

## Find the Jungle in School

Abstract: This academic paper was written for the Dialogues in the Humanities, HUMN 2440, capstone class, with Professor Michael Konsmo. The theme of this class was to write a paper that conveys how storytelling is relevant to humanities. Since storytelling is used as a means of education, I chose to discuss how teaching needs to be wild because learning is dangerous. I propose that teaching has become a standards-based model and how it needs to change so that teaching is wild and students voyage into an adventure of learning opportunities. I explain a brief history of the American education system and how the United States has come to today's education system. As well, I discuss how non-western cultures are working to make teaching wild and learning dangerous. I argue that for all aspects of learning to occur, the whole child needs to be taught, and that teachers need to fulfill multiple roles and prepare students for their futures. Through various academic sources, I support my argument that teaching needs to be innovative to ensure optimal learning for students; educating children is not just about giving them knowledge, but also: guiding them through learning; teaching academic, emotional, and social intelligences; and being a positive person that influences them throughout their entire lives.

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Textbooks can no longer solely educate America's youth. The purpose of education and teaching in America has cycled through reform, and today reform has changed education to a standards-based model. *The American Public School Teacher*, a book dedicated to research on past, present, and future schools and teachers, states, "Our nation has succeeded in building the most extensive school system in the world" (Drury and Baer 3). This extensive system creates scholars, engineers, teachers, businessmen, electricians, welders, and fast food workers. However, the controversy about the American school system is that teaching – and the means of teaching – the future generation does not address the needs of students. Students are expected to meet high standards, achievements gaps are attempting to be vigorously closed by educators, and teaching the whole child is slowly being forgotten.

There is a problem with standards-based and test-centered education. Although these forms of education require teachers to have high expectations and standardized tests show students' strengths and weaknesses, they have pushed away student-centered education and have narrowed curricula. Teachers must try to reach around the emphasis of creating the "above-average, perfect" student and above-average assessment scores and teach the whole child. To ensure optimal student learning, teachers must teach academic course content as required by standards while strengthening emotional and social competency because this allows the students to develop to their full potential in all aspects of school and life. Academic skills and knowledge combined with the nonacademic skills acquired in the classroom, the impact that teachers have on students and learning, and the interactions between peers provide students with the attitude to lead their own successful lives. Teaching is not a means of providing facts for students to memorize, but rather transferring knowledge, guiding students through learning, preparing students for their futures.

There is a great need for teaching to remain wild because learning is dangerous. David Rigoni, author of *Teaching What Can't be Taught*, and Jay Parini, author of *The Art of Teaching*, discuss this untamed side of education. Rigoni states that learning is nowhere near being one dimensional; it is definitely not an organized instillation of academic knowledge into long-term memory where it can be recalled at a moment's notice any time after it was "learned." However, learning is dangerous. "It changes the way we see things; it causes us to view the world through uncomfortable new lenses...The results [of learning] took me in directions and changed me in ways I could have never anticipated" (Rigoni 9). Students need to experience this kind of learning. They should feel the lawlessness of creating their own opinions, dreams, imaginations, and futures. Similarly, Parini argues that the wildness of teaching is diminishing. Educating students is not just studying texts, taking notes, and then grading exams. From his own teaching experience and what he discovered about how a writer becomes a teacher from writing a biography on Robert Frost, Parini has concluded:

[Being educated] Is having a stance toward this material, a tone, a manner of address, that matters more...Frost gave the class something they could take with them out into the world...He gave them a way of being in the world, too, that involved making endless connections...which he saw laying at the heart of human intellectual enterprise. (88)

Teaching is wild, and teachers must not be afraid to jump into the fray. Teachers must adapt their teaching "norms" to reach all students, engage students in learning, take chances, be creative, and invent an environment where students will propel.

Federal and state government has made it difficult for teachers to keep the "wild" in schools. Because of the push for high achievement by government at the end of the twentieth century and in the twenty-first, teachers are required to teach for the proficient academic student-

learning outcomes. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act was signed and in 2002 was implemented and has led to a decline of classroom experience for many students because teachers lack freedom in their own classrooms. According to the New York State Education Department, No Child Left Behind consists of a three-part formula:

- (1) By the year 2014, all students must be performing in reading, mathematics, and science at the “proficient” level; (2) in each school each year, student “adequate yearly progress” must increase at such a rate that 100% proficiency would be met by 2014; and (3) the annual rate of progress applies not only to the aggregate student enrollment of a school, district, or state but also to “disaggregated” groups of students according to income, race, gender, English language ability, and special education status. If any of the groups are below expected progress rates, the entire school is considered “failing” and in need of improvement to be realized through presidential sanctions. (74)

Schools and teachers are now being held accountable for students’ scores on the standardized tests measuring proficiency. This creates a fear of losing government funding, causing teachers to vigorously work towards high test scores. Government does not control the experience or teaching methods that occur in classrooms, however. No Child Left behind cannot be a teacher’s excuse for limiting the learning opportunities for students.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was a bold and momentous action taken to better the education of the United States. However, as a result of its stringent laws, the schooling of many students has suffered and many teachers are restricted from teaching the whole child. NCLB is leaving behind children. Some argue that focusing on test scores hinders students who are proficient because teachers do not need to show more progress. Likewise, students who score low on standardized tests tend to be ignored because it is expected that they will not reach

proficiency. Teachers are focusing their attention on students who are not proficient but are within an achievable level to proficiency. The business model of education cannot work. All students cannot produce the same levels of learning and will not all be at the same stage of cognitive development; humans are not manufactured and wired identically, but rather each has a unique composition, especially their abilities to learn. Some standards are unrealistic for some students to achieve. Special education students are being expected to perform at the same level as a typical student. The consequence of teaching to test is that curriculum and teaching strategies are narrowing. As well, subjects or skills that are not measured on standardized tests are receiving little attention (Lembo). Although NCLB could punish future education and does limit teachers, teachers can still perform the art of teaching: guiding children; stirring up ambitions to learn; and helping students carve their futures. Teachers need to be wild and show students the untamed side of learning.

“Wild” teachers leave imprints on the hearts on minds of their students. These teachers fulfill multiple roles besides instilling knowledge in students, and serve a much more important purpose in the lives of children. A child will spend almost as much time with his or her teacher as with a caregiver; this makes it vital to be a positive influence. According to the authors of “Intergenerational Bonding in Schooling: The Behavioral and Contextual Correlates of Student-Teacher Relationships,” teachers serve as mentors, models, and supporters to their students (Crosnoe, Kirkpatrick Johnson, and Elder 61). In the book *Supporting the Whole Child*, the role of the teacher is to transfer responsibility, teach how to navigate a subject, encourage discussion, prepare students for the future, teach morals and character, and influence and know their students (Scherer). Kathleen A.J. Mohr and Eric S. Mohr state teacher roles are to welcome class discussion and motivate outspokenness, to be an active transporter of knowledge while

supporting students' active learning, direct classroom discourse, and clarify questions that hone into facts (K. Mohr and E. Mohr). These professional actions and conduct model exemplar behavior for students to follow; if a student does not have a positive role model at home, at least they are guaranteed to have one at school. When teachers have an important role in the students' lives, students will leave class with much more than subject matter; they will know what it is like to have a good role-model in their lives and how to be a role-model to others.

Inspiration is the key that motivates students to open the door to their own learning. Students are in control of their own learning because teachers do not have the power to force subjects into the brains of children and expect them to learn. Jonathan C. Erwin states in his book, *Inspiring the Best in Students*, that, "No matter how skilled the instructor or how engaging the lesson plans, learning – a change in perception or behavior – must originate from within the mind and heart of the student" (128). Teachers must first arouse a student's desire to learn, convey the context in a manner that students will understand and learn, and capture the attention of students to teach for effective student learning. Teachers must provide the spark that students will use to ignite their learning.

Students need to have motivation to fulfill their own need to know and understand, be aesthetic, and discover self-actualization. In the book *Supporting the Whole Child*, a touching story illustrates the importance of motivation. An athlete from an emerging country, a country where elite athletic training was unavailable, qualified to compete in the 2004 summer Olympics in swimming. As the book tells:

Before he arrived at the Olympic venue, he had never even seen an Olympic-size pool. In his initial heat, he flailed at the water with a stroke so awkward it was painful to watch.

As the race progressed, he was clearly out of breath and gasping for air. Spectators feared

he would drown. Nonetheless, he swam the entire race. Later in an interview, he confirmed that he, too, was afraid for his safety as he swam. “Why did you continue?” asked the interviewer. “Why didn’t you just stop?” Without a pause the young man answered, “Because the people in the stands were clapping so hard for me. I just didn’t want to let them down.” (Scherer 5)

Teachers must motivate students to not want to fail and do their best. Educators need to root hard for students. In terms of baseball, whether a student needs a grand slam or a base-hit, to win his or her game, teachers need to cheer for them to accomplish what they need and can achieve. As well, teachers need to coach them through the process. Those students will not want to give up with such an encouraging coach. Teachers should go on and motivate and inspire because it fuels fires for students to go on, motivate, and inspire their own learning and lives.

Teachers must create interpersonal relationships with each student. According to Jonathan Cohen, author of *Educating Minds and Hearts*, effective teaching “is based on understanding who our students are developmentally, academically, psychologically, and socially. The more we connect with our students, the more effective we are as educators” (118). Teachers must understand their students’ academic strengths and weaknesses, and attune the lessons to fit the learning needs of each student. Arguably the most important aspect of the classroom is the informal, nonacademic relationships formed between teachers and students. Although class size and racial-ethnic compositions of students and teachers affect interpersonal relationships in the classroom, teachers must still bond with their students (Crosnoe, Kirkpatrick Johnon, and Elder 63). When student-teacher relationships are strong, according to research on intergeneration bonding in schools, student outcomes are positively associated with the student-teacher relationships (Crosnoe, Kirkpatrick Johnon, and Elder 71). Teachers need to take the

time to create interpersonal relationships with students. Teachers should listen to students, understand their home lives, show interest in their lives, identify with their interests, and create an emotional connection with them. Teachers have a tremendous power to influence the lives of their students, and to maintain and use that power, they must create that important student-teacher relationship. It is important for these bonds to form so that students receive the benefits that student-teacher relationships are shown to provide.

Teachers need to use their interpersonal relationships with students to guide them to self-discovery. A student should be able to leave school viewing the world with his or her own eyes, taking the content and experiences from the classroom in whatever direction they desire. Jay Parini described that Robert Frost's teaching was a little eccentric and lofty, but one of Frost's best approaches to education which Frost called "teaching through presence." This idea suggested that the most important aspect of a classroom was the informal contacts between the students and teachers. Frost wanted freedom to remain in classrooms, and in a journal wrote, "It is the essence of symposium I am after, heaps of ideas and the subject matter of books purely accidental. I'm looking for subject matter, for substance, in yourself" (86). The teacher is merely the tour guide of content, allowing students the freedom to form their own opinions. When a student-teacher relationship exists, teachers can use what they know about each student and guide them in his or her individual direction. Self-discovery – becoming aware and understanding themselves – occurs when students have the freedom to explore their curiosities and form their own views on their world.

Government and schools have not always immobilized the art of teaching "wildly." The history of the United States' education exposes how America has mistakenly left behind the ideas of student-centered education for standards-based education. In the late eighteenth and the



early nineteenth centuries, the industrial revolution sparked a great yearning for the American people to improve their lives and to ensure a proper future for their next generations. To do this, there needed to be a common philosophy on education's purpose. "New ways of teaching, new courses of study, and new ideas about the purposes of mass education vied for attention" (Reese 78). A vision of education demanded textbooks to be updated to grab the attention of students and for teachers to stop boring students with standard lectures.

Humanitarianism, a major revolution for human and social improvements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, drove activists to promote change to "textbook education," and the child-centered education emerged. This shaping of education was connected to European romanticism. "By the seventeenth century the adjective romantic... referred [to] 'adventure, chivalry, and love,'... added connotations of sentimentality, extravagance, and an appeal to the imagination" (Reese 83). Johann Pestalozzi, a romantic who wrote about education, founded European schools that modeled child-centered beliefs. In Pestalozzi's schools, reading, writing, inspiration, and guidance were "taught" and real-life experiences were connecting students' to their learning. He believed that children should be taught through "things" not "words." For example, Pestalozzi would teach science by taking children to a duck pond to draw and learn about "their innate curiosity about nature" (Reese 88). Pestalozzi wanted teaching to be purely about student learning – academically, socially, and emotionally – not test results.

John Dewey's study of progressive education gave the romantic theories of education validity. Dewey also argued against the belief that education should be subject driven and focus on the quantity of knowledge. He stated that children would rather learn best through "intimate and extensive personal acquaintance... [and] mastering the way of dealing with the problems of experience, not the piling up of information" (Peterson 43). Dewey's philosophy of education

was to improve the lives of Americans; he thought that every child needed to be accepted wholly by his or her teachers and that a child's natural curiosity should compel his or her desire to learn. Through Dewey's methods, cooperative groups were incorporated in classrooms and students' interests were now being taken into consideration. The romanticism of a child-centered pedagogy is an element that allowed learning to be dangerous and teaching to be wild. Students were thinking beyond textbook materials; they were developing powerful minds and skills, not just wise minds. Teachers didn't just teach content; they taught students how to use their academic and nonacademic knowledge and skills in the world. It was a controversial pedagogy, favored by educators and praised by most of the public, philosophers, psychologists, and some political members.

Since the post World War II era, education has shifted to become standards-based. This is mainly because of the emergence of scientific views and measurements, the Intelligent Quotient (IQ) test, and Russia's launching of Sputnik. Human development and achievement became a central emphasis for educational practices; it was seen that educators could produce academic efficiency and it was convinced that students' school performance would surpass that of other countries. In 1958, in response to Sputnik's launch, the U.S. government passed The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) which required schools to strengthen their math, science, and foreign language programs. The intentions of this act were to bring America's academics above the learning levels of other countries (Powell):

They bought millions of new microscopes, telescopes, and other devices for science labs and filled closet upon closet with radios, televisions, and other audio-visual equipment.

The schools justified each purchase as a contribution to national defense or, more

accurately, to the education of those who would be responsible for the country's military strength and resistance to domestic subversion. ("Federal Education Policy...")

There became, as George Counts said, "An orgy of testing that swept through the entire country" (147). Today, teachers are in the frenzy of a standardized tests and standards era. Unfortunately, this has caused many teachers to exclusively teach to test for their students to obtain the desired test results instead of teaching for all dimensions student learning.

Teachers must not get lost in the stress of test-oriented and academic teaching because the futures of students are too important to be ignorant about the rest of student learning. Standards have been created to help meet proficiency on standardized tests. Expectations for *all* students are increased, and teachers are expected to teach so *all* students will score well on the standardized tests. According to the Kamehameha Schools Research and Evaluation Division, "Schools must be transformed in ways that will enable students to acquire the creative thinking, flexible problem solving, collaboration and innovation skills they will need to be successful in work and life" (Pacific Policy 1). Common core standards fail to teach this, so teachers must ensure they are incorporating these skills and knowledge into their classrooms while meeting the required standards. Although teachers must teach core curriculum and meet state and federal standards, they must not forget about teaching social and emotional competency. If standards remain only the focus in classrooms, then the classroom is removed from the wilderness and placed in a more controlled environment like the suburbs; the dangers of learning may seldom arise in an unadventurous place like that. If teachers fall short on teaching more than academic content, then the learning opportunities for students will be limited to only learning subject material.

The dimensions of a human being are not always the perfect 36-24-36. All four dimensions of a human being, the whole child – physical, intellectual, emotional, and social – need to be emphasized in the classroom. If a particular dimension is not adequately developed, then the student may fail with tasks using that dimension. Teachers should, to the best of their ability and the students', emphasize learning in all four areas. Jonathan C. Erwin wrote *Inspiring the Best in Students*, and in it he states:

The human dimension with which schools are primarily concerned is that of intellect... As educators, we fail our students if we don't also address two other important human dimensions: the social and emotional. By intentionally helping students develop those facets of themselves, we will simultaneously improve both their physical and intellectual development. (7)

Schools, as a whole, need to implement social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, or teachers need to include social and emotional learning in their classrooms for this very reason. "SEL programming can positively affect a broad range of student social, health, behavioral, and academic outcomes" (CASEL 2). In other words, implementing social and emotional learning strengthens all four human dimensions. When social and emotional intelligence are disregarded, schools and educators are risking the full development of students. Social and emotional competent students show a decrease in alcohol and drug use, take advantage of learning opportunities, are less disruptive, better their content understanding, make favorable decisions, and show improved cognitive functioning (CASEL 5). Teachers must try to allow each student to reach his or her full potential, and in order to do so, emotional and social development must be stressed in the classroom. The whole child must be taught, otherwise, all possible student learning outcomes will be missed.

Emotions do not come with an operator's manual. Teachers must include lessons that allow students to properly operate their emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence gives people control to power through life. Students with low emotional competency will have difficulties throughout their lives; teachers must strive to prevent this from occurring. Emotional competency, according to Salovey and Grewal, "Matter in almost all areas of life – from career success to being liked by others" (283), thus making incorporating teachings that focus on building emotional strength important. Also, "Relating Emotional Intelligence to Social Competence and Academic Achievement in High School Students," concluded from research that students with high emotional intelligence displayed important positive social and academic outcomes. "Students with high EI tended to be more prosocial and perform better in school. This suggests that integrating lessons on socio-emotional learning in schools might improve students' performance, decrease maladaptive behavior and increase prosocial behavior" (Gil-Olarte Marquez, Palomera Martin, and Brackett 122). Teachers and schools must use this research and act. It is a must to incorporate activities that strengthen emotional awareness like meeting with students individually, teaching thinking skills – decision-making and problem-solving – giving students responsibility and self-managing tasks, and dealing with students' mistakes and discipline appropriately (Cohen 67-72). Proper emotional development needs to occur so students can take charge of their lives and have the skills to recognize and deal with their emotions. If students strengthen their emotional intelligence, according to research, the rest of their schooling will follow a positive trend.

To connect and belong and to love and be loved are a "deep-seated urge" by most. Children who learn strong social skills can grow powerful because positive social development allows productive relationships to be formed with members of society. Teachers must fulfill their

obligation to help develop and strengthen their students' social skills. Social intelligence is defined as exhibiting social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL 1). Vygotsky's studies of socially constructed learning and theory of sociocultural learning is, "As interpreted by educators, fosters students' construction of knowledge, rather than simple acceptance of reception of transferred information" (K. Mohr and E. Mohr 442). Social interactions hold a variety of benefits including enhancing comprehension, developing critical thinking skills, fostering communication skills, creating interpersonal relationships with peers, and preparing students for interacting and participating in society (Hadjioannou 371). There is a great need for social skills to be taught in classrooms because students need to learn to live and cooperate with a democratic society. Social competency, good social skills, and strong, healthy relationships, will improve academic achievement, mental health, and career skills. In the words of Jonathan Erwin, "It is time for educators to teach social skills intentionally, rather than letting it happen by chance" (151). In order to deliberately enhance students' social skills, teachers need to provide community, collaboration, and communication between students and from students to teachers.

Teachers must initiate student connections through social intelligence building activities. Students feel safe when the classroom feels like a community, and community members must be able to express their views and student differences must be accepted (Osher et al. 7). Teachers must establish rules for student collaboration and communication so that students feel socially accepted and safe to participate. Students cannot feel like "outsiders" and be alienated (Hadjioannou 391). According to Kamehameha Schools Research, in the twenty-first century, social relations are in demand, making it extremely important for students to be able to communicate and collaborate with others and accept the differences of a globally diverse

population (Pacific Policy 4). Activities that teach these skills include direct and mediated discussions, group projects, and performance-based projects that can be learned through project-based, problem-based, and design-based learning (Pacific Policy 6-7). A study of eighth grade students proved that “students are more engaged and motivated when they believe that they are encouraged to work collaboratively with peers” (Hadjioannou 374). Collaboration brings learning strengths and weaknesses together so students can learn from each other, and social skill building activities create engaging lessons and active learning. Teachers must incorporate lessons that build on the social skills of students so students have the opportunity to learn communication and collaboration skills. Humans are naturally social beings, and teachers must help students develop and utilize these necessary skills.

Students travel through learning as their gondolier paddles them through it. Student learning is not just the consumption of facts, but rather self-directed discoveries that lay a foundation for lifelong learning. Teaching is not just the transfer of information, but rather the guidance and opening of minds for students to embrace content. A teacher is the guide of each student’s voyage through learning. Together they travel – the expert leading the way – and in the end, they both grow. The travelers master the information from the sites and tours, discover novelties while exploring, build relationships with the guide and other travelers, and find a little of themselves on the trip. The guides discover new ways of telling the stories of the sites and tours, build relationships with each voyager, and lead each to explore the new. The dangers of building minds are always lurking, and so students must go looking for an adventure to find it, and teachers must allow this.

Student learning takes many forms. The teacher’s primary role is to facilitate and guide learning, which may be difficult, but teachers must accommodate to each the learning preference

of each student. The four most prevalent learning modalities are visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic (Powell). In order to meet the United States's push for proficiency while meeting the needs of the students, teachers need to keep in mind students' intelligence differences and learning styles in the classroom. How a student learns in any intelligence depends on the teacher's theory of learning and whether the teacher adapts lessons to each student's learning style. If a student's learning style is not taken into account, then the student will not learn to his or her full potential. It is necessary that students have the opportunity to learn to their maximum capabilities, and to do so they need to be taught in the way they best learn.

If students are not attracted to learning, they will not open their hearts to learn. Student engagement harbors learning. Every student has different interests; therefore, teachers must have a bright, shiny lighthouse that attracts the students to shore. Engagement is what gives content that luring appeal. Teachers must realize that, "Engagement is multidimensional" (Osher et al. 8). Teachers can engage students by peaking their individual interests, incorporating social interactions, and creating appealing activities and lessons that will in return, improve students' understanding of the content (Morzano). According to the book *Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn*, instruction that is relevant to the lives of students – their experiences, goals, backgrounds, values – engages students in learning. Teachers that exhibit engaging classrooms provide:

Instruction that draws on students' preexisting understandings, interests, culture, and real-world experiences can make the curriculum more meaningful to them. Students are also more motivated when they are actively engaged in problem solving and applying new knowledge to real-world problems than when traditional textbooks and worksheets form



the core of instruction. Engagement is relatively high when instruction is varied and appropriately challenging for all students. (National Research Council 213-214)

Students will understand and enjoy learning when they are engaged in the instruction. Teachers must put meaning in subjects and personalize learning for their students.

Teachers are the stepping stones that lead to each student's future. Teachers prepare students for their futures whether it is college, the work force, or family life. However, preparing students for their futures takes a new meaning because of today's digital era. Now, students must know how to be virtual, they must work with a diverse world and in a global marketplace, and have the "new basics" of "communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving" (Berry). The National Education Association (NEA) president Reg Weaver informs teachers about this major role. An NEA report quotes Weaver, "We need to prepare them for the real world, for success in the new industries of tomorrow" (National Education Association). When students reach the end of their path that education paved, the real world will carve the next steps. In order for students live as competent, successful, civic adults, they must learn the twenty-first century skills that will allow them to do so in this technology rich world.

If students are unprepared for the world, it will eat them alive. Technology and information are making revolutionary changes, and teachers need to transform lessons to fit the skills and knowledge needed to prosper in twenty-first century. Available teaching programs include curriculum with, "Desired outcomes within 21<sup>st</sup> century learning frameworks [that] include learning traditional school subject and contemporary content themes in combination with the interdisciplinary 21<sup>st</sup> century themes" (Pacific Policy 2). Core subjects and themes associated with twenty-first century learning skills include civic, financial, health, environmental, and visual literacies and global awareness. Teachers must include the twenty-first century critical

learning and innovation skills of communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, and creativity and innovation. Students need twenty-first century life and career skills like leadership and responsibility, productivity and accountability, social and cross-cultural skills. Educators must teach twenty-first century information, media, and technology skills, unquestionably the most important skills for students to master because of today's technology-rich world. Without learning these skills, students lack basic employability skills. Deloitte Development concurs, and in a study found that eighty percent of employees lack, "attendance, timeliness, and work ethic; problem-solving skills; ability to collaborate; and reading, writing, and communication skills" (Pacific Policy 17). Teachers must move their classrooms into the twenty-first century so students transition into adulthood with the skills to survive in this century. If only academic material continues to be taught, the U.S. will have a plethora of smart, incompetent Americans. Teachers cannot let students wander into the world with only a map and compass; today, they must venture with wilderness expertise, survival skills, and a GPS.

Western education compared to other cultures has not always been congruent. In Chinese society, Confucianism has dominated the education system. Almost 2,500 years ago, Confucianism was adopted, which placed a high value on performance. Confucius ranked knowledge and argument above all "superficial" performances (Gardner 143,145). In recent centuries and decades, Confucianism has continually dominated teaching methods in the Eastern world, pushing away the Taoist philosophy of conducting creativity (Wu and Albanese 150). Today, China is known for their "drill-and-kill teaching style." However, China is making a ground-breaking transformation – extinguishing their traditional teaching methods and adopting problem-based learning (Bronson and Merryman). In 2010, China was ranked as the top country in student academics. Nevertheless, they failed considerably when it came to creativity, ranking

at the bottom of the list (Wu and Albanese 151). In 1989, Howard Gardner stated that America encourages innovation and creativity compared to the stringent, machine-like performing Chinese. U.S. schools were more about socializing, and Chinese schools were more about performance (Gardner 154). In spite of this finding, it seems that China and the United States are switching their education systems – America is obsessing about testing and China is implementing more creativity. If each country would learn from each other's education systems and listen to what is important to strive in the twenty-first century, an eclectic approach could consist of a perfect combination of standards and creativity.

Similarly to China, Singapore is trying less to cram the brains of their students and are starting to let the minds of their students be freed. Instead of imparting knowledge, Singapore teachers want to share their passions. Singapore Minister for Education, Heng Swee Keat says that it is “less about content knowledge, but more about how to process information...discern truths from untruths, connect seemingly disparate dots, and create knowledge even as the context changes” (qtd. in Lim). They want the learning of their students to be fun and active, decrease the emphasis on testing, and change their “grade-driven and high-stress” education system for “holistic education.” They want to align curricula and learning objectives so that this new education approach can also take effect (Lim). China and Singapore seem to be attempting to move in the direction that the world is moving – innovation.

A world lacking creativity would be bland, and other countries are beginning to see this. According to the Newsweek article, “The Creativity Crisis,” China is rushing towards our old model that included creative curriculum and we are moving towards their old model of “drill-and-kill.” In the United States, intelligence test scores are increasing and creativity intelligence test scores are falling. According to 1,500 polled CEOs, creativity is now ranked as the top

“leadership competency” (Bronson and Merryman). Educational Psychologist, Kyung Hee Kim says, “Countries investing in creativity can expect new ways of life and of governance, new materials and tools, and new technologies and occupations that we cannot even begin to imagine” (Encyclopedia Britannica). China and Singapore are reversing the trend of classrooms lacking creativity, and the United States needs to also do something; countries need students who are proficient in creativity and intelligence because creative people are able to be innovative, experiment, and problem solve.

One size fits all does not apply to education. Differentiation is a student-aware method of teaching that educators must adopt to optimize the classroom experience. According to *Teaching for Student Learning*, “Differentiation is the practice of adjusting the curriculum, teaching strategies, assessment strategies, and the classroom environment to meet the needs of all students” (Arends and Kilcher 106). Teachers need to ensure that students will go into the world with the power of knowledge and learning to enrich their lives as life-long learners, and differentiation’s purpose is such. To differentiate lessons, teachers must engage and challenge students, require critical and creative thinking, vary learning opportunities, and balance teacher-assigned and student-selected assignments, projects, tasks, etc. for all students (Arends and Kilcher 110). Teachers differentiating lessons to each student will produce much more desirable and an assortment of student outcomes than teachers who only teach for high test scores. Academic outcomes are content mastery, the ability to test or perform proficiently with the skills and knowledge. Examples of nonacademic outcomes include creativity, cooperation, openness to diversity, self-regulation, tolerance, leadership, and effort. Proficiency in these nonacademic outcomes reflects aptitude for twenty-first century success (Salinas and Garr). In order for

teachers to harvest such diversely intelligent beings, they must teach ideas with a differentiated approach.

An ideal classroom involves a teacher with the ideal pedagogy. Standards must still be implemented with the ideas of a student-centered and teacher-directed education. Reese explains the ideal pedagogy as revolving teacher created lessons around the needs and student-learning so the best learning-outcomes for each individual student are met. Reese writes:

The child should be an active, not passive, learner, that the teacher should be a helpful guide, not master, that the curriculum should adapt to a changing society, not stay lodged in the past, and that something needed to be done about the many incompetent teachers who sent their pupils to sleep. (117)

This is the ideal pedagogy: active students learning from an active teacher. Arends and Kilcher say, “[teachers] Must find ways to meet the demands of the state and district’s formal curriculum, listen to the desires family and community members express for their children, while simultaneously considering foremost the needs of students” (88). Teachers must focus on the three areas of teaching a lesson – knowledge, issues, and student exploration – for an ideal pedagogy (Morzano 177). The knowledge is the content and what standards expect students to know about it. Issues are showing students how to view the content and how to form their own opinions, and exploration allows students to discover interests in the content. High-stakes, standardized tests are not disappearing in the near future. Teachers need to take charge of their classrooms – design intriguing lessons that meet standards, engage student learning, differentiate for each student’s needs, and be guides, models, and motivators for each student.

When students are deep in learning it becomes dangerous. Although government standards hinder freedom for teachers in their own classrooms, it should not shackle teachers

from giving students optimal learning opportunities. Students need more than an intelligent mind; they need emotional and social skills. Furthermore, students need to have been impacted by their educators. Making an impression on the lives of students is an honor and every teacher should strive to do so. They should know their students and touch their lives; the relationships that teachers form with their students do not just impact academics, but also all other parts of their lives. As well, teachers need to motivate and inspire students to want to learn and achieve and move towards their dreams. When students are learning, their minds become dangerous and they become powerful because they are developing their individuality along with their intelligences. Engagement drags students into learning— teachers must make instruction appealing to all students and teach the whole child. To direct instruction for every child, it needs to be differentiated to fit the learning needs of every student. When every student's learning is personalized, just like his or her futures are individualized, academic and nonacademic success is increased. Mind and heart must be taught, not just mind. Teaching needs to be wild so students have the opportunity for dangerous learning; the minds of both teachers and students should always be on an adventure.

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