

Holding a space for learning . . .

Several weeks ago the Praxis teaching team was asked to come up with those elements that define the unique learning of students in this program. The following is the first attempt at the **Big Ideas Behind Praxis**:

- * Curriculum springs from student questions
- * Learner goals take priority over content goals: students collaborate with teachers to set and evaluate their own goals.
- * Regular reflection on learning by students and teachers
- * Flexible scheduling creates large blocks of uninterrupted time
- * Learning is doing what matters: learning as service, real life learning
- * Team approach: students, teachers, principal, and parents work together
- * Learning to listen to each other and to know each other
- * Role of the teacher and student is different; there are no spectator students; teaching is listening and learning is talking
- * Students speak for themselves about their learning; students take responsibility and develop competence

This list is a work in progress. It is raw; the phrases are not uniform. Some have verbs; others sort of come out of nowhere. This is an example of the type of work done in Praxis. Teachers constantly struggle to allow students to find their own way. Just this morning at the weekly teacher's meeting the conversation centered around holding the right space for students to develop what is in their minds. While in a dialogue with a teacher last week one student remarked, "I could do what is in your head (your idea) or I could do what is in my head." I wonder how often our agenda gets in the way of a student taking responsibility for their own learning. Can I reserve judgment long enough so a student can express their own ideas? When I read through the BCS Essential Questions I notice a lot of "I" statements. How do I receive and express ideas; How do I practice what I have learned; How do I develop and use my gifts; How do I learn, live and serve? These are just a few examples. These seem like questions that must be answered by the students. How can teachers hold a learning space for students in which they develop for themselves the answers to the essential questions?



Andy with a mechanic at Bike Works

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

For the final field trip of the first semester Praxis students visited Bike Works on Rainier Avenue in Seattle. Praxis student, Jon Fouquier, helped make the arrangements for the trip. Students learned that the Bike Work's mission is "to build sustainable communities by educating youth and promoting bicycling." The employees exhibited a real joy for their work and commented, "we teach young people how to fix bikes, reward them with their own set of wheels, and provide affordable bicycle services to the community." Praxis was able to donate two used bicycles that will be used in the Earn-a-Bike program. Over eight classes kids learn all about bike repair. Then during "Earn-a-Bike time" outside of class, they practice their repair skills on donated bikes, and work their way towards their own recycled bicycle to take home. In the bike unit Praxis students learned: 1) how to maintain their own bikes, 2) how to fix a flat tire and patch a tube, and 3) a long list of bike terminology. Individual projects included a history of bicycles, changes in bicycle technology, and finding out if 'Green Goo' works to repair flats.



Students next major project is developing around the topic of American History and includes a look into the future. Students are preparing a timeline. More on that in next edition.



Praxis students and parents prepared a Christmas dinner for JH teachers.

What's been happening?

December and January were busy months in Praxis. Students participated in:

- * a visit to the Seattle Art Museum
- * preparing a Christmas Dinner for JH staff
- * a visit to Bike Works, Rainier Ave, Seattle
- * a Praxis Chapel with a 20 minute video
- * IOWA Standardized Testing
- * an afternoon with two BCS alumni
- * a visit to Three Points' sixth grade classes