

If the point of education is developing intelligence and the capacity for creative problem solving and communication, does Common Core get us there?

Isn't the ultimate goal of all education developing intelligence and the capacity for creative problem solving and communication, rather than the recitation of disconnected facts that so often passes as proof of an education, or worse yet, of intelligence?

Do we learn arithmetic for the sole purpose of being able to repeat certain algorithms on command? No. We learn it to be able to use it as a tool to serve some purpose. If we are to be an *intelligent* society then we must accept what educator Howard Gardner once said:

"Intelligence is the flexible use of knowledge for the purpose of creating an effective response to a problem or a challenge that will benefit society."

Therefore the question arises, should developing language and mathematical expertise be the primary focus of our public education system? And does the CCSS lead to the type of intelligence that Gardner alludes to in the quote above? Is it the only, or even the best way to get there?

I believe that the point of all education is to teach for the flexible and creative use of knowledge through real world inquiry and project based education. I believe wholeheartedly in the idea of *making new work*, i.e. creating a product in any discipline, to train the mind. Now in creative problem solving specifically, I support:

- using strategic, disciplined thinking to perceive and analyze the elements of the task at hand;
- exploring and forming connections between these elements;
- experimenting with potential solutions - skillfully using the tools of your profession to transform or vary the ideas of others (learned through collaboration) or to create something completely original; and ultimately
- composing an outcome through one's creative efforts that is viable, effective, useful and, hopefully, inspirational to the receiver of that outcome.

For when the outcome is inspirational, a creative response to that outcome may be fostered in the receiver, and a *cycle of creativity* perpetuated forever.

I am not saying that the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) does not allow for this type of creative problem solving. What I am saying is that it limits the disciplines through which creative problem solving can be taught and places an emphasis on the teaching of English language arts and mathematics that is out of proportion to the diverse interests of the student population and the overall career options of the society as a whole.

Blogs by Niel DePonte

The advantage in transferring the type of creative and critical thinking that is found when making works of art to other disciplines goes well beyond striving for efficiencies in education or creating a superior workforce, assuming you teach for that transfer.

Its real value is found in creating a way of looking at the world: each opportunity; each problem; each encounter with another discipline or another human being in such a way that the promise of exciting revelations, deep learning, rich and textured interactions and opportunities for growth – along with the belief that one can generate creative responses to those opportunities – engenders both a love of knowledge and an unbridled enthusiasm for the thrill of discovery! This is how we keep kids in school.

Does the CCSS limit or promote developing a comprehensive intelligence suited to the challenges of the 21st century? By excluding the arts and marginalizing other disciplines, while overemphasizing language and mathematics, I find it wanting in many ways.

I would suggest evolving it, building upon the current CCSS to be more inclusive and allow for an appreciation of the other types of intelligences that students might bring to the classroom, while opening up possibilities for more creative thinking and a more expansive approach to developing intelligence in our students.