

January 9, 2011



Students from Roosevelt Elementary in Tulsa, OK proudly wearing their custom designed Big Picture Learning t-shirts!

January 2011 - Kicking off a new decade?

So is 2011 the first year of a new decade or was that 2010? Either way, we are celebrating January and excited about the great year in front of us!

Lots of great info to share - be sure to read everything...

- Check out this promo video from our friends at Central Vermont Big Picture Academy! <http://www.schooltube.com/video/57b1b5df97a13d192298/Central-VT-Big-Picture-Academy>
- Great article about our friends at the Bronx Guild's GreenFab Winter Project <http://www.livescience.com/technology/computer-teaching-program-bronx-bts-101217.html>
- Check out this great article published in the New England Journal of Higher Education by the College Unbound Team. Excellent Job! <http://www.nebhe.org/2010/12/21/how-to-develop-learners-who-are-consistently-curious-and-questioning%E2%80%94so-more-likely-to-be-college-ready/>

Be sure to send us info so we can share with the network. Take a minute to drop us a note, send pictures, videos, poems, anything exciting that you want to share.

Have a great week!

Mark your calendar!

There are lots of opportunities to connect - be sure to pass this information to the people in your building who may be interested!

January 20th

SPED Connection Call
Monthly Call - 3:00 EST
(610) 214-0200
Access code: 499268#

January 26-29th

Principal Retreat in Newark, NJ
Registration is now closed, but we will send info to everyone so no one misses anything! Can't wait to see you all there

The other network-based calls will be starting up again really soon. Keep an eye out for the LTI coordinator call, and the Post-Secondary Transition Counselor call!

The Road Trip Nation crew stopped by the MET Sacramento in November to see how students were using the new curriculum.



Cool News You Can Use!

Make MLK Day a Day-On, not a Day Off!

What is the MLK Day of Service?

On January 17, 2011 we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the holiday recognizing one of America's greatest heroes-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'"

Each year, Americans across the country answer that question by coming together on the King Holiday to serve their neighbors and communities.

The MLK Day of Service is a part of [United We Serve](#), the President's national call to service initiative. It calls for Americans from all walks of life to work together to provide solutions to our most pressing national problems.

Want to know more or get some resources? Check out the website: <http://mlkday.gov/> Be sure to send us photos and news of how your students make this a Day On!

Accepting applications for the 2011 awards

<http://ing.us/about-ing/citizenship/childrens-education/ing-unsung-heroes>

Are you an educator with a class project that is short on funding but long on potential? Do you know a teacher looking for grant dollars? ING Unsung Heroes® could help you turn great ideas into reality for students.

For more than 10 years, and with \$3.0 million in awarded grants, ING Unsung Heroes has proven to be an A+ program with educators. The program's "alumni" have inspired success in the classroom and impacted countless numbers of students. Each year, 100 educators are selected to receive \$2,000 to help fund their innovative class projects. Three of those are chosen to receive the top awards of an additional \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$25,000

Applications for the [2011 awards](#) are now available. The application deadline is April 30, 2011. To make it easier for applicants to fill in the required information, the non-essay portion of the application is now a fillable PDF. All that an applicant needs to do is download the PDF and type in that information directly. Applicants still need to complete the essay and budget sections in a separate Word document or other word processing program, and submit all application materials following the process outlined in the application.

Teacher Fellowships

The deadline for applications for the Department's 2011-12 Teaching Ambassador Fellowship, offering highly motivated and innovative school teachers the opportunity to work for one year for the agency -- either full-time in Washington, D.C., or part-time in their home states -- is fast approaching. In particular, to help achieve the program goal that "the final team of selected fellows...represent the diversity of our student body and settings in which students receive instruction across the country," the Department is seeking applications from the 22 states that have not had a fellow in the past three years: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. All fellows will be selected based on their record of leadership, impact on student achievement, communication skills, and insight from school and classroom experiences. Applications are due by January 17. Fellows will be named in early summer. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/teacherfellowship/>.

Third Annual Young Minds Digital Times™ Competition presented by KidThrive.org.

Cool opportunity for students who are into digital media.

<http://www.youngmindsdigitaltimes.com/>

The competition is free to all students grades 6-8 and 9-12. Registration is open starting October 4th, 2010 for the 2010-2011 Competition. All entries are due by March 19, 2011, but you do not have to wait! As soon as you register, you are able to send us your creations. Check out the [detailed timeline on the About page](#). Plus, BIG surprises underway this year. YMDT is proud to announce a brand new **Gaming Competition** - more info to be announced soon in the coming weeks.

Co-Corner: D to the E

From Doc

Last month Littky was in Qatar. This month tennis stars, Roger Federer & Rafael Nadal are in Qatar. I think we started something.



Everything started fast and hard this week, but I was ready after some relaxation in Jamaica. In between the chilling time I got to go to a special spiritual ceremony with a Jamaican friend who is a drummer in Kingston. What a wild experience – chanting, dancing, and praying as well as a ceremony where they cut a goat's head off as a sacrifice as participants went into trances. Whew – all as my friend drummed away.

In this month's Rhode Island Monthly, they did a one pager on Littky's 10 things needed to improve education. Here they are:

10 THINGS: DENNIS LITTKY

Education innovator Dennis Littky—co-founder of The Met school in Rhode Island, Big Picture Learning and College Unbound—knows that we can't afford to fail our future. His ten steps to smarter schools:

1. **Create individual learning plans.** The basics of reading, writing, math and scientific thinking apply to any discipline, so let's build lessons around each student's interests and goals. When students are motivated and engaged, they stick with school.
2. **Involve families.** Parents are a child's first teacher and know their student best. Schools need to do all they can to get parents involved — and not just when something is wrong. Parents will make it a priority. They just haven't been asked.
3. **Focus on real-world learning.** Memorizing facts is the lowest level of learning, yet it's what we ask our students to do most. Working on purposeful projects and internships under the guidance of advisors, parents and mentors in their fields of interest allows students to develop knowledge and skills in an integrated way.
4. **Foster questions, not answers.** Curiosity is a powerful motivator. Instead of giving students the questions, we need to teach them to frame important questions and seek out answers for themselves.
5. **Evaluate skills.** Answering a, b, c, d, or e on a standardized multiple-choice test doesn't reflect who a student is or his or her ability to put knowledge into action. We need a broader spectrum, of assessments like oral presentations,

portfolios of written work and projects, and detailed written evaluations by teachers.

6. **Use technology wisely.** Students are mostly using computers in schools as word processors and online encyclopedias. They need to learn to use computers for collecting and analyzing data, networking and solving problems.
7. **Support great teachers.** We must work hard to have only the very best teachers in our schools. Teacher training colleges need to get future teachers thinking innovatively about what school should be, not preparing teachers for the schools of yesterday.
8. **Focus on college completion.** For the first time in U.S. history, today's college-age generation will be less educated than their parents because they're just not finishing their degrees. We can't keep encouraging students to go to college yet forgetting to help them make it through once they're there. We talk about students being college-ready, but colleges need to be student-ready as well. Colleges have to move beyond text books and lectures to prepare our students for work and life in the twenty-first century.
9. **Make schools, not districts, accountable.** Teachers, principals, parents and students know their school the best. They should have enough control to design some of the accountability measures to show how their students are succeeding on the broad district, state, and federal goals.
10. **Do everything at once.** Tweaking around the edges and treating more testing as innovation haven't created noticeable change or narrowed the achievement gap in our country. We must reinvent.

Big Picture is a finalist in a multi-million dollar grant and soon the foundation will come to visit the central office - a few schools designated by them. Also, the Principal Retreat is around the corner.

The Met is working hard to think about how to cut 6 million dollars over the next ten years and keep the integrity of the program. We have some great ideas on how to increase enrollment using sites outside The Met to run advisories – as well as running school from 3 to 10 for students who have left school before graduating (for the whole state) Better to add students and make money than cut and lose money.

Next week Nancy and I will be visiting each school to go over the budget and tuition and our plan to move forward. We are very open to involving as many people as possible in figuring out how to cut costs without losing who we are. See you Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

And to make it all a little busier, we are fighting a new high stakes test in math that is not the regular 9th grade skills, but students need to know Algebra II to have a shot.

It is all very clear why we are running Big Picture Schools. At least Tufts University, under the tutelage of psychologist Robert Sturnberg, have added another "test" for admissions that shows wisdom, intelligence, analytical thinking, practical thinking and creativity. Their theory is that leaders need to have these skills. There are prompts for students to answer:

- 1). Select a film whose message or imagery resonated with you long after the credits rolled. How did it capture your imagination or affect your consciousness?
- 2). Offer an open letter to the new president: What issue would you like to see addressed in the first 100 days of the new administration. Why does this matter to you?
- 3). Use an 8.5 x 11 inch sheet of paper to create something. You can blueprint your future home, create a new product, draw a cartoon strip, design a costume or a theatrical set, compose a score or do something entirely different. Let your imagination wander.

The college students returned home and we had a full day – a scavenger hunt where they had to explore and talk to people in Providence, then an organization workshop as a beginning to guide our students and then brainstorming about travel abroad. The students are also working on financial literacy as well as looking for jobs – what does it take, etc. We had a consultant go through their Facebook with them and talk about how employers are doing the same thing. Some good life lessons – Jamie was asked to write an article for our work – see article and student videos here:

<http://www.nebhe.org/2010/12/21/how-to-develop-learners-who-are-consistently-curious-and-questioning%E2%80%94so-more-likely-to-be-college-ready/>

In The Heights

Next week College Unbound has their 2nd Board Meeting and a night of the theater where we sold 190 tickets to the play at our Providence Broadway Theater (PPAC). We have a pre & post party where we are getting the word out and raising money. Should be fun!

Just a perspective (see below)
HIGH SCHOOL -- 1957 vs. 2010

Scenario 1:

Jack goes quail hunting before school and then pulls into the school parking lot with his shotgun in his truck's gun rack.

1957 - Vice Principal comes over, looks at Jack's shotgun, goes to his car and gets his shotgun to show Jack.

2010 - School goes into lock down, FBI called, Jack hauled off to jail and never sees his truck or gun again. Counselors called in for traumatized students and teachers.

Scenario 2:

Johnny and Mark get into a fist fight after school.

1957 - Crowd gathers. Mark wins. Johnny and Mark shake hands and end up buddies.

2010 - Police called and SWAT team arrives -- they arrest both Johnny and Mark. They are both charged with assault and both expelled even though Johnny started it

Scenario 7:

Johnny takes apart leftover firecrackers from the Fourth of July, puts them in a model airplane paint bottle and blows up a red ant bed.

1957 - Ants die.

2010 - ATF, Homeland Security and the FBI are all called. Johnny is charged with domestic terrorism. The FBI investigates his parents -- and all siblings are removed from their home and all computers are confiscated. Johnny's dad is placed on a terror watch list and is never allowed to fly again.

From Elliot

Happy New Year!

This week I spent time up in Santa Barbara and in Los Angeles on some very different work. In Santa Barbara one meeting was with Russ Rumberger. Russ is a top researcher/evaluator in the UC system on high school dropout prevention. He is working in the Office of the President of the UC on developing statewide initiatives for P20. Most of this work will center on developing district policy and practice. I went over the work we outlined in our Stuart proposal and all of it fits with the work they would like to do in districts. Once again, the non-cognitive work was large. Over the break, Charlie Mojo spotted an article in Ed Week online



December 23, 2010

Experts Begin to Identify Nonacademic Skills Key to Success

Since we've been working with and developing a proposal to norm Bill Sedlacek's non-cognitive dimensions to high school and middle school students we are right where the action is.

Russ has connections to the legislature and office of education that are longstanding so, it is very conceivable that we can start to have the influence we need to do work in the districts. In addition to meeting Russ, I met with the Weingart Foundation

around Steve's school but also to see if they would help support the funding for our statewide work in California and partner with Stuart. Their answer was they would like to do so.

My other meetings were arranged by Peter Karoff with foundations, districts, and school reform groups in Santa Barbara. All of these meetings were good beginnings and I'm looking forward to the follow-up. Peter was great at putting four foundations together for one meeting. It not only saved time but they fed off of one another in very good ways.

Before going to Santa Barbara, I stopped off for a day with the Muse School staff and their founders that is founded by Rebecca Amis and Susie and Jim Cameron. Rebecca is Susie's sister. We are having some very good influence in the design of their school and they really promote our work.

Over the break Viv stayed with me for a few days and we had lots of time to brainstorm and develop the international work. This included a meeting with Dale Dougherty head of the Maker Movement. Dale will be a keynote speaker at the upcoming principal's retreat which is being planned. There are lots of partnership opportunities we put out there.

There's something about the winter that allows me to work differently. I had lots of time over the last two weeks to write and pull things together. Over the holidays, the phone stops ringing around work and emails slow down. I get a different kind of creative energy. It's the type that allows you to chew on some things, play with them, and see if they work. Here's some strands about play and school that I noodled with that was inspired by talks with Charlie, Viv, and Dale and in reading a few books and an article in the New Yorker on video gaming - Master of Play The many worlds of a video-game artist. by Nick Paumgarten

"The tug is the drug." Fisherman

"Learn from the pan." Cooks

The Pull – "the mysterious ability that good games have of making you want to play them."



What on-line learning is hoping to accomplish is what video games have done. Through play, gamers have figured out the right combinations of challenge and repetition; sharing and feeling; narrative and improvisation; mystery and surprise; motivation and ownership. Thus far schools have consistently failed

to do these combinations with high percentages of students.

Can on-line learning develop the platforms that would get students to do things they may not normally do and practice academics through repetition and challenge?

When players play the game they are in-charge of making decisions and dealing with the consequences in an in the moment environment. So much of school has either too much repetition without challenge or too much challenge without repetition. The result is boredom and low self-esteem for many students.

It is fairly apparent that the difference is games are play and the ways traditional academics are taught in school violate all of the rules of play. Play is voluntary, not part of ordinary life, unserious, unproductive and uncertain. The French intellectual Roger Caillois called play "an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often of money. Therein lies its utility, as a simulation that exists outside regular life." Precisely because school bills itself as serious and certain, it becomes the foil. In the hearts, hands and minds of students, it is academics that become a pure waste of time and energy because school lacks what video gamers refer to as the pull of the game. Also, it lacks the game environment where players share an emotional connection that allows the participants to go deeper and practice longer.

A good example of a game that introduced the element of play to a task that people might not normally do is the Wii Fit fitness game. It has sold over 37 million copies. The game's inventor Miyamoto is the best and most famous video game inventor. When I read about him, I was happy to hear that the narrative and environment for all of his games comes from his childhood experience of exploring caves and getting "pulled" deeper, further and for longer periods of time into those caves.

The best example I saw of an academic game was the welding simulator. It followed most the rules Miyamoto puts out there. Here the combination of all of the elements of play were mixed in with the practical skills of literacy and numeracy and it was happening all at once where you had to think with your senses and feel with your mind. Yes, it is possible to get better at this combination of practical and academic and assess it by going deeper and practicing longer. This simulator was proof.

Next week, I'm up in Seattle and then back in San Diego with Kari doing some work in Grossmont. It will be good to have time together. There is a great deal going on in preparation for work next year. There are lots of proposals to foundations due in the next few weeks as well as new work with districts.

Enjoy the weekend!!