



Nurturing a Progressive Culture in a Competitive Society

JOHN NOVICK, INTERMEDIATE & MIDDLE SCHOOL DIVISION HEAD

SIOBHAN ALLEN, INTERMEDIATE & MIDDLE SCHOOL DEAN OF STUDENT LIFE

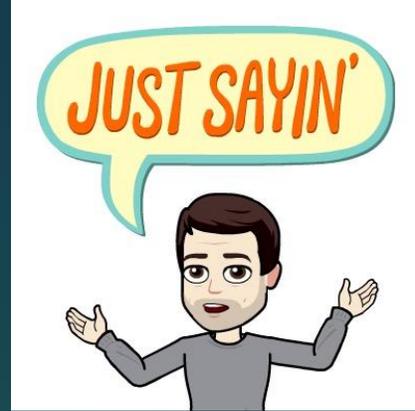
Thursday, 11/3/16 1:30-2:45 PM



The Chicago Cubs won the World Series. *Just thought we'd mention it.*

Education...is a
process of living...and
not a preparation for
future living.

JOHN DEWEY



Schools must help children find the freedom and space to:

- Explore and discover, satiate their curiosity
- Question
- Make mistakes
- Slow down and reflect
- Use their imaginations and create
- Develop resilience
- Collaborate
- Practice citizenship and leadership (share in decision-making)
- Be inspired and inspire
- Develop their identities
- Gain cultural competency, fluency & adaptability for an increasingly culturally heterogeneous global society
- Learn to be informed and thoughtful consumers of media and 'content' and recognize bias
- Grow organically and authentically at a developmentally appropriate pace



AND we must do it in the context of an anxious, competitive, often cynical popular culture that lacks patience for human development and imposes pressure on students to reach fixed benchmarks on a random timetable...that reduces complex, potentially joyful processes like relationship-building, learning, growth and identity to oversimplified binaries, zero-sum games, winner-take-all contests that end in success or failure, victory or defeat.



How is it possible, then, for us to...

...honor and celebrate childhood?

...encourage a growth mindset?

...help children learn to curate their own space for reflection?

...teach listening for understanding, not debate?

...nurture in them an inclusive vision of and commitment to community?

...teach wellness and self-care as life-long priorities?





Nurturing a progressive culture is not easy in such an anxious, hurried, crass and fear-driven society.

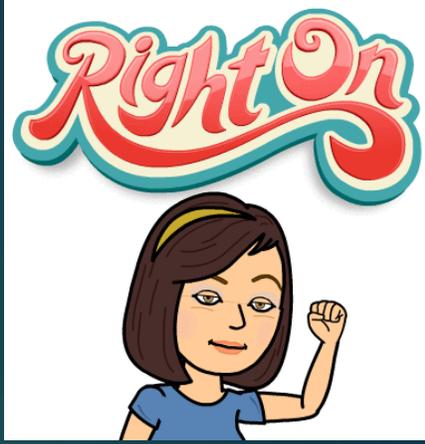
But it is possible...

...with greater levels of engagement with parents (and more parent education than ever before), plus bucket loads of optimism on the part of faculty, staff and administration. Every interaction with students, parents and one another is an opportunity to reinforce progressive values and the benefits of being counter-cultural. This is the lens that all who teach, coach and mentor children can adopt: every interaction can make a difference, can promote a progressive orientation to learning and life with the potential to impact that child's life positively forever. This has to be seen as **the sum of our daily work, the primary purpose of everyone in our school.**

Let's talk about what this might look like in practice...

Whole Group Share

10 mins



In what ways do you
believe your school is

progressive?

(programs, procedures,
culture, climate?)

Progressive Education is...

- reflective (makes time, practices it)
- oriented toward doing, making
- collaborative
- imaginative
- focused on both depth and breadth (in spite of pressures of time)
- optimistic, joyful, about possibility (but not naive, uninformed)
- authentic
- inclusive and equitable, celebrating differences
- influenced by student voice, input, ownership



- attuned to stages of human development
- committed to a growth mindset
- holistic – intellectual, social-emotional, physical
- integrative in nature – student experience beyond the academics matters a great deal; the same values evident in all areas of school life (academics, clubs, activities, athletics, support services, et al)
- rooted in *community*
- welcomes parents as partners – and views this partnership as critical
- non-competitive (or at least rarely competitive, with special attention to process and equity when competition is present)
- counter-cultural



Small Group Chats

20 mins discussion (groups of 3-4)

Brainstorm together ideas for making your school (an aspect of your program, or the culture and community) more progressive, and record each idea on the paper (we'll collect them, photograph them, and email all who are interested in the ideas generated).



Whole Group Idea Share

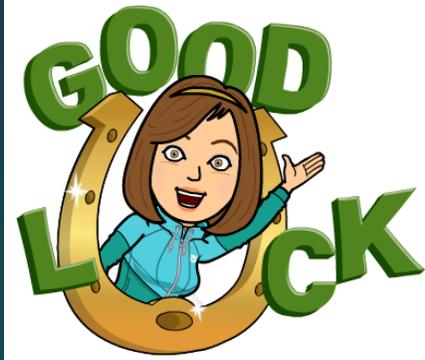
15 mins

What were some of the ideas you heard in your small group that might help a school become more progressive, more counter-cultural...that could move the needle toward a more growth-oriented, reflective, inclusive, collaborative, wellness-driven model of learning? Or toward a more progressive school culture and climate?



A Few Ideas to Consider

- Parent “Developmental Nights” (with parent input on agenda)
- PD program with budget...for *parents*
- Data collection on activity participation for evaluating inclusion and relevance to students
- A progressive “audit” process that includes everyone
- Social media, blogging to promote progressive philosophy and approaches
- Who’s in tune with student experience beyond academics? Make it a job
- Run toward the hard stuff...thoughtfully, honestly, with solid preparation (politics, ideology, race, gender, class...name it, engage...get comfortable with respectful disagreement, stimulating conversations without closure). And make building cultural competency of faculty/staff a job (within each division)
- Build into all faculty meetings some time for reflection, collaboration, discussion...of equity and cultural competency, and of all aspects of progressivism (evaluation/assessment, homework, communication, curriculum, pacing, competition, reporting)...if you’re striving to be counter-cultural in some way, curate time for faculty to talk about it – focus meeting time on things that cannot be emailed



Resources, References & Our Contact Info



- Devorah Heitner on technology in a developmentally appropriate context: www.raisingdigitalnatives.com
- Progressive Education Network (PEN): www.progressiveeducationnetwork.org
- Learning & the Brain: www.learningandthebrain.com
- Derek Gay on Equity, Inclusion & Diversity: www.derrickgay.com
- Howard Ross' book *Reinventing Diversity*
- Ann Anzalone on brain research: www.annanzalone.com
- Dr. Eugenia Cheng (math in a progressive context): www.eugeniacheng.com
- Facing History and Ourselves: www.facinghistory.org
- Bruce D. Perry on the neuroscience and childhood: www.childtrauma.org
- Martin Moran on innovation and design in education: @martinmoran21 on Twitter

SIOBHAN ALLEN: sallen@fwparker.org – 773.797.5203
JOHN NOVICK: jnovick@fwparker.org – 773.797.5119



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