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## OF NOTE

**Are We Doing What We Say We Do?**

*The Disadvantages of an Elite Education*, by William Deresiewicz

Doing a double take at the title is just the beginning of asking yourself to think deeply and differently while reading this opinion piece by William Deresiewicz for *The American Scholar*, the magazine of the Phi Beta Kappa Society. The author takes up an argument that looks at both advantages and disadvantages of schooling in an elite environment. And he should know... his own Ivy League education is one of the many warrants he carefully delineates in defense of his hypothesis: that an elite education limits, narrows, deceives, and misguides those who are inside the gates at exclusive institutions. Examined in light of its impact on society, economics, humanistic understanding, inclusion, and thinking, the place of privilege comes up short for Deresiewicz. The article compels us to take a look at the student who is packing in AP courses, filling a resume, and becoming "the kid whom everyone wants at their college but no one wants in their classroom." The author asks if we are helping students ask the big questions and reach beyond analytic thinking skills to work hard at what they believe in and to love learning in its broadest and most humane definition.

Elizabeth Morley, Institute of Child Study, Toronto, Canada

*The American Scholar*, Summer 2008

## ARTICLES, BLOGS, AND OTHER MEDIA

**Flip the Paradigm**

*Reverse Instruction: Dan Pink and Karl's 'Fisch Flip*, by Jonathan Martin

Instructional exchanges in many 1:1 schools often resemble those that occur in their non-1:1 counterparts. Instead of printing out papers, students email them to their teachers; instead of taking notes in notebooks, they take notes in a word processing program; teachers post their old handouts online. More efficient? Yes. Revolutionary? Not really. In a recent blog post from the excellent *Connected Principals* (<http://www.connectedprincipals.com/>), Jonathan Martin presents "reverse instruction," a gloriously simple and potentially school bending model available to technologically inclined schools. Teachers reverse instruction by using online resources to deliver content - think lectures and skill modeling - for homework. Class time, on the contrary, helps students process and apply what they have learned at home. That we often ask students to do their most important problem solving away from the collaborative possibilities afforded by the classroom is undeniable. Martin's generously hyperlinked piece nudges us to look carefully at this institutional habit and ask if it really is the best way.

Stephen J. Valentine, The Montclair Kimberley Academy, Montclair, NJ

*Connected Principals*, November 7, 2010

**The Myth that Social Media Promotes Social Change**

*Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted*, by Malcolm Gladwell

(only part of this article is available without purchase)

Gladwell challenges the prevailing notion that technology has the power to foment large-scale social change. He compares the role of direct action, such as the sit-ins of the Civil Rights era, with the so-called electronic Twitter Revolutions that have happened in places like Moldova and Iran. Looking at successful activist movements over time, he notes patterns that differ starkly from social media, such as the power of strong ties and the need for visible hierarchy versus the anonymous, non-hierarchical relationships (what he terms "weak ties") that typify electronic social networks. The implications for school leaders ethically committed to change are tremendous. If Gladwell's premise is correct, then the "lunch counters" of poverty, disease and political inequality will require human action rather than virtual attention. In other words, do our students recognize that these problems will never be solved unless they can distinguish the different impacts of direct versus virtual action? Over time, relying on the weak ties that characterize electronic social networks will be insufficient for real social change.

Bruce Shaw, Essex, MA

*The New Yorker*, October 4, 2010

**Can Professional Development Transcend Superficial Benefit?**

*Professional Development at a Crossroads*, by Stephen Sawchuk

Do professional development programs matter? According to this special report in *Education Week*, the field of professional development has "tolerated a lot of sloppy thinking, practice and results" with little attention to outcomes. Two articles included in the report may be of interest to independent school educators. Bess Keller describes current approaches to professional development derived from observing teachers that get outstanding results. Stephen Sawchuk provides an update on research on professional development noting that evidence on what works is sparse since few studies use scientifically rigorous methodologies. One shot workshops have little staying power. Only substantial investment of time - between 30 and 100 hours - was correlated with positive achievement gains. On site professional development appears to be effective if it is sustained over time, includes formal protocols, a leadership structure to guide meetings and a process for solving problems. Overall, the report indicates professional development efforts would benefit from more systematic approaches that consider goals and measure outcomes more rigorously.

Pearl Rock Kane, Klingenstein Center, NY

*Education Week v. 36 no. 11*, November 10, 2010

## BOOKS

**The Shoe is on the Other Foot**

*Catching Up or Leading the Way, American Education in the Age of Globalization*, by Yong Zhao

As the American education system seems to overemphasize high-stakes testing and standardization, a mainstay of the Chinese system for centuries, China is reforming its system to be more like their American counterparts. In this book, Yong Zhao, a University Distinguished Professor in the College of Education at Michigan State and a product of the "creativity-reducing and conformity-producing Chinese educational system," provides a unique perspective on the current education reforms in both the United States and China. He argues in his preface that, "what China wants is what America is eager to throw away - an education that respects individual talents, supports divergent thinking, tolerates deviation, and encourages creativity; a system in which the government does not dictate what students learn or how teachers teach." *Catching Up or Leading the Way* is a valuable addition to the discourse about globalization, technology, and education reform. The irony of the critique and the cultural contrasts provide American educators much to talk and debate about.

Paul Erickson, Nichols School, Buffalo, NY

Ed.M Candidate, The Klingenstein Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, NY

ASCD, 2009

**When Adults Act Like Children**

*Relating to Adolescents: Educators in a Teenage World*, by Susan Eva Porter

Over the past decades, the line between adults and teens has blurred. In this incendiary "hot zone," schools become vulnerable when adults act like teenagers by gossiping, flirting, crossing boundaries, undermining authority, regressing to immature behaviors, or defaulting to an "us vs. them" attitude that is hostile to school leaders and other teachers. Porter writes about the importance of modeling seven growth-up skills, among which include self-control/self-mastery and ability to deal with conflict. Teenagers need adults to be adults by relating to them rather than identifying with them: they need adult friendliness rather than adult friendship. Porter provides a list of "Do's and Don'ts" that govern the behavior between adults and teens at school. Porter's best insight, which may burst the bubble of adults vying for kids' adulation, is that "teenagers aren't really interested in us beyond our interest in them."

Pat Bassett, National Association of Independent Schools, DC

Bruce Shaw, Essex, MA

*Rowman & Littlefield Education*, March, 2009

**A New Way of Studying Innovation**

*Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*, by Steven Johnson

Do today's schools squelch the development of new ideas, or do they foster an environment that breeds innovation effortlessly? Educators interested in creating and sustaining a space for innovative minds to grow will appreciate Steve Johnson's *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*. Johnson examines this "space" by presenting a cross-disciplinary investigation into how good ideas have flourished in their respective (but very divergent) domains. He examines this generative impulse in both the human and natural world as well, focusing on quirky discoveries and moments in history. His results are presented in a discussion of seven patterns that help organize the knowledge into specific categories. Displaying the importance of concepts like competition, connectivity, and openness, Johnson shows the power of ideas that "collide," "emerge," and "recombine." As we consider how to employ resources that facilitate the curriculum development for our schools, this text can provide a less orthodox approach and greater inspiration to help build more fertile ground for innovation.

Kai Bynum, Belmont Hill School, MA

Ed.M Candidate, The Klingenstein Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, NY

*Riverhead Books*, New York 2010

**A Latter Day Studs Terkel for Educators**

*Conversations with Great Teachers*, by Bill Smoot

Bill Smoot, an English teacher at the Castilleja School in Palo Alto, has followed in the spirit of Studs Terkel to compile a series of interviews with great teachers in almost every walk of life, including fields that will be unfamiliar to the reader. Smoot seeks to capture the universal underpinnings that animate that mysterious mixture of art, science, and intuition that every effective teacher brings to his or her classroom. As these teachers try to describe the ways that they bring their students to understanding, whether that understanding is of history, surgery, acting or prison counseling, one cannot help but be moved by their creativity and passionate commitment, the timeless quality of their work even in a profession so bound by time. A highlight of the text is the lovely introduction to the collection that is itself a great tribute to the complex and consuming art of teaching.

Stephanie Lipkowitz, Albuquerque Academy, NM

*Indiana University Press*, 2010

**A One Stop Shop for Service Learning Programs**

*The Complete Guide to Service Learning*, by Cathryn Berger Kaye

In Kaye's comprehensive step-by-step guide to developing a service learning curriculum, the author supplies concrete and practical advice on how to ensure student connection to the curriculum when designing service-learning projects. The book is accompanied by a CD with downloadable forms for use in the classroom that help students plan, reflect and learn from their experiences. The book clearly differentiates between community service and service learning and helps to identify some of the more common challenges to developing a meaningful service learning curriculum. As our service learning programs continue to become an integral part of school life, this book provides a fully tested set of activities, methods, and interviews with experts in a burgeoning field where we often lack the resources to test and sustain good programs.

Eric Temple, The Carey School, CA

*Free Spirit Publishing*, 2010

**In The Lion's Den, Again, with a New Resource**

*Gender, Bullying, and Harassment: Strategies to End Sexism and Homophobia in Schools*, by Elizabeth J. Meyer

Schools and universities have registered national conversations about school climates and ways of making our schools safe for all students in light of recent alarming statistics. It is clear that educators and administrators need to respond with a greater sense of urgency. An instructor at McGill University and a researcher at the Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance at Concordia University in Montreal, Meyer also has experience as an educator in secondary schools. Horrified by what she saw from both in relation to sexism and homophobia, Meyer directed her research to address how these phobias translate into bullying and harassment. In addition to providing strategies, her text neatly provides definitions for terms such as bullying, sexual harassment, sexual-orientation harassment, and harassment because of gender nonconformity; an overview of the legal issues involved in addressing gender and harassment; and a complete set of resources for schools to refer to in creating new policies and practices. Meyer's research offers educators a real opportunity to take action with approaches that will transform not only school cultures but also transform our students' lives.

Ileana Jimenez, Elizabeth Irwin School, New York

*Teachers College Press*, 2010

**Balancing Life in the Age of Tweet**

*Hamlet's BlackBerry: A Practical Philosophy for Building a Good Life in the Digital Age*, by William Powers

In *Hamlet's BlackBerry*, William Powers is far from condemning our increasing dependence on technology; he is technology's advocate and apologist, reaching back in time to offer examples which should calm our fears about the latest threats to civilized society. Did the advancement of print culture once portend that storytelling would be lost, and with it human memory? Perhaps, but we are still here, arguably the better for having both technologies at our disposal and the facility to move between them at will. What Powers exhorts us to remember is that we need to exercise this will, thus ensuring that technology remains a healthy part of a balanced life. This book is indeed practical in that it helps the reader gain a better perspective on the force that compels humans, as Powers says, "to connect outward, to answer the call of the crowd," and also offers insight into the value of being alone with one's thoughts.

Stephanie J. Hull, Ph.D., The Brearley School, NY

*Harper Collins*, 2010

To submit comments or suggestions, or to request that the newsletter be sent to a colleague, contact Adele Tonge, Communications Manager at [Klingbrief@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:Klingbrief@tc.columbia.edu).

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