

February 27, 2011



Welcome to the Network! We are thrilled to welcome Positive Outcomes Charter School (Delaware) to the Big Picture Learning network.

Welcome Positive Outcomes!

We are excited to officially welcome Positive Outcomes Charter School to the Big Picture Learning network. POCS has been around for 15 years, doing an amazing job serving students in Delaware. They are excited to join the network and work with like-minded educators who are dedicated to serving students.

School Director Ed Emmett and Principal Steve Norman were at the principal retreat in Newark, and have already jumped into the work by joining the mid-Atlantic CFG group. You can send a welcome note to Ed (edward.emmett@pocsnet.org) and Steve (snorman@pocs.k12.de.us). Look for the Positive Outcomes staff at Big Bang and in other regional events!

There are only 4 months left of school - and so much work to do in that short amount of time! Don't forget the Big Picture Birthday celebration on April 7th.

Big Bang dates have been finalized - August 3-5, 2011 in Providence. More information will be coming soon!

We are launching the Supercalendar Cover Art Contest - see page 4 for details. The deadline for submission is April 15th, 2011!

Have a fabulous week!!



Co-Corner: D to the E

From Doc

A week in San Francisco. The Met was off but BP and College Unbound were on.



Tuesday I met with 2 young entrepreneurs each developing projects to help college students stay in school. One developed a system to help former military men and women navigate the college system and then the entrepreneurial game.

The other young man has developed a program using facebook to let students hook up with each other as they get accepted to college. This connection continues when they arrive on campus, which helps students not feel alienated and stay in school.

The next day I met with a guy who had just bought an online college that was accredited and performance-based. He then gathered some top tech guys from Google to develop better systems to give students feedback on their learning.

I spoke at a fundraiser from Tutorpedia- a non profit tutoring company run by my nephew Seth. It was great for me to help out family and see his Mom(my sister) and Mario and Jim(SF principal) attended as well.

Lots of interesting people who were there were involved in education at some level, whether it be running mentoring programs or starting ed tech companies.

A friend of Charlie Euchner wrote a book on the 1963 march in DC. He talked about the “ordinary heros” that made the civil rights movement a success. We always hear about the leaders but it was all the people on the ground that made things happen. The “professional activists” got the press but it was committed everyday citizens that helped the movement turn the corner.

A great quote from the book was that, everyone prepared to be a hero- we must all be ready when we get called. I love the saying as a guide for our students. Lets prepare them all to be heros so they are ready whenever an opportunity arises.

It’s a good mantra for our work.

Two interesting books

Academically Adrift by Josipa Roska

As many of us has been saying, there is not much value added to the students after 4 years of college. It

is one of the many reasons we have started College Unbound.

The book did pre/post tests and interviews to show that no significant improvements will be made in the areas of critical thinking, complex reasoning, writing, etc.

Unschooling Rules by Clark Aldrich

An easy quick read that supports our work.

Some chapter headings:

The future is portfolios not transcripts

Internships, apprenticeships and interesting jobs beat term papers, text books and tests.

Learn to be; learn to do; learn to know.

What a person learns in a classroom is how to be a person in the classroom.

Animals are better than books about animals.

Time to fly home!

Dennis

From Elliot

This week the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation did their final site visit at MetEast. Tim and Carlos were there along with Camden district people, MetEast students, mentors, and parents. The reaction of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation to the school and the work of Big Picture were overwhelmingly positive. After coming to the Met and seeing a



mature school that has been around for almost 15 years, they wanted to see a school that was not the first one but rather a school in a tough city that has been around for a while. Would they see the BPL distinguishers in place? The same culture? The interests of each and every student addressed? Great results? These visitors walked away feeling the design transferred as a transformational experience for students.

Years ago, the Gates Foundation was upset that we were going to Camden. It was not part of their strategy for school developers to go to places that they deemed were too difficult. And yet, where else but places like Camden could we do the most for students and community? I’m glad we were tough on our decision and we persevered. Over the years, we had great coaching from David Bromley and others and great leadership from, at that time, a very young Tim

Jenkins. Everyone put their heart and soul into this work and we collectively developed and sustained a school now in its 7th year with the chance to support the bigger picture work in Camden through middle school and high school turnarounds. No matter what happens with the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, we did what we had to do and it can't be denied.

This week I was also in Oakland - yet another place we were told not to go. MetWest is in its ninth year and has an outstanding track record. While many small schools are closing in Oakland, we are thriving. As Greg told me, our school is influencing the entire city with a citywide internship program being instituted by the mayor of Oakland. A new school is being built to house MetWest and the staff meeting I went to was as vigorous as if it were in its first year. What a great staff! All this goes to show that if we stay with doing the right thing, the right thing happens.

Yesterday, Dennis and I met for a full day. We usually meet in places where no one else is so we don't get interrupted. It was a great meeting. We have been having these types of meetings for 20 years and looking back to some of the first ones, we really accomplished what we set out to do. Now we are at a next step and as the world has finally caught up with at least some of our thinking in using technology, we are at a crossroads in figuring out our next best strategies for influence and scale. The timing of events is important and there are lots of changes, not so much in school structures and about learning, but in how policy is carried out and by whom. Foundations now play a different role in reform. They wield tremendous power like they never did before in education. They are operational with goals and objectives rather than grant-driven by people who are doing the work on the ground. They are in the middle of the political battles going on around the country and have narrowed their focus on what constitutes a quality education for each and every student. The accessibility of information has made so many non-practitioner and researchers experts at least on paper of learning, education and schools which to the surprise of so many is still a practice and not a game on a computer or a set of algorithms. We are in the midst of changes where data and studies set policy without a proven practice. Historians and accountants who absolutely should play a role are now in-charge of lots of policy decisions. The actual practices of developing schools that are about each and every have taken a back seat in terms of setting the agenda. Of course, some of this will change. It's a question of who will be bold enough to step up and call out lots of the tumult we are experiencing. That's what the meeting was about. Where do we fit

in the next 20 years? How do we take what we now and influence more students, staff, and policy?

In the middle of writing this TGIF Charlie sent along an email from education journalist John Merrow. His email is below. We are feeling the same way John does. Not only is there a lack of journalists there is a lack of practitioners who understand, live and accurately report the realities of what is going on.

The 900-lb. presence in education

In a post on his Taking Note blog, John Merrow writes that he has participated in balanced coverage of Teach for America, on PBS's NewsHour, in a web-based series, and in his new book. He's in neither of two large camps -- those who love TFA, and those who detest/fear/suspect it. "The middle can be lonely, by the way," he adds. He relates how in shooting a segment for the NewsHour about TFA in New Orleans, he and his crew amassed enough footage for a full-length documentary. "By year's end, we had some terrific material, and at that point I began looking for money," he recounts. He made the rounds of foundations and individuals with an interest in teacher education, and pitched the project: "seven profiles, lots of good video of the nitty-gritty of the life of a first- or second-year teacher." Yet he found no one wanted a mixed representation, part resounding successes, part flops, part some who fell in the middle. Funders wanted either wholly negative or wholly positive portrayals of TFA. "It's a shame that the world of teacher training has become so political," Merrow observes. "There's no question that Wendy Kopp and Teach for America have changed the landscape and made a significant contribution. But let's not pretend that it's all good or all bad."

Read more: <http://takingnote.learningmatters.tv/?p=4854>

Next week, I'm in Los Angeles and Denver. I'll be working with Ted Fujimoto on a site visit to Film and Theater Arts with facilities backers and for the Right to Succeed Campaign. I'll also make a presentation to the Chamber of Commerce in LA about our work. Then, off to Denver for a competency based conference to see what is up. Most of the work I'm assuming is the dressing but no animated body to put the work into to move into a non-seat-time space. We'll see.

Enjoy the weekend!



Calling All Student Artists

2011 SuperCalendar Cover Contest

Last year's SuperCalendar was made more special by the original artwork by our first annual contest winner - **Miriam Turner from Community Connects High School in Lisbon, CT.** We are pleased to announce our second annual contest for the cover of the 2011 SuperCalendar.

This contest is open to all students in the Big Picture Learning network -and this year, the network will also be choosing the winner by voting on submitted designs!

If a student's artwork is chosen, it will be printed as the cover of the SuperCalendar which goes to more than 5000 people worldwide! This is a great opportunity for students to get their art in the world - you never know who's going to see a SuperCalendar! The winning student's name and school will be prominently featured in the SuperCalendar.

Entries must be sent to Rodney by April 11th. Web voting will begin on April 20th and close on April 29th. The winner will be announced by May 6th.

To have your artwork considered, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The design must be original and created by the student submitting it for consideration.
2. The design must include the Big Picture Learning logo in some form which can be downloaded in several forms (<http://www.bigpicture.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/logo-collection.zip>). Hand-drawn logo is totally fine! The words 'SuperCalendar 2011-2012', and the Big Picture Learning website - www.bigpicture.org must also be included.
3. Sizing for artwork must be 7.75 inches wide and 11.25 inches high.
4. Any photography or digital artwork must be 300 dpi for print purposes.
5. For non-digital artwork, please scan the originals and send to Rodney via email. If non-digital artwork is selected as the winner, we will work with the artist to convert it for the cover.
6. Deadline for submission is Midnight on April 11th. You must email your submission to Rodney Davis (rdavis@bigpicturelearning.org) and include your name, grade, school and advisor contact information.

Questions? Need Clarification?
Email Rodney at rdavis@bigpicturelearning.org!