
Current Conditions

Your Aspiration Communication

“Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes, and having fun.” --Mary Lou Cook

Creativity is often thought of as “extra-credit” or “extra-curricular.” Or, if curricular, creativity is the sole responsibility of the art teacher. There is another point of view; one that runs counter to more traditional approaches to education: Creativity is the starting point of any education that



seeks to be relevant. In an era when the “rote” can be accessed by anyone with an internet connection, ingenuity, imagination, and inventiveness are necessary skills for all learners. If we are serious about wanting our students to take on the concerns and challenges of the 21st century, developing their creative talents is the place we must start.

CONDITION OF THE MONTH: CREATIVITY

Curiosity encourages students to ask, “Why?” while creativity invites students to ask, “Why not?”

5 Strategies for Promoting Creativity

- ✓ Change a lesson you currently teach with rote methods to one that requires problem-solving.
- ✓ Allow all learners—not just gifted-students—to demonstrate their knowledge in ways other than a standardized quiz or test.
- ✓ Publically celebrate the creative accomplishments of students in your classes.
- ✓ Co-create a lesson for the next unit with your students.
- ✓ Challenge your students to find a creative solution to a current world problem—e.g., recycling, global warming, or poverty.

2007 My Voice© Surveys

For Consideration and Conversation

On the My Voice Survey, fifty-seven percent (57%) of students agreed with the statement "At school I am encouraged to be creative." 7 out of 10 teachers agreed with the same statement on the My Voice© Staff Survey.

- ◆ How is your school a creative environment for students and staff?
- ◆ What do you do on a daily basis to nurture imagination, inventiveness, and ingenuity in yourself and your students?

E-mail your Curiosity stories, thoughts, or ideas to qisa@qisa.org

Aspirations in Action

Creative Parent Involvement

One of the more difficult challenges facing educators is having parents involved in the life of the school. Most schools have a core group of dedicated parents that help with fund raising, copying, and class parties. However, meaningful parent involvement must seek a far wider representation. While schools provide forums for such gatherings, most parents meetings have minimal turn out at best. Yet year after year schools conduct the same kind of parent meetings with the same results. Involving parents more broadly and deeply requires more creative approaches. Here are pioneering approaches from our Demonstration Sites.

Captain Albert Stevens Elementary School (CASS)

In an effort to have students and their parents experience the 8 Conditions together, CASS held a parent/student interactive aspirations evening. Together parents and their child rotated between stations. At the Fun & Excitement station parents and children danced to African drumming and at the Spirit of Adventure station they worked their way through an obstacle course. In between stations parents and children were given an aspirations question to discuss. This ensured that parents and their child were constantly communicating. The evening ended with a group Belonging activity. Volunteers, parents and students all agreed that this evening was a rousing success.

Mount View Junior High School (MVJHS)

In response to very low attendance at parent junior high information sessions, MVJHS decided to rethink its parent evenings. The district is located in a geographical large area. Some parents must travel up to 45 minutes in order to attend a parent meeting. Given the harsh Maine winters and often a long day of work, this drive was one of the many factors contributing to low parent attendance. The school decided to hold parent meetings in the local elementary schools, thus ensuring short commutes for most parents. In addition, parent meetings involved both students and parents. Over the course of the school year over 50 parents and their child attended a meeting in local elementary school. Considering that the average attendance at non-sporting events the previous year ranged from 1-4 parents, the school was quite pleased with this number.

Laconia School District

In response to a football team hazing incident at the middle school, the Laconia School District held a "kid-to-kid" forum on respect that focused on the ways in which students could take an active role in ensuring that the school environment is one that allows people to grow, no matter what their differences. Dr. Russell Quaglia led the forum of approximately 100 people gathered at the Laconia High School auditorium. Numerous students — including a large number of football players — attended. There was little mention of the incident itself; participants focused on the issue of respect as a whole. Involving students in the solution to such issues, as well as holding them responsible for their actions (the middle school's football season was canceled) develops the respect that can prevent such incidents in the future.

John F. Kennedy Elementary School

In partnership with Colavita USA (www.colavita.com), QISA and the Somerville Public Schools are offering a Family Food and Fun Night in the Kennedy Elementary School in Somerville, MA. Dr. Russell Quaglia will be talking with families about developing Self-Worth in children and celebrity chef Barbara Seelig Brown (www.stressfreecooking) will be teaching families to prepare a healthy stress-free meal. The goal is to create a base of parents who will then network with other parents to create broader school and family connections.