

The Real Work of Young Minds

Lively Minds: Distinctions between academic versus intellectual goals for young children, by Lilian G. Katz

"Lively Minds" takes up exactly the question that causes heated, lengthy and as yet unresolved debates in schools, parent associations, academia and families: what is the appropriate emphasis on academic learning for young children? Lilian Katz speaks with passion and recognized acuity, and therefore, a new article by her both excites and challenges those who teach. Here, Katz makes a helpful distinction between academic goals and intellectual goals, as she speaks unequivocally about the costs of the banal, trivial, shallow, or premature work that she often sees in programs for young children. She is a fierce advocate of nurturing in our classrooms the life of the young mind and its intellectual capacity to reason, predict, analyze, and question. These are all skills a teacher can foster and deepen through effective programming and knowledgeable understanding. Katz rejects the "earlier is better" academic camp in preschool pedagogy and promotes instead the longer term benefits of children's lively minds being actively engaged in meaningful investigation, hypothesis building, analysis of ideas, and a quest for understanding every day, in every class.

Elizabeth Morley, Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, ON, Canada

Defending the Early Years, April, 2015

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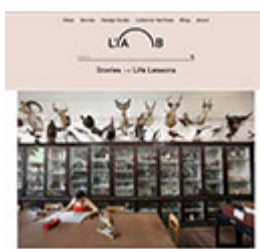
Playing with Fire

The Value of Wild, Risky Play: Fire, Mud, Hammers and Nails, by Eric Westervelt

"The Value of Wild, Risky Play: Fire, Mud, Hammers and Nails" from NPR Ed includes an interview with documentary director Erin Davis whose film, *The Land*, explores the adventure playground movement. Her documentary, a clip of which is available at the end of the article, focuses in particular on a Welsh playground that features all the elements modern parents work so hard to keep out of our children's lives - fire, tools, nails, and lots of sharp edges. The emergence of these kinds of playgrounds speaks not only to the natural impulse to take risks that all young people have, but also to the benefits of allowing that impulse to flourish. As Davis says in the interview, "[Children] have the play drive. It's up to us to . . . provide the kinds of opportunities for them to really follow through on it." While widespread adoption of this model in American schools or communities seems highly unlikely in the short term, this documentary and the movement it chronicles raise some much-needed questions about the way we conceive of play, freedom and risk in modern times, and whether, in our quest for maximum safety, we've forfeited valuable opportunities for our children's growth.

Matt Micciche, Friends School of Baltimore, MD

NPRED, April 3, 2015



A Different Kind of Maker Space

RISD's Edna Lawrence Nature Lab plays host to a world of creative inspiration, by Anna Carnick and Josephine Sittenfeld

The Rhode Island School of Design has been the home for many years to The Edna Lawrence Nature Lab, where students can interact with all manner of natural specimens - bat hands, jelly fish, porcupine quills, petrified wood - in a completely unmediated way. The lab is a truly interdisciplinary environment where students of design, science, fine arts, and technology come to find inspiration and innovative ways of looking at design and problem solving. In her write-up, Josephine Sittenfeld outlines the philosophy of the nature lab, underlining how it has evolved over the years and the ways in which it functions as a kind of bridge between the past and the future. Currently, it serves not only as a collection preserving specimens from the natural world, but also as a different kind of "Maker" space for students looking to design and innovate in a wide array of fields. As such, it can easily serve as a model for creative work in independent schools of all kinds, and it inspires as a place of hands-on learning for students across disciplines and grade levels.

Stephanie Lipkowitz, Albuquerque Academy, NM

Larcobalanco website, August 27, 2013



The Biology of Resilience

What Makes a Resilient Mind, by Karen Brown

Karen Brown focuses her research on an extreme situation: a woman who grew up in an abusive household and who, as an adult, was kidnapped and then held captive in unthinkable conditions for over a year in Somalia. This piece, done for *Nova*, explores the brain science around resilience. What mixture of conditions, it asks - genetic, biochemical, and social - combines to allow humans who have suffered trauma of any kind to bounce back and even thrive? Researchers are moving beyond psychological studies while they collect saliva samples and conduct fMRIs, consider genetic make-up and look at social support systems. They are finding that interrelationship itself impacts behavior and this conclusion has consequences for schools. Every student struggles with some level of stress and many will experience trauma at some point in their schooling. An expert at the University of Minnesota now considers resilience more "a process than a state of being," one that depends on the surrounding systems working well. Schools need to be intentional about devising those systems and they need to be powerful enough even to sustain those whose situations become more extreme. Strong social networks, mindfulness training, yoga and meditation seem to be key components in reducing the biological effects of stress and enabling most people to live lives we would characterize as resilient.

Bruce Shaw, Bruce A Shaw Consulting, MA

Nova Next, January 14, 2015



Resilient Transitions

Ascending to the C-suite, McKinsey Insights

According to NAIS research findings and data on the growth of international schools, we are in the midst of major leadership transitions in the headship. Transitioning school heads and those whose careers have been accelerated by vacated positions along the career ladder often have little guidance as they move into their roles, but there is much that can be gleaned from research on transitions in other fields. A recent study of over 600 business executives indicated that effective transitions are purposeful and focused. Most important, and most difficult to carry out, is identifying strategic priorities and then aligning the organization to create a shared vision of those priorities. Assessing the culture and developing an executive team with trusting relationships is a precursor to carrying out such priorities. In the most successful transitions, leaders build buy-in and communicated a vision to their team and their organization. Most transitioning leaders made few changes in the executive team they inherited. Where changes were necessary, in hindsight, they said they would move faster. Those who made effective transitions also took time to prepare themselves for the personal demands of the job. Given the high cost of failed transitions to both the organization and the individual, the findings of the study "to be purposeful in setting strategic priorities, understanding the culture, building a team, and preparing oneself" are instructive.

Pearl Rock Kane, The Klingenstein Center, NY

McKinsey & Company website, April 2015



Flat Screens, Super Teachers, Technicians, and You

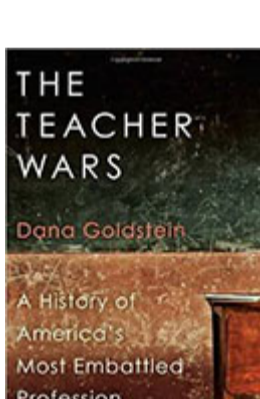
The Destruction of the K-12 Teacher, by Michael Godsey

Godsey's article joins the conversation about the internet age and its vast implications for education, and while he focuses on public schools, his ideas are equally applicable to and relevant for the independent sector. Educators will want to stay abreast of the dialogue as we both reflect on and anticipate changes to teaching and learning in the age of information. Godsey writes provocatively about a time - just five or ten years away, he says - when the teacher will be replaced by a large flat screen, beaming in lessons from "super teachers," so that only a technician will be needed to troubleshoot the technology. Forgetting about the power of a workshop or studio approach, modeling, student-led inquiry, constructivism and project-based learning, Godsey polarizes the conversation around the old and the new, lamenting the loss of the content-expert teacher and decrying his replacement, the computer screen. This is a familiar argument and educators will recognize both Godsey's fear mongering and his fallacy of the student as recipient of knowledge. Still, as a philosophical exercise or thought experiment, Godsey's concerns challenge us to hone our explanations regarding the centrality of the student-teacher relationship, the dynamic and discursive classroom, and the ongoing necessity of active learning in our schools.

Meghan Tally, American School in London

The Atlantic, March 2015

BOOKS



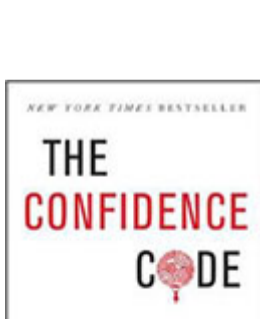
Knowing Our Past

The Teacher Wars: A History of America's Most Embattled Profession, by Dana Goldstein

Dana Goldstein's lively history of teaching, from the earliest days of the common school movement to the present battles over measuring success, allows the sweep of the profession's development to scan. Those who care about teachers can benefit from understanding the history of teaching and Goldstein combines an engaging exegesis of the main themes of this history with stories of some of its main characters, from Horace Mann to Randi Weingarten. While Goldstein, a journalist whose work has appeared in *The Atlantic* and *Slate*, is far from objective in her recounting of these 175 years of history, she is also courageous and pragmatic enough to offer some suggestions for the future. It is instructive to know that there are echoes of the past disputes of Adams and Jefferson, as well as Booker T. Washington and Dubois, present in our modern day educational struggles with issues of race, gender and class. Likewise, anyone interested in TFA should know of its earlier model in the National Teacher Corps, and anyone troubled by the inertia opposing change and the repeating patterns in all reform efforts would benefit from first understanding our historical foundations.

John Gulla, Edward E. Ford Foundation, NY

Doubleday, 2014



Confidence as Competency

The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance - What Women Should Know, by Katty Kay & Claire Shipman

Katty Kay & Claire Shipman, the same authors who gave us *Womenomics*, argue that girls are taught at an early age to be "good." School instructs us to work hard, be agreeable and be quiet. Unfortunately, while women are more educated than ever before, they spend hours agonizing over whether they are good enough. Of the multiple senior-level women interviewed in this book, nearly all expressed feelings of self-doubt. The authors identify this as the "confidence gap." In direct contrast to their male counterparts, women must know every aspect of their job before they feel confident. While science supports some genetic predisposition toward confidence, it can be learned and practiced. Confidence is the "great enabler," the stuff that turns thoughts into action. Perfectionism, its antagonist, prohibits decision-making, risk taking and mistake making. Women need to place themselves into the "broader human condition" and both expect and accept personal failure in their lives. Mistakes represent opportunity, not the end of our careers. We are being dared to think less and to act more. It would be wise for us to share this insight with the next generation of glass-ceiling breakers.

Patricia Burns, Ed.M. Candidate, The Klingenstein Center, Teacher College, Columbia University, NY

HarperBusiness, April 15, 2014

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