



From Philosophy to Practice

Vol 1, No 5, November 30, 2004

I must practice what I preach. I have a responsibility to transform my world which for many hours of the day is the classroom. As an educator/transformer, I've had my ups and downs, but there are some general principles that I increasingly see as central to my task of bringing redemptive change to education. Some of these principles are simple, but with profound implications. Here are a few of them.

Every student is valuable. No two students are the same. Every student has different strengths and weaknesses. There is no such thing as an average student. Students are wired differently; they process information differently. Students want to be and deserve to be respected. It would be a big step towards respecting them if we took into account individual differences in what students need, how they learn best, and what would be the most suitable curricula and pace for them.

Developing learners is more about molding attitudes than delivering content. Christians are warned against stumbling children, which I would take as meaning that our mission should be to make schooling a positive experience for every student. This does not mean "dumbing down" the curriculum or having a "feel good about yourself" curriculum. Only academic rigor produces a learner with competence and confidence.

Continuing on a bit more . . . curiosity is the foundation of learning. If students lose their curiosity, they will also lose most of their ability to retain and use the information we work so hard to give them. Content must always be attached to meaning, or it is not retained.

There is a temptation to think that students should know everything adults know. There is also a temptation to think that all students should know a lot of information that the average adult has long since forgotten. In an information age, where information can often be found quite quickly, it is important for students to learn core information really well and to give a context to all the other information that is getting too great to be retained.

Continued in next column

Learner goals are as important, if not more important than content goals. Students should do work that matters to them, and matters to others. Doing is more important than knowing. Doing validates knowing. Genuine doing requires giving the student the responsibility to frame what he will do with the information he is gathering. (Taken from Bill Weston's Open House Handout. Mr. Weston teaches in Praxis one period per day.)



Mr. Weston with Praxis Students

Reaction

Thanks Tim, the photos and poem made up thousands of words collectively! A reaction from a Praxis parent about The Woodcarver.



Round Table Meeting

Bridges is a bimonthly newsletter about Praxis Academy, a non traditional approach to teaching and learning at Bellevue Christian School.

Powerful Interactions Between Students

We are finding over and over again that some of the most powerful interactions in Praxis occur between students. Although I am sure this also happens in other classrooms at BCS, Praxis is setup to enable time and space for student to student conversations to be a natural part of each day. Just recently one student was observed by other students to be passive and non-participatory. Two concerned students, along with Mrs. Seymour went on a walk -n-talk with their classmate. The troubled students asked thoughtful, open ended questions. They really wanted to know why the other could not share ideas and participate more fully in class. They also affirmed the more passive student by saying, "We want to know what you are thinking" and "You have to participate, you're part of the team." We don't fully comprehend the power these statements can carry, nor do we know what the end result might be. Time will tell, and if students continue to care for and challenge each another, I firmly believe positive change for all is possible.

The conversation described here was held several weeks ago. Since then many more opportunities have developed. Just today, at a round table meeting with the whole class, one student remarked that there really was a problem *with focus of attention* (editor's words) at the end of the day yesterday. He said, "I was part of the problem, and I am sorry." When students are given time to talk about what matters to them and to each other, positive outcomes emerge.

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).

Questions or comments? E-mail us at tkrell@bellevuechristian.org 425-454-4028 ext. 502