Keynote: What We Could Do If We Were Brave Together

- Selected Slides -

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rick@rickwormeli.onmicrosoft.com
www.rickwormeli.com
@rickwormeli2 (Twitter)

What tethers us to
ineffectiveness and low morale?
What is no longer supportable
in education practices?

Never sacrifice sound
pedagogy because someone
above you isn't there yet.

Technology integration by itself will improve student achievement.

Reducing everything to a number.

Denying students opportunities to re-learn and re-assess

Never opening ourselves to correction, never allowing ourselves to be vulnerable.

Conducting middle schools like junior version of high school

Relying primarily on "telling" as our way to information across to students

Avoiding candid conversations about racism, gun violence, cultural bias, poverty, and other societal issues in school

Teachers as the sole arbiters of all there is to know, limiting the next generation to learn what the current generation thinks is salient.

Blind adherence to pacing mandates, I mean, guides.

Hiding behind "physics envy'"

Succumbing to Intellectual Bias

Honor Roll

Assuming that just because students are in upper grade levels that they know how to read

Thinking we have to replicate learning conditions in later classes in order to prepare them for those classes

Using grades to motivate students and teach them self-discipline

Staying quiet when education pundits/bullies distort the truth

Removing students from fine/performing arts and p.e. in order to spend more time on exam preparation

Not being creative because it makes others look bad

"Courage is not the absence of fear. It's the judgment that something else is more important than that fear."
-- Ambrose Redmoon

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo…
…Do I dare disturb the universe?
- T.S. Elliot, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, 1915

Create moral imperative.

"We must avoid being lulled by popular 'diversity'
approaches and frameworks that pose no threat to
inequity—that sometimes are popular because they are
no real threat to inequity."

– Paul Gorski, Equity Literacy Institute, December 9, 2017

"Educational outcome disparities are not the result of deficiencies in marginalized communities' cultures, mindsets, or grittiness, but rather of inequities." - Paul Gorski, Equity Institute

Honor the full individual the student really is rather than categorize him in terms of the degree to which he satisfies our own descriptions of successful students from our own cultures.

"Compared with schools with low percentages of students experiencing poverty, schools with high percentages of students experiencing poverty are more likely to have:

- less access to school nurses and college counselors;
- more limited access to computers and the Internet;
- inadequate learning facilities such as science labs;
- more teacher vacancies and substitute teachers;
- more teachers unlicensed in their subject areas;
- less rigorous and student-centered curricula;
- inoperative or dirty student bathrooms;
- less access to preventive healthcare;
- serious teacher turnover problems;
- higher student-to-teacher ratios;
- insufficient classroom materials;
- less access to stable housing;
- fewer extracurricular programs;
- fewer experienced teachers;
- lower teacher salaries;
- larger class sizes; and
- less funding."

Before we assume students lack grit and claim openly or privately that this and personal character are the roots of their academic struggles, let's remember…
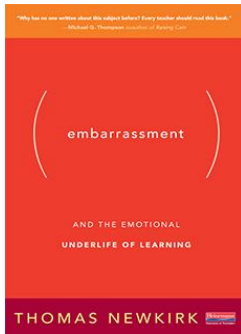
- Paul Gorski, Associate Professor, Integrative Studies, George Mason University
May 16, 2018

"The most impressive educational activists are those who struggle to replace a system geared to memorizing facts and taking tests with one dedicated to exploring ideas….By contrast, those enamored of grit look at the same status quo and ask: How can we get kids to put up with it?"

- Alfie Kohn, on-line post from Fall 2014, adopted from his book, *The Myth of the Spoiled Child*

'Courageous Act: Give students proof that hope is warranted.

- Use words, policies, practices, and attitudes that come across advocating, not, "Gotcha!"
- Allowing re-do's on both formative and summative assessments *for full credit*
- Encourage divergent thinking and problem-solving with no academic penalty when they don't turn out as planned – 'just analysis, critique/reflection, and trying again
- Discipline as restorative and in private
- Recoverability in full after cheating or plagiarizing
- Modeling and facilitating constructive responses to failures and mistakes
- Zero sarcasm directed at students
- Complete erasure of earlier indicators of incompetency from later and more current reports of competency (no more averaging of grades)
- Grudges dropped
- Cognitive coaching more than judging
- Teacher follow-through on promises made
- Students' reflective analysis of choices and revision as warranted
- Daily, visible proof that we will not humiliate the student nor will we let him humiliate himself
- Weekly proof that progress is being made
- Weekly proof that individual students have something to contribute

What goes unachieved in students because we chose to be politically safe?

In order for someone to accept feedback or take a risk with a new idea, he must admit first that what he was doing was less effective than his ego thought it was.

The fallacy of rationalism is the assumption that the social world can be altered by logical argument. The problem, as George Bernard Shaw observed, is that, "reformers have the idea that change can be achieved by brute sanity."

- Michale Fullan (1991, p. 96),
as quoted in Robert Evans'
The Human Side of School Change (1996)

"Why has no one written about this subject before? Every teacher should read this book."
— Michael G. Thompson *coauthor of Raising Cain*

embarrassment

AND THE EMOTIONAL
UNDERLIFE OF LEARNING

THOMAS NEWKIRK

'Highly recommended new book, 'worthy of a book study – One of the most impactful books on teaching I've read in years.

Working Premise:

Examined pedagogy elevates; students thrive.

Unexamined pedagogy harms; students whither.

Provocations and Courageous Policies when It Comes to Grading:

- *A grade reflects what we know at the end of learning, not how we got there.*
- *Averaging distorts final grade accuracy and should be abandoned.*
- *The 100-point scale was never meant to be used to report an individual's progress toward learning goals. It's provides a false sense of precision, leading to sorting students more than cultivating their talents.*
- *Recovering from failure matures students faster and more solidly than does being permanently labeled for failure with no hope for recovery.*
- *Effort, behavior, character, and all teaching techniques or learner methods should be reported separately from achievement.*
- *We can learn without grades, but we can't learn without feedback.*

1892: The Committee of Ten:

- The Standardized Curriculum
- High School
- School Day made of 50-60 minute class periods

Popcorn kernels pop at different rates, but when each one pops, it's accorded full status as a piece of popcorn, not something less than popcorn because it popped later than its fellow kernels.

Let's end the false assumption that students all learn at a uniform rate and manner.

Time is NOT immutable.

Fair Isn't Always Equal

Scaffold Student Learning

Support, then pull away support.

Ceaselessly move students *from dependence* to independence.

In some schools, there is a pervading, anti-intellectual bias.

[**Note: Ask Rick for article on how to cultivate teacher intellect]**

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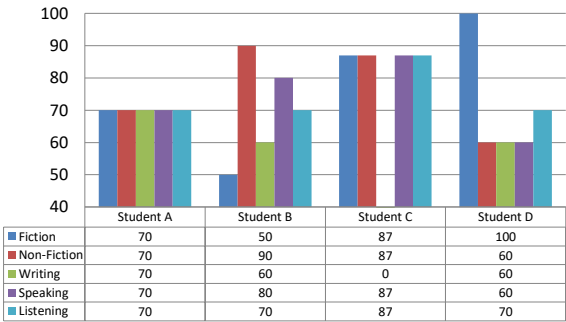**"We can't be creative unless we're willing to be confused."**
- Writer and educator, Margaret Wheatley

We are hired for how we are similar to a company or organization, but we advance based on how we are different.

"It's not what you don't know that gets you into trouble, it's what you know for sure that ain't so."

- Mark Twain

There is no such thing as laziness.

	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D
■ Fiction	70	50	87	100
■ Non-Fiction	70	90	87	60
■ Writing	70	60	0	60
■ Speaking	70	80	87	60
■ Listening	70	70	87	70

"We went to school. We were not taught how to think; we were taught to reproduce what past thinkers thought….Instead of being taught to look for possibilities, we were taught to exclude them. It's as if we entered school as a question mark and graduated as a period."

-- Michael Michalko,
Creative Thinkering,
2011, p. 3

It's <u>not</u> an *answer chase*.

It's a question journey.

Embrace the fact that, "[l]earning is fundamentally an *act of creation*, not *consumption of information*."
-- Sharon L. Bowman, Professional Trainer

Active Creators, NOT Passive Consumers!

Whoever
does the
editing,
does the
learning..

**We don't let a
student's
immaturity
dictate his
learning and
thereby his
destiny.**

Recovering in full from a failure teaches more than being labeled for failure ever could teach.

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It's a false assumption that giving a student an "F" or wagging an admonishing finger from afar builds moral fiber, self-discipline, competence, and integrity.

"I used to think…, but now I think…"

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'Bold Actions that Happen When We are Brave Together:

- Build in mechanisms to deviate from the teaching plan if you can improve the learning over that which otherwise might be achieved.
- Remove Honor Roll. It has little to do with students' academic achievement and personal maturation.
- End the use of the 100-point scale.
- Get trained in gifted education so we can meet advanced students' needs in regular education classrooms, if necessary.
- Articulate your pedagogy, and invite its critique.
- Pushback on anti-intellectualism in the profession.
- Audit your gradebook and school grading policies in light of ethical, accurate grading practices.
- Invite discussions of morality and ethics in your grading and teaching conversations.

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- Turn middle schools into true middle schools, not junior versions of the upper school.
- Walk side by side with a student who makes a mistake – moral or immoral -- rather than label him permanently and assume the label builds moral fiber.
- Develop a constructive response to cheating and plagiarism. Hint: It's NOT by recording an unrecoverable "F" or "0" in the gradebook. *(Ask Rick for article on this)*
- Teach in the ways students best learn, regardless of whether or not it's the way we best learn.
- Speak up about schools and good teaching at community events; confront education bullies and pundits who spread myths and misconceptions.

- Participate in the national/international conversations of your field. Develop a Personal/Professional Learning Network (PLN), contribute to it, make yourself open to its ideas.
- Conduct serious, extended, uncomfortable, candid conversations about poverty, racism, classism, cultural bias, school violence, and other societal concerns and their impact on student performance.
- Take steps to resolve the growing disparities between the have's and have-not's: Actively change/remove policies, structures, practices that marginalize any culture, ethnicity, or economic class
- In an English or Language Arts class, spend the majority of time actually reading, writing, and critiquing.

- Accept the fact that schooling is not limited to learning job skills so they can contribute to our economy. Ultimately, it's about passion and meaning-making.
- Embrace the very real positive effects of fiction reading on critical-thinking, scholarly analysis, problem-solving, empathy, and civil discourse.
- Speak up about policies mandated upon us, if what is mandated is not working.
- Record feedback on students' work NOT to justify a grade, but to cultivate real learning in the student.
- Give up being the oracle and arbiter of all knowledge. Perceive lessons as launching pads for students own pursuits, not collections to be stacked and retrieved later.

- Conduct professional development, feedback, evaluation, and collegial relationships in the manner in which we want teachers to do it for students.
- Become something more than a "clicktivist" when it comes to civil and educational challenges.
- Accept a teaching or leadership position in a *low* performing school.
- Accept a teaching or leadership position in a *high* performing school.
- Make it the policy that we cannot take students out of P.E., fine/performing arts, and tech classes to double-up on remediation for exams.
- Teach to cultivate hope.

As highly accomplished professional educators, we have a responsibility to be courageous advocates of diverse students and their learning, even in politically tough times…
– and we help others do the same.