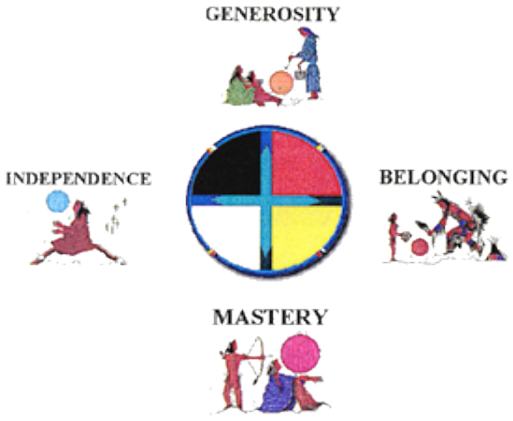
Whole Schooling and the Circle of Courage



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Preface

I am a teacher. I am a special educator and I am certified to teach in the area of what the State of Michigan terms "Emotional Impairment." As an undergrad, I wanted to be more familiar with the types of students I would be working with in the classroom, so I looked for a place to work that served children with troubled and troubling behavior. I was hired to work at a residential treatment facility afternoons and weekends as a treatment specialist. The facility served adolescents from ages 12 to 18 years old. As a treatment specialist, it was my job to work with the group in the cottage I was assigned to by going with them to their activities throughout the day. I was told I would also learn "The Program," and help the youth in my group work through their difficulties by using "The Program."

I was not given any training in the program prior to my beginning work with the young people in my cottage. I was to learn it by immersion. I began my work in early June at the beginning of summer. During the first couple of weeks I wondered to myself, "What is going on here?" I questioned whether I wanted to continue to work there. I would, of course, ask questions of supervisors and fellow workers, and I was told that the program was set up so that the youth could assume responsibility for their own behavior and learn to understand it and regulate it themselves. Even with these answers, I really didn't fully understand, yet.

I now understand that I viewed the program with what John Seita (Seita & Brendtro, 2002) calls "naïve psychology." I was so accustomed to thinking in terms of a reward-punishment model or even the medical model being applied to young people, or really any people in our society, who displayed troubled or troubling behavior, that at

first I had no frame-of-reference for what I was seeing and experiencing. I understood, however, that reward-punishment didn't really help people because it only made them fear their punishers and learn to manipulate for rewards; and if anything, taught them how to better put on an act of desired behavior, rather than developing any real positive inner values change. I felt that relying on medications and diagnoses often times led people to view themselves as inadequate and incapable and unable to be responsible for their own behavior. I do understand that there are legitimate mental health issues requiring medication and that some people will always need support in functioning, but I have met many adolescents who say they can't help what they do or say and it's of no use for them to have goals or to try to develop themselves because there is something wrong with them, and if they do well they feel their medication is working that day, and if they don't do well they feel their medication isn't working that day and maybe they need to find a new one. Emphasizing the medical model for some young people has increased or confirmed their sense of helplessness. Because I understood that what was commonly done usually didn't work, I was able to stick with the program keeping an open mind. By the end of that summer I came to know and understand the program and I saw that it did work and in real and genuine ways, ways where the person changed on the inside and developed a positive set of values that would be the guide for their own behavior. I learned by watching it in action and by talking to the young people in my group and listening to them tell me how the program helped them.

After working in and observing the program during that summer I realized I did have some frame-of-reference for the program. It reminded me of John Bradshaw's (1988) theory about the family and how a child needs a good functional family system in

order to grow to emotional health and maturity. Every child needs a nurturing family where he can get his or her needs met in a caring, consistent, and safe place. I began to realize that the group of young people and the way they were taught to care for one another and to work together was structured like a functioning family system for its members and was a safe place where they could get their needs met. The Circle of Courage (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990), as I later learned, defines these universal basic human needs as Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.

After I worked there for some years, I saw the process of each young person's change from beginning to end for myself. I experienced what young people believed and how they behaved as they entered the program; I could see them change as they participated in the program, and then finally what they believed and how it transformed their behavior when they were ready to exit the program. I felt that it was a great gift for me to have just by chance happened to come to work at this place where such a wonderful program existed that it really worked with young people, and that I had an opportunity to learn and understand the philosophy of the program. It felt like a great privilege to participate in such a program and to see it help so many young people turn their lives around. Of course, I came to know that the program was called "Positive Peer Culture" (PPC) (Vorrath & Brendtro, 1985). I was extensively trained in it over the time I worked at the agency, but besides that I researched it on my own. My research led me, of course, to Reclaiming Youth and Larry Brendtro, and the Black Hills Seminars where I found the many authors, researchers, and practitioners who believe in the Reclaiming Youth philosophies. At my first Black Hills Seminar I was introduced to the Circle of Courage as a chart of the universal basic human needs for Belonging, Mastery,

Independence, and Generosity. I have come to know and love the Circle of Courage as a tool for understanding where a child is strong and where he or she needs support, as well as a way to assess the environment of a child to find if the environment offers opportunities for the child to get what he or she needs to be supported and grow emotionally healthy.

As I completed college and began my teaching career I experienced a huge disconnect from the philosophies I had internalized and used in my interactions with young people, people who were now my students, and the philosophies guiding education practices in most public school districts. For my first year after college I worked as a substitute teacher in many schools while I looked for a teaching position at a school on a residential treatment campus. I felt called to work with this particular population of young people and wanted to continue my work with them as a teacher. The particular principal who hired me said she was very impressed during my interview with many of the philosophies I shared with her about working with young people. I told her my philosophies were grounded in what I had learned from Positive Peer Culture and Reclaiming Youth. She said that the educational field was on the verge of a big change and that the ideas I were expressing were ones that education was beginning to and needed to move towards. I was hired as the first special education teacher in that school and it was my job to establish a resource room. I was to take the students that other teachers "couldn't" teach due to behavioral or cognitive reasons, or both.

The big disconnect (or I could say, the rude awakening) came when I realized that this facility did not use a Positive Peer Culture program, or any type of program at all that was based on character change or teaching positive values. There was a point

system in place which the students had learned to expertly manipulate. I felt I had an opportunity, though, to create some positive peer culture in my classroom because I had the same group of students for the first half of the day, so we had about three hours a day to spend together. I used the philosophies I knew from PPC and adapted them to the classroom. Our class had a meeting each morning where students could talk about their goals for the school day and other things that were important to them in their lives. We called this "communication circle" and the educational objectives were grounded in the speaking, listening, expressing, and responding areas of language arts. I also emphasized the idea of students helping one another in the classroom, academically and behaviorally. My students learned to support and praise one another's learning and successes and not to support one another's negative behavior. Over time, through carefully chosen lesson plans, such as particular stories or projects, and through those inevitable teaching moments, students learned to identify and clarify their own values (which can be pretty good values if you can just get them to think about what they are) and to evaluate their own behavior based on those values. They worked to come up with ideas and behavior that would match their values and had opportunities to try it out and talk about the results. Sometimes, if a student had a serious problem in the classroom, we would stop and talk about it as a class and try to support the person to continue in school. We created a culture of caring and democracy in the classroom and where all students were treated with respect and respected one another. Students who had been in the class longer made it a point to let newer students know the way we did things in our class. They were able to tell newer students how they had changed over time, and the value they now had for school, and would encourage the newer students to give it a try because it might work for

them and having a better life was worth it. Overall, my students improved their behavior in school, in all classes, not just mine, and they showed more responsibility in the completion and quality of their school work.

Even though I was experiencing success with the students others considered the most difficult, I was not experiencing success with my fellow teachers. I had been given a classroom with no door because the resource room was added to the school after other classes were established and this was the only room available. It was a tiny room, no where near the size of a regular classroom, and it opened to a sort of a lobby between the counselor's office and the computer lab. Teachers knew that I was doing something different and I guess as a matter of curiosity, they stood outside my door and listened to my classes. It got to the point where there would be three or four teachers standing out there listening and they would make sarcastic and ridiculing comments and then laugh about what was going on in my classes while the students and I could hear them. They complained to my principal and to higher administrators in the district about me and tried to get me fired. My principal defended me and when I explained my philosophies and practices to administrators, who also observed me, I was told I was doing the right thing. I was told the other teachers just didn't understand what I was doing and that is what made them reject it and respond so hatefully toward it. Of course, it wasn't just my teaching style they rejected; they gave me the cold shoulder, as well. I was told that I didn't know how to teach, that maybe I should have been a therapist. I was told that if I tried to handle a behavior problem in the classroom, I wouldn't have time to teach the subject. I was told that I wasn't controlling the students in my classroom. I was told that students were not capable of helping one another, only adults could help them. I was told,

and I quote, “You are letting the inmates run the asylum.” This last statement hurt more than anything, because it showed me the attitude that the adults had towards the children they were there to teach and help – as people who were imprisoned as sick or insane. This was a rough time, but I continued on with my methods and let people know I would not change because I knew this was the right way to interact with our young people. Gradually, most people began to accept and want to know more about what I was doing, and only a few people continued the ridicule. Within a few years, the principal arranged for me to take four other teachers with me to the Black Hills Seminar. We came back to school with a great presentation on the conferences we attended and the teachers said they would like to start some school practices based on the Circle of Courage. This was a miraculous change.

During this time I decided to make an application to the doctoral program at Wayne State University. As a part of the application process I had to do a research paper based on a question I was given. The question was about inclusion practices and their history and success rates. I did a very thorough review and submitted my paper. I was called in to be interviewed by a panel and to discuss my paper with them. One of these panel members was Dr. Michael Peterson. He is an inclusion specialist and is the co-founder of the Whole Schooling Consortium, which is founded on full inclusion and democratic principles. He talked with me quite a bit because my paper was about inclusion, which is his great passion. As we spoke, I began to explain my underlying philosophies about teaching and working with young people and that they had originated with Positive Peer Culture and Reclaiming Youth. When I began to explain some of the basic ideas, Dr. Peterson said they were similar to the philosophies of Whole Schooling.

At that point, Dr. Peterson said that he liked what I wrote about and liked the philosophies I had described and he would be my advisor in the doctoral program.

Being a special educator I already knew what inclusion was about, but I did not yet have a full understanding of Whole Schooling. I learned about parts of Whole Schooling, especially that it was based on full inclusion, but I didn't really come to know and appreciate the extensive and brilliant design for schools that Whole Schooling encompasses until Dr. Peterson presented a session on Whole Schooling at "The Roots and Wings Seminar" held at Wayne State University in September of 2008. Dr. Peterson was invited to present at the seminar by Adrienne Brant James, the Detroit representative for the Reclaiming Youth Network. Adrienne recognized the parallels between Dr. Peterson's Whole Schooling philosophies and the Reclaiming Youth philosophies and felt a presentation of Whole Schooling would be a good fit for the seminar and well-received by the audience there. Adrienne's insight and intuition were correct. The presentation was beautiful and well-received, from Dr. Larry Brentro's introduction where he quoted William Morse as saying "Whole Schooling is the best thing to come out of the last decade," to the many positive comments and questions the audience had for Dr. Peterson during and after his presentation. It was at this presentation that I came to fully understand that Whole Schooling is more than just a full-inclusion philosophy. Whole Schooling is a comprehensive design plan for schools to follow when they are truly looking to create a caring culture within their school and to develop greatness within each student.

As I listened to Dr. Peterson describe Whole Schooling and I grasped the full scope of its nature, I became electrified. I began to mentally compare what I knew about

the Reclaiming philosophies and what I was learning about Whole Schooling. The parallels between Whole Schooling and PPC and the Reclaiming strategies came into clear focus for me. Positive Peer Culture seeks to teach each young person to be the greatest they can be. They call this "demanding greatness." When PPC asks a young person to be the greatest they can be, they are taught to ask themselves "In what ways can I be a good person?" That is quite a different question from one that is so internalized by many youngsters today, which seems to be, "What can I get for myself?" PPC also teaches young people to ask, "In what ways can and should I help others?" This again seems very different from the attitude that some young people have internalized in our materialistic culture, which is something like, "What can I get from others?" PPC also teaches young people to take a realistic view of themselves to realize their strengths and weaknesses and to use their self-assessment to make goals for themselves. It teaches young people to be goal-oriented; how to create long and short-term goals for themselves based on what they need to have a good life, and it teaches them to stay focused on those goals until they are achieved. It teaches them to evaluate their goals and their own behavior by asking, "Is this helping or hurting myself and is this helping or hurting others?" PPC facilitates young people learning to communicate honestly and respectfully with all other people, to problem-solve with others for the common good, and to negotiate. Whole Schooling emphasizes all these things as well. Whole Schooling asks a young person to be the best they can be by calling them to develop "Personal Excellence." Whole Schooling teaches young people to achieve personal excellence by learning to ask themselves, "What is my personal best?" This is very different from the question, "What do I have to do to get by?" Whole Schooling also teaches students to

think about when and how they should help others by emphasizing "just right" learning, where each student recognizes that everyone has different abilities and talents and that each student should use his or her strengths to help others work and learn. Whole Schooling also teaches young people to set goals for themselves based on their strengths and weaknesses, and teaches them to become goal-oriented by involving students not only in what needs to be learned, but by planning the way they want to learn it. Whole Schooling teaches students to set personal goals for themselves and collective goals with the classroom, and then provides opportunities for students to achieve them. A great principle of Whole Schooling is that students learn to work together for the common good of the classroom and school and that the diversity among students is to be appreciated and respected. I felt an amazing synchronicity between these two philosophies. I also felt that this is a school design that could be used in any school setting, particularly regular public schools, because although it is aimed at accomplishing full inclusion, it goes way above and beyond that one aim. It is a school design that would remedy and improve many aspects of the whole school where it is implemented.

Full inclusion, along with democracy, is at the heart of Whole Schooling. Whole Schooling emphasizes the idea that all students with special education needs should be educated in general education classrooms, but not in ways where they are stigmatized or grouped in any specific or routine way. Every teacher who reads this knows how difficult this is to accomplish, because even when special education students come into the general education classroom, they usually are grouped together somewhere with a paraprofessional or even a special education teacher that everyone knows is assigned to them, or the work they are given is obviously different, and there may be a sense of

discomfort, tension, or resentment in the classroom because people don't know what to do or how to accomplish inclusion. This is where, when, and how the great beauty of Whole Schooling is revealed. Not only does it require the full inclusion of students with special education needs in the classroom, but it acknowledges that to meet that requirement, the whole school must change to implement and accomplish Whole Schooling. The changes that must come about in the school are changes that demand greatness. The school must become a positive caring culture in order to achieve Whole Schooling. Every adult in the school – teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, psychologists, counselors, social workers, bus drivers, lunchroom workers, and anyone who works with the students in the school must care about, value, and communicate high expectations to all students. Students must be taught to care about and support one another in these same ways. Adults must work together in genuine respect and cooperation to develop the best programs and curriculum delivery possible based on the needs of the students. Students need to see adults working together in this way so they can follow the example and mirror this behavior in working together with one another. Adults must work with students to get input on how the school should operate. Teachers must work with students and include them in the operation of the classroom. Students of all ability levels and diverse backgrounds must work together to accomplish personal learning goals and collective learning goals. The intention of these practices is to give students opportunities to participate in the democratic process, to develop decision-making abilities, and to cultivate great interpersonal skills, as well as to develop an understanding within students that these are desirable and necessary qualities to participate as a citizen of the world. Whole Schooling does not just change the school

experience for special education students, nor does it change the school experience for just general education students, nor just general and special education teachers, nor just inside the classroom, nor just inside the school itself; it doesn't just change the outer experience of school at all, it changes the inner value system of each person at the school, as well.

Each person involved in creating and implementing a Whole Schooling design for their school must do a sincere self-inventory and a soul-searching with some pretty serious and basic questions about what they believe about social justice and what they believe about truly educating a child. This is where it gets hard. This is where it might even hurt. We are not accustomed to looking at education, as we are doing it now, through the social justice lens. We believe we've ended social injustice in education, perhaps with Brown vs. The Board of Education. It's hard for us as educators, and as a nation, to really look at the education system and see how in some ways it still sorts, separates, and segregates people based on various characteristics in limiting ways, and to see how this sets an example for our young people that this is a way to solve problems. They don't have to explicitly be told this is the way to solve problems, in fact they can be told something completely different, which is what I know most educators strive to explicitly teach their students: treat others with equality; don't discriminate against others because of race or ability or income. However, young people internalize what they see and experience, regardless of whether it matches what they are told, so if they see segregation as a solution used in school to solve the problems that differences among people can create, they will view this as an acceptable way to treat people. In this way, education inadvertently establishes and perpetuates a sort of class system when it

segregates and separates students, because school is a major contributor to the internalization of a young person's expectations for life and place in the world. Whole Schooling asks educators to look at these practices in education and challenge them. It hurts because if we come to the conclusion that our students are being injured in some way by these practices, then we may see ourselves as participating in doing the harm. It is hard because we realize that no easy, superficial changes can fix this fault in education, and the changes that are needed will take a tremendous amount of work and courage. When I think of the hostile reactions to the practices I implemented in my first classroom, I can imagine grand scale of the negative responses some people might have to the implementation of Whole Schooling, especially when they are asked to make changes and participate. Knowing that some people will react with rejection, hostility, and in undermining ways can also make the thought of transitioning to Whole Schooling hard.

The results of Whole Schooling are worth the efforts. The greatest value of Whole Schooling, and it has a multitude, may be that it doesn't just tell students about the values that we as a society say we hold dear, it shows them the values at work in the way the school functions, and then not only does it show them the values at work, they get to actively participate in situations and create settings using these values. This theme holds true across Whole Schooling as it strives to create ways for students to experience what they are being asked to learn. Whole Schooling gives all students a chance to internalize self-efficacy. Adults benefit as well. Whole Schooling requires that adults in education examine their core beliefs to find if their practices match what they believe. It also requires that adults develop new practices to facilitate learning in the Whole Schooling setting. There is no doubt about the fact that adults will have to grow and develop both

personally and professionally to create and work in a Whole Schooling environment. Everyone participating in Whole Schooling is called to achieve Personal Excellence. Each one contributing in creating a place of learning for everyone grounded in democratic principles and the Circle of Courage; a place where all can experience and achieve Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.

Patricia D.Taylor M.Ed.

Introduction

Why Have School?

Let's start with this essential question: Why do we *have school* in the first place? What is the purpose of schooling and teaching? If we don't know what the mission and goals of school are, it's not possible to even know if we get there. We also don't know if the target was missed. Interestingly, with all the focus in recent years on accountability of schools, you don't see that much public discussion about the fundamental purpose of schools.

Two interrelated stated purposes of schools, however, are clear: (1) personal outcomes for children; and (2) social outcomes. In other words, we hope that schools will help children grow and achieve for their own personal good. However, schools also contribute to our society. These two types of goals are interactive. As we shall also see, people have divergent views on the purposes of school, particularly its societal function. Sociologists have described schools as 'contested territory'. Schools are the one place where individuals of all sorts of backgrounds and characteristics come together to be taught how to function in society. People also differ greatly on what schools would do if they helped individual students reach their potential. Written into law at present, schools could be rated as doing a great job if students passed tests in reading and math. For others, as we'll discuss below, this is a very limited, narrow goal.

Two primary opposing views exist regarding the purpose of schools. Some, such as the Business Roundtable (A. Ryan, 2004) and Achieve (Achieve, 2004), an organization created by governors and business leaders, believe that the primary purpose of schools

should be to *create workers* who have skills and personal styles to fill and perform available jobs. Others believe this outcome is too narrow (Freeman, 2005; Goodlad, 1984; Hodgkinson, 2006; Postman, 1996). For them schools should seek to develop active *citizens,* helping children develop their own capacity for personal achievement and contributing to society as an active citizen for democracy.

These two goals, producing workers and creating citizens, require two very different approaches. If, on the one hand, the key goal is to educate students as workers, where education essentially functions as a section of the personnel department for business and industry, schools are expected to perform two essential tasks: (1) create a pool of workers with at least minimum competence and attitudes from which businesses can select employees; and (2) provide a way of sorting workers in rank order of ability, eliminating those from the pool who do not have the perceived capacity to function as employees. The goal for businesses, of course, is to have a large pool of potentially qualified candidates with requisite skills that far exceeds the availability of jobs. This allows the business to select the best candidate. The resulting competition for jobs allows them to keep wages lower, thus decreasing costs and increasing profits. This goal becomes evident through the call for standards with higher levels of skills. The need to have a way of ranking individuals in order of basic skills, or at least certifying minimum competency, is seen in the push for standardized testing that was incorporated into the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act passed in 2004. It is notable that the Business Roundtable and other business and industry groups were intimately involved in calling for identified minimum standards and the use of standardized testing.

Following are some key strategies that may lead to schools accomplishing these personnel office functions in the societal service of business. They most often include:

- Identify basic skills that all students should achieve, skills needed in most jobs in business and industry
- Use tests to rank students or, at minimum, identify students as competent or incompetent on basic skills
- Increase the number of students meeting competence in basic skills.
- Assure that the curriculum focuses narrowly on the basic skills rather than curriculum options that address individual interests and needs
- Facilitate conditions under which students with challenges drop out of the system to reduce costs

The fact is, of course, few school districts actually *state* that their prime mission is to serve as a personnel department for business and industry. However, functionally many schools make this clear by engaging in practices designed to insure such outcomes. Similarly, policymakers often use language whereby an outcome is veiled by other language. If you look carefully at the list above, you'll see a description of practices presently mandated by NCLB (No Child Left Behind) in the United States (Education, 2002) and laws in other countries as well. Some of these requirements, like the creation of standards and use of standardized tests are mandated in the legislation itself. Others, such as the increase in dropouts (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006; Woods, 1995) and racial segregation (Horn, 2006), are a result of a system that does not attend well to

the personalized needs of students, particularly those with substantial life challenges (J. Ryan, 2004). Similarly, as schools are evaluated based on very narrow criteria (eg. tests of math, basic literacy skills, and science), the curriculum of many schools is narrowed, de-emphasizing social studies, the arts, physical education, and even, on occasion, eliminating recess for elementary children (Karp, Spring 2003; Marshak, November 2003; Mathis, 2006; McKenzie, November, 2006).

If, on the other hand, schools seek to help students achieve personal excellence and become effective citizens, their learning activities must be organized quite differently. In such schools, the curriculum would necessarily offer many rich opportunities rather than focusing only on narrow basic skills. Students are nurtured to become adults who have skills, attitudes, and knowledge to be productive community members, leaders, parents, as well as workers.

Throughout the rest of this book, we will explore multitudes of concrete strategies designed to meet these goals. However, just to give you a taste at this point of the difference in working to foster personal excellence in learning and the education of citizens, here's a short list that schools and teachers would be about in such schools:

- Help students identify their interests and abilities
- Support students in setting personal learning goals
- Facilitate student involvement and learning in decision-making regarding their own learning and the use of power and responsibility in the classroom and school

- Create a culture of care and community where students learn to support one another and take responsibility for the well being of each other and the total community
- Facilitate students learning together in a diverse groups where they learn how to value contributions of others and manage productive group work
- Teach students who are functioning at many differing levels of ability together in heterogeneous mixes
- Assess student skills and learning styles to facilitate learning and promote personal excellence

You might ask, "Can we not do both - educate for being a worker *and* for being a citizen?" From one perspective, the answer is "Yes!" This is true because in working towards personal excellence and citizenship, children and youth also learn how to be effective workers and producers. However, it's also true that you cannot organize a school and classroom around the strategies for each approach at the same time. You can't, for example, focus most of your curriculum around basic skills in three subjects and give students opportunities for personal excellence and learning skills of citizenship. The problem, of course, is that in the present political environment, schools don't have much choice in participating in some of the strategies aimed towards education of workers as the goal of schooling. By law, schools must develop standards and have their students take standardized tests. The good news, however, is that there is substantial evidence that test scores in schools aiming for personal excellence and citizenship are equal to or higher than schools that focus on narrow curriculum only.

The fact is that most parents and educators, when clearly asked, do not want education for work as the prime outcome of schooling. They want much more. We often conduct workshops with educators and parents in which we ask them to describe what has made the best year and the worst year for children. Always, teachers and parents state that what made the difference lay more in how the student was treated and positive or negative relationships rather than how well they did on particular tests. In other words, in addition to cognitive learning of basic skills and even critical thinking skills, the emotional and social well-being of the child is paramount. Helping children develop in these arenas is a key expectation and goal for most people.

We recently conducted a study of mission statements of school districts in the United States and discovered that, when school districts engage stakeholders in identifying the mission or purpose of the school, their goals typically are those related to personal excellence and citizenship rather than limited to a narrow curriculum. Here are some examples of statements we found:

- Neshaminy is dedicated to empowering students to become accountable, creative, self-aware, and productive citizens who utilize the knowledge, the skills, the social consciousness and the desire for continuous learning (Neshaminy School District, Pennsylvania).
- Elk Grove Unified School District will provide a learning community that challenges ALL students to realize their greatest potential. Outcomes for students; achievement of core academic skills; confident, effective thinkers and problem

solvers, ethical participants in society (Elk Grove Unified School District, Elk Grove, California).

- The Board of Directors believes that students should complete school in full possession of skills, knowledge, and insights necessary for responsible, productive participation in society (Searcy Public School, Searcy, Arkansas)
- To provide a wide array of instructional programs that assure core competencies and nurture the unique talents of the individual and that are regularly revised to meet current needs and anticipate challenges; to provide and regularly review a wide and relevant array of extracurricular and co-curricular activities at all levels that foster lifelong learning by nurturing the unique talents of each individual and promoting social responsibility (Hopewell Valley Regional School District, Pennington, New Jersey)
- The Boerne Independent School District exists to prepare its students for responsible citizenship, sound character, lifelong learning, and productive employment through programs and activities which challenge and develop language literacy, mathematical proficiency, scientific competence, and social maturity (Boerne Independent School District, Boerne, Texas).

These are quite serious statements regarding the commitment to what we call personal excellence and citizenship. However, these statements are not unusual. Go look at the mission statements of your local school districts and you'll likely find similar language. Support for such goals is very widely accepted.

Interestingly, however, in our study we found a troubling pattern in urban schools that serve many children of color and children from poor homes. Of the 25 major cities whose websites we investigated only Seattle Public Schools even had a mission statement available for the public to view. Given that schooling and teaching for these students is challenging and widely noted as inadequate, this is particularly notable.

The problem, of course, is going from an excellent mission statement to organizing schooling and putting in place an evaluation system based on such a mission statement. Too often there is a great mismatch between the mission statement of a school district and individual schools and the actual practice in schools. Teachers, administrators, and parents may not even clearly see the dramatic difference in strategies designed to reach towards their stated goals and vision and the much narrower, restricted goals associated with education of workers. The challenge, then, is to take these mission statements and make them real.

What would happen if we were successful and the concepts and strategies incorporated in this book were the basis of local, state, and national education policy? What might be the impact on the individual lives of students and the broader impact of the unleashing of new levels of creativity, social critique, and problem-solving? We believe the impacts could be dramatic, on the individual lives of students and on our society and communities, which is, of course, why we're writing this book. We hope you and others can understand more clearly and practically what is needed and possible and we can all work together to create better futures for our children and all of us. We further hope this book helps you in your personal mission to do this.

J. Michael Peterson Ph.D.

Figure 1
Why Have School?
Contrasting Views of Purposes and Outcomes of Schooling and Teaching

Worker	Citizen
Individual Outcomes	
Basic skills and facts	Basic skills and facts
Ability to sit in one place a long time and do uninteresting work	Creativity
Acceptance of authority without questioning or critique	Relationships and social skills
Compliance with rules made by others	Setting personal goals
Following directions	Problem-solving and critical thinking skills
Social Outcomes	
Create a pool of workers with basic skills to fill available jobs.	Ability to obtain employment that fits personal needs and goals
Sort students ranking those as competent and incompetent	Critique of social and community needs, issues and problems
Encourage incompetent or problematic students to drop out of the system.	Organizing skills and attitudes to create change and to engage in the political process
Maintain differences in learning outcomes based on race and socio-economic status	Taking leadership roles in community and society

When schools only think of preparing students as future workers, they end up neglecting and thwarting many students' innate needs for growth and development and the ability to participate in their own education or to function in their educational environment. When schools know that students have innate emotional needs that must be met in order for them to develop into a healthy, happy person, and plan for students' needs to be met, they are educating the young person to be a citizen. The Circle of Courage defines the emotional needs that are universal to all persons as Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. Schools where these needs are met for students are providing the best educational environment and are truly concerned about the healthy development and education of the whole person.

Chapter One: The Circle of Courage and The Eight Principles

In these times of great change, many schools are seeking ways to provide environments that address the social and emotional needs of today's students, as well as to support and improve their academic learning. We know now, more than ever, that the two go hand in hand. Children learn better in environments where their emotional and social needs are met. We also know that children learn better when experiences and activities are part of the learning process and that social interaction reinforces learning.

Schools are searching for ways to incorporate these ideas into their practices and procedures. They are looking for sensible, practical, and relevant philosophies to guide them in restructuring schools that answer today's needs. Schools must be much more to children than they were 50, 20, or even 10, or 5 years ago. As society and the family have changed, school must change to meet the needs of the children within it. Today's school does need to be a place where the emotional and social needs of children are considered and attended to much more specifically and intentionally than in the past. Schools and classrooms must be set up to provide the types of social, emotional, character, as well as academic education our students need now.

Brendtro, Ness, and Mitchell (2001) tell us about highly developed educational strategies that the First Nations people of North America traditionally used in raising their children. Their practice was to intentionally provide an environment where children were included and participated in activities and situations where they would develop into healthy, respectful, courageous, and caring individuals. They have

named this child-rearing philosophy the Circle of Courage. Although the Circle of Courage is based on traditional values from cultures of people who cherish children and treat them with respect, current research in education and youth development show that these practices are in alignment with what children need to do well.

Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1990) explain that the Circle of Courage charts the four basic and universal human needs:

1. **Belonging:** The universal longing for human bonds is nurtured relationships of trust so that the child can say, "I am loved."
2. **Mastery:** The child's inborn thirst for learning is nurtured; learning to cope with the world, the child can say, "I can succeed."
3. **Independence:** The child's free will is nurtured by increased responsibility so that the child can say, "I am in charge of my life."
4. **Generosity:** The child's character is nurtured by concern for others so that the child can say, "I have a purpose for my life." (p. 96)

In order to experience emotional health, a person must experience a sense of these qualities in a good balance in his or her life. The Circle of Courage can also be used to analyze what opportunities to develop or experience these qualities a particular environment offers and whether there is a healthy balance of all the necessary qualities within the environment.

Whole Schooling is an educational strategy based on democratic principles and full inclusion where the whole school and each classroom intentionally engage in practices that make the school and the classroom a community that nurtures students' healthy growth both academically and as caring and respectful persons. Teachers

work to establish community, caring, and respect in the classroom through sharing control and responsibility with students in a democratic way. Whole Schooling educates all students together in the general classroom with the intention of meeting the social and emotional needs of each student by providing them opportunities to work together and care for one another.

These are the Eight Principles of Whole Schooling:

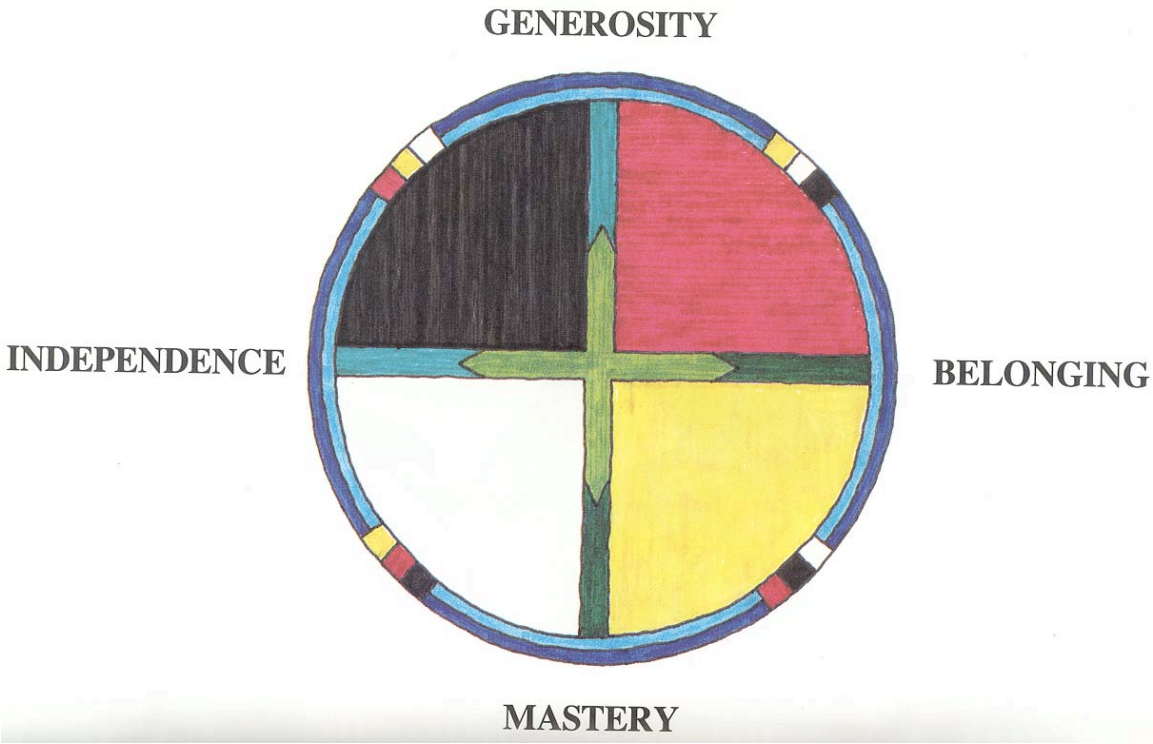
1. **Create learning spaces for all.**
2. **Include all in learning together.**
3. **Teach all using authentic, differentiated, multilevel instruction.**
4. **Empower citizens for democracy.**
5. **Use authentic assessment to promote learning.**
6. **Support learning.**
7. **Build a caring community.**
8. **Partner with families and the community.**

In understanding the Circle of Courage and learning about the Eight Principles of Whole Schooling it is amazing to notice how Whole Schooling carries out the intentions of the Circle of Courage in its philosophies and methods. Any person who has had an interest or a love for the Circle of Courage and is an educator could not help but be thrilled by the concept and practice of Whole Schooling. Likewise, anyone who is an educator and has come to know and love Whole Schooling could not help but appreciate and adopt the Circle of Courage as their guide to understanding their students' needs for development, assessing their students' development, and assessing the environment to see

if it provides the opportunities students need to develop these vital qualities, necessary to a happy, satisfying and productive life.

In the following chapters we will describe how to implement the Eight Principles of Whole Schooling in schools and classrooms and their relationship with the qualities of the Circle of Courage.

CIRCLE OF COURAGE



Art by George Blue Bird

Chapter Two: Create Learning Spaces for All

The first and most basic principle of Whole Schooling (WS) is Create Learning Spaces for All. This principle addresses the organization of the classroom. The classroom is the place where students experience most of their time in school, and with the WS approach, students should be in the classroom even more because activities that were pull-out for many students should now take place in the classroom. In organizing the classroom space with the WS approach in mind, the teacher plans for the variety of activities and dynamics that the classroom arrangement will support.

In Whole Schooling, where classrooms are set up with democracy, citizenship, and personal best outcomes in mind, it is important to consider the individual needs, interests, and learning styles of students, including special needs for learning support. Thoughtful planning is given to the arrangement of furniture, the placement of materials, and the appointment of space.

The arrangement of furniture in the WS classroom should reflect the need to serve whole group, small group, two-person, and individual work needs. It should also reflect consideration for students with different mobility, such as students with wheelchairs, crutches, or visual impairments. Everyone should be able to negotiate most of the space fairly easily. Large furniture should be placed to allow for open space and perhaps to create a small workspace area. Desk arrangement should allow for flexibility between whole group and small group activities. Desks in rows with students confined to their desks will not facilitate students' interaction with each other or with the teacher. In fact, in a WS classroom there should be other types of areas designated for students to work, recognizing the need for movement or to sometimes stand while working. Some students

enjoy standing at a countertop or even at a windowsill while working. The WS classroom often provides other seating areas besides desks for students, such as carpet squares on the floor, bean bags, or different chairs.

The placement of materials in a WS classroom reflects the ability-level diversity. Materials should be placed where students have easy access to them. Materials should be at varying levels of difficulty and should include a broad variety of interest. The classroom should contain many resources for learning that support different learning styles and needs of students. Of course, a variety of books at many different reading levels should be available in the classroom, but there should also be books on tape, computers with a variety of software, DVD's, tape recorders, and an inventory of learning tools based on students needs and interests and alternative ways of learning.

The appointment of space in a WS classroom allows for a variety of working situations. First of all, it offers a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere for students to be in. In arranging the space, keep in mind where the windows and doors are. Make sure the space provides a way for all students to work together, or in small groups. Try to provide some quiet or separate space for quiet activities such as reading, or if a student wants to be alone or have personal space for awhile. The classroom is the place where students will learn how to respectfully share space with one another and to assume responsibility for the space they use. This is an important element of citizenship.

In the democratic spirit, the teacher in the WS classroom promotes student ownership of the classroom. Students should display their work throughout the classroom. They should also have a hand in organizing materials and supplies and in arranging the classroom. In the WS classroom, the teacher is always assessing and re-

assessing the students' needs and arranging and rearranging the space of the classroom to meet the needs of the students as they grow, change, and learn.

Creating Learning Spaces for All recognizes the importance of the Spirit of Belonging. (Brendtro, et al. 1990) In WS it is acknowledged that everyone needs to feel a sense of belonging to do well, and in the Circle of Courage philosophy, Belonging is a necessary ingredient for a child to be comfortable and confident enough to do well. Everything in the way the WS classroom is set up acknowledges each student's need for a sense of belonging in that classroom as a foundation for each student to do well. In a WS classroom the overarching importance that a sense of belonging is necessary for all students to achieve and do well is manifested in the way the classroom is set up and space is laid out. When students enter the classroom space they should have the sense that, "This space was created with me in mind so that I can do well here. I like it here. I belong here."

Reflection: Think of a classroom that you are familiar with. Evaluate the ways the space is laid out relevant to practical, academic, and social needs of students. How do the arrangement of furniture and materials and the appointment of space support the learning and social dynamics of all students in the classroom. Are furniture, materials, and space presented as user-friendly? Does the general tone and atmosphere of the room seem pleasant, inviting, and welcoming so that a sense of belonging would be encouraged among students in the classroom? Would you feel welcome and comfortable in the classroom?

Chapter Three: Include All In Learning Together

The Spirit of Belonging (Brendtro, et al. 1990) continues as a strong theme in the next principle of WS: Include All In Learning Together. In this principle we move beyond the practical arrangement of the classroom space that will facilitate belonging, to the interactions and attitudes among the persons within the classroom and the school that promote a sense of belonging for the people there. The Spirit of Belonging is seen in the passion to have students of different ability levels, ethnicities, and backgrounds work in the same classrooms together learning to cooperate, communicate, and care for one another. The classroom, and on a larger scale, the school, becomes a community where everyone works together and feels a connectedness with everyone else joining together for the educational process. When students feel a sense of belonging and feel welcomed in the classroom and in the school environment, they will be much more receptive to learning, to developing citizenship, and to finding and achieving their personal best in that environment.

If you are committed to supporting personal excellence and citizenship for all students, then the most basic place to start is by welcoming all students into your school and class. Of course, this is easy to say, harder to do. This practice, perhaps, challenges the existing system more than any. We have long established structures and traditions in schools that segregate and separate children and youth from one another based on many variables. Consider the following information:

- After 30 years of a federal law in the United States (and similar laws in many countries throughout the world) the dominant model of education for students

with disabilities is still separate schools and classes (full-time or part-time resource rooms) despite the fact that research is clear that academic and social outcomes are higher in inclusive classes and a growing international movement towards inclusive education (Booth & Ainscow, 1998; Vitello & Mithaug, 1998).

- Students of color are overrepresented in special education, meaning that a much higher percentage of these students are labeled as having disabilities than their percentage of the total student population. These students are more likely to be placed in separate special education programs. Relatedly, an achievement gap continues to exist between students of color and white students. Overrepresentation in special education is thought to contribute to this achievement gap (Losen & Orfield, 2002).
- Despite significant efforts to reduce racial segregation in schools since 1954, in the last 20 years schools are again becoming more racially segregated(Orfield & Gordon, 2001).
- Major controversy continues regarding education of students considered gifted and talented. Some 20 years ago, major research concluded separate classes and schools for these students contributed only very slightly to academic gains. However, socially such programs often led to reduced skills and strained relationships (Oakes, 1985; Wheelock, 1992).

If you are committed to promoting personal excellence and citizenship for all students, they simply must be there, learning how to work together. In this arena, the question regarding the purpose of schools becomes most clear. For example, if the

purpose of schools is to create workers only, helping to sort students, identifying those most and those least able, then segregated programs make sense. Similarly, if we desire communities segregated by ability, race, socio-economics and more, we should keep segregated programs. Perhaps we should even create more of them.

However, if the goal really is personal excellence and citizenship for all students, then it makes no sense to segregate students from one another. Citizenship for democracy means that all students must literally be there, all voices be heard. Part of developing personal excellence is learning how to work in truly diverse groups, helping to support classmates with abilities that range from being non-verbal to a truly gifted writer and artist. If students are to become effective leaders in a pluralistic society, education must provide opportunities to engage students with diverse racial, ethnic and ability characteristics.

The sense of community and social safety promoted in such inclusive classes along with respect for diverse abilities and characteristics provides an emotional foundation that promotes brain functioning at the highest levels, preventing the downward shifts when fear and rejection are prevalent. Thus, for students with and without disabilities, integrated and inclusive classes are associated with higher levels of academic achievement (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994; Peterson & Hittie, 2003). Diversity represented in inclusive classrooms provides a stimulus and challenge to deep thinking that occurs less in segregated classes. Inclusive classes, thus, are not optional but a necessary component of a school and classroom that contributes to personal excellence and citizenship.

So, what would we see in an inclusive school and classroom? Consider these practices:

- All children and youth participate in classes together. They are systematically heterogeneously grouped on multiple dimensions placed in classes. They are not tracked by ability, put in special education or gifted classes, or even clustered (where, for example, all the gifted students or special education students are in one 4th grade class in an elementary school).
- Within classes, teachers intentionally engage students in learning in heterogeneous groups, assuring flexible grouping arrangements that change frequently based on need, interest, and relationships. (Peterson et al., 2002)
- In any class of 24 students, you see children with mild to severe disabilities (3-4), children considered gifted and talented, mixtures of races and cultural backgrounds, all working together on projects and learning activities at their own level of challenge.
- Specialists (like special education teachers, speech therapists, gifted specialists) provide both direct services, consultation, and collaborative within the general education classroom.
- Assistive technology is used to support learning of all students, including students with mild to severe disabilities. Students are enthralled and teachers find them useful for other students as well.
- Students learn how to care for each other and support and challenge one another in learning.

Reflection: Visit a school or reflect on the school in which you work. What approach to dealing with diversity of student abilities are used in this school? What are the impacts of this approach? Does the approach support a Spirit of Belonging for all students, or does it create a type of segregation among students? What would you recommend to improve teaching in this school?

Chapter Four: Teach All Using Authentic, Differentiated, Multi-Level Instruction

Once a young person develops a sense of belonging in an environment, he or she can safely fulfill the desire for mastery. The next principle of WS allows for just that. The Circle of Courage describes the Spirit of Mastery as the need that each person has to feel competent and to experience success. (Brendtro et al. 1990) The WS classroom offers the Spirit of Mastery in allowing each student to feel success in the classroom. The Spirit of Mastery calls for persons to encourage one another in their competencies, to share successes, and to develop attainable personal goals. The WS classroom allows plenty of opportunity for mastery as the teacher is attuned to each student's learning ability and interests, and the students are attuned to each other's. All students come together to learn and are given individual and collective tasks that they can achieve, leading to the feeling of competency and personal excellence.

If teachers and schools are to teach for personal excellence and citizenship, to truly 'leave no child behind', then they must (1) take children where they are and (2) help them move to the next level (3) without segregating or ability grouping them based on perceived ability. How might this be done? Here we introduce this important topic of authentic, multilevel instruction. To move this direction, however teachers and parents must first *lay aside idea the of meeting grade level expectations* and focus instead on *helping each child move to the next level of their learning* – personal excellence as we discussed above. Every child can then be challenged, supported, and valued for who they are. Second, you must also simply toss aside forever the idea that children have to be grouped by some presumed ability for teaching to work. Educators must be committed to

teaching children with ability differences *together* and *look for opportunities for multilevel teaching.* You find what you look for. If we believe something doesn't exist, we probably won't see it even if it's sitting right in front of us. As a famous man said, "Seek and you shall find". Given this attitudinal base, here are a few useful strategies (Peterson, 2006):

- *Use open-ended learning projects.* Open-ended projects, by definition, allow children to perform work at their own ability level. A student with a cognitive disability and highly able student could both, for example, be doing a project on volcanoes where they research information and present this in one or more formats.
- *Teach children about just right work.* Kids know that some are smarter than others. They also know that in traditional classrooms some students work very hard and always get bad grades and other students hardly study at all and always get A's. In a multilevel class children are expected to do 'just right work', work that builds on their abilities but pushes them to the next level. Children are taught how to judge this for themselves and how to judge for one another. Cheryl, a student with a cognitive disability in a 4th grade class said one day to John, a student considered gifted: "That's a good project on snakes John. But I don't think you had enough information. You know more than that. That's not just right work for you".
- *Use multiple intelligences for gathering information and producing products that demonstrate learning.* Human beings have many different ways of demonstrating

abilities and intelligence. Howard Gardner has identified 8. If we teach students using these multiple intelligences students who have difficulties in some areas may shine in others. The student who is having difficulty reading but is a good artist may use pictures and drawing to communicate key ideas and deepen the learning of other students.

- *Have learning materials at different levels of ability around key topics always available.* Families and teachers should have learning materials available at a wide range of ability levels. If a class is studying the civil war, books and websites should be available at very different reading levels.
- *Use assistive technology.* Assistive technology can also help bridge ability gaps between materials and the abilities of students to expand capacity to learn and perform. Computer programs can read text aloud, connect images and print, show videos while words of the transcription are available.
- *Insure that learning activities are truly authentic – engaging meaningful topics that students care about, related to their lives.* When instruction uses canned materials that are based on fill-in-the-blank worksheets about topics or skill drill in which students are not engaged, learning is difficult and un-enjoyable for all students. Such an approach also makes it more difficult to have students of differing abilities in the same class. However, authentic themes and topics make it easier to develop open-ended assignments, use multiple intelligences, and access materials of multiple ability levels all around the same Reflection.
- *Imbed parallel learning goals.* Sometimes a particular Reflection may be difficult to make truly multilevel. If the class is working on certain algebra equations, for

example, a student who is working on addition and subtraction may have difficulty. However, the same worksheets could be used for this student but for different purposes – have her add circled numbers.

- *Use a workshop approach to instruction.* If teachers use a workshop approach to instruction across subjects, students are given authentic tasks in which they engage both as small groups and as individual projects. Students of differing abilities may work together where they challenge and support each other in different ways.
- *Have students set their own individual learning goals.* Many effective multilevel teachers help students to set their own learning goals, share with one another their progress and provide support to one another. These goals provide one multilevel approach to grading but they also help students take responsibility for their own learning.
- *Develop portfolios of student work where they show their best work, explain what they learned, and how they could do better next time.* Having students collect and develop portfolios, particularly if connected with student-led conferences where students are taught to share their work with their parents or others, is very powerful. By definition, students are engaged in demonstrating their 'just right work'.

Looking at these ideas you may think, "I already do a lot of this". Your comment brings up an important point. Most *teachers know a great deal* about teaching students with diverse abilities and characteristics together. However, sometimes you don't realize what

you do know when confronted with challenging students. What is critical is that you be able to articulate your philosophy of teaching diverse students and be able to explain, to yourself and others, how the practices you use fits this philosophy and, most importantly, meets the needs of all students in your class.

With all of these activities taking place in the classroom, each based on the commitment to help each student learn at his or her personal level and experience success and accomplishment, each student will know the joy of experiencing the Spirit of Mastery.

Reflection: Reflect on the concept of personal excellence and mastery for students. What implications does this have for teaching, learning, and schooling? Make a list of practices that would support the development of personal excellence and a sense of mastery within students.

Figure 2
Differentiated, Multilevel-Instruction
Contrasted with Traditional, Outdated Instructional Approaches

	General Education	Students with Special Needs
Segregation	One-size-fits-all curriculum organized around grade level. Allows for little ability variation.	Separate classes for students with disabilities, gifted and talented, second language learners
Ability grouping	One-size-fits-all curriculum organized around grade level. Allows for little ability variation.	Stable ability groups within and across classes; pull-out and pull-aside remedial instruction
Adapting	One-size-fits-all curriculum organized around grade level. Allows for little ability variation.	Some students in general education. Teachers use adaptations and modifications based on needs of individual students.
Differentiated, Multilevel Instruction:	Designing instruction so that students may function at multiple levels of ability, engaging in authentic learning, receiving support, yet learning in heterogeneous groups and situations.	Students with special needs are able to learn at their own level with support as part of the design of the class.

Chapter Five: Empower Citizens for Democracy

The Spirit of Mastery comes through activities where a motivation for competency and group involvement reinforces participation. (Brentro et al. 1990) The Circle of Courage identifies some of the qualities of a person with a healthy sense of mastery as competent, creative, persistent, and a problem-solver, and recognizes that these qualities are cultivated in young people when they are given responsibility to participate in their community and their participation is taken seriously. The WS classroom and school community ask students to participate on many different levels to make a high-quality learning environment and a caring culture and community. All students internalize the essence of democracy through participating in decision-making, acknowledging the achievements of the community and individuals, and sharing in the successes and even shortcomings of the community and individuals with the caring intention of creating solutions that will improve the classroom and school community for the future.

We hope that our students will become adults who make contributions to their communities, who are active citizens, who engage in democratic processes, who show leadership skills. As much as students learning academic skills in school, we expect them to become full human beings able to problem-solve with others and create new solutions for problems. This is a big calling but a critical one for the future of students as well as our society.

Empowering children to become citizens for and in a democracy is both a goal and a principle that guides daily practice in classrooms and schools. Students must experience, day-by-day, democracy in action. They must be taught explicitly how to take responsibility for themselves and others, to problem solve, and to use power and

authority wisely. Students must see democracy modeled by adults in the school in decision-making between staff and the administration and engagement of parents and community members in having input into the directions of the school.

In the daily life of the school and classroom, children have multiple opportunities to make choices, engage in dialogue, problem solve, and take responsibility for the use of power and resources guided by adults. Children, starting at the youngest ages, are afforded numerous opportunities for learning the substantive skills of democracy. These include but are not limited to (Apple, 1995; Dewey, 1916; Horrocks, March 16, 2005; Peterson et al., 2002; Skrtic, 1994):

- Leading and participating in classroom meetings to make decisions and solve problems
- Dialogue with the teacher regarding choices in the classroom curriculum
- Learning responsibility for selecting reading materials and work
- Developing class rules with the teacher and other classmates
- Supporting and helping other students in their learning
- Engaging in conflict resolution with support from teachers and other adults
- Studying the local community regarding issues and needs
- Learning about others in the class and how to honor diversity and the voices and contributions of all.

Reflection: Think about children you know. What have been their successes and problems in school? What do their experiences tell you about the functional practices of the school relative to instilling a sense of competency within their students that will allow them to set a standard of achievement for themselves based on personal excellence, as well as the competency and commitment to participate in a democracy that includes consideration for the needs of all people?

Chapter Six: Use Authentic Assessment to Promote Learning

The Spirit of Mastery includes the belief that mastery and success lead to feelings of inner satisfaction for the individual and a healthy form of social recognition. (Brendtro et al. 1990) It is also understood that opportunities to develop a sense of mastery must come from authentic activities relevant within a person's life situation. Children have a natural inclination to master tasks or abilities that are meaningful within their culture, and when they are achieved the success motivates them to master new and perhaps more complicated tasks and activities.

Assessment, from a WS perspective is an opportunity for students to show the level of mastery they have achieved focused around their classroom learning and to experience feelings of success. WS assessment practices reflect the idea that assessment must be closely related to what has been taught in the classroom, must offer a variety of ways to demonstrate knowledge, must be seen by the student as a tool to measure progress, and must lead to feelings of success and accomplishment for the student even if the results show need for further work in the area. When assessment leads to feelings of incompetence for students it is in direct conflict with the WS intention of assessment, which is to allow students to demonstrate the level of mastery they have achieved through their work and practice in the classroom. Assessment must be authentic, appropriate, and relevant for each student.

No area of educational practice is as controversial and problematic as student assessment. Throughout the world, a move is on whose stated goals are to make schools more accountable for their outcomes. A key piece of this movement is the use of standardized tests as the primary measure of effectiveness of student learning and

evaluation of schools. The fact is, however, if you are interested in pursuing personal excellence and citizenship for your students, standardized tests don't contribute very much. First, their focus is much too narrow. Most emphasize basic facts in core subjects such as reading, math, and science. Presently, such assessment is limited to these three areas under the requirements of NCLB in the United States. Even in these subjects, however, most tests do not engage students in problem solving and using skills and information in performing authentic tasks. Few involve students in meaningful thinking beyond factual recall. Of course, there simply *are no tests* for other important areas in children's development – eg. honesty, relationships, critical thinking, and more. The second problem is related to the first. Many schools are following the narrow focus of these tests to further narrow their curriculum, reducing and restricting the quality of learning (Kohn, 1999; Neill, Guisbond, & Schaeffer, 2004).

Effective assessment for personal excellence and citizenship has three key purposes: (1) guide teachers in developing, delivering, and adapting curriculum and instruction to facilitate children learning; (2) improve the culture and environment in schools to support learning; and (3) report progress regarding how well schools are achieving their stated purposes and goals to parents and the community. Most fundamentally, assessment should help determine whether a school is meeting its mission. That seems pretty fundamental. However, this seldom happens. While most school districts have mission statements that focus on the whole child promoting personal excellence and citizenship, when they assess student learning almost always these districts use the very traditional structure of 'subjects' as the framework for assessment. Thus, most school districts have

no way of knowing whether they are meeting their mission or not (Fairtest, 1995; Kohn, 1999; Peterson, 2001).

Effective schools go far beyond use the standardized tests. Rather teachers use authentic, curriculum-based assessment to determine what students know so that learning strategies can be targeted to help them go to the next level of performance. To *help children learn*, educators assess what students know, what they want to know (understanding that this itself is part of the learning process) and how students best learn. Assessment is used to guide daily instruction. Meaningful assessment must have the following characteristics (Fairtest, 1995; Kohn, 1999; Peterson, 2001):

- Be organized around the ultimate educational mission of the school – e.g. personal excellence, democratic citizenship, lifelong learner, etc.
- Be based on the actual curriculum and learning opportunities in the school
- Involve students in performing meaningful tasks that demonstrate learning authentic (connected to genuine activities related to home and community life)
- Focus on growth and improvement rather than meeting predetermined criteria or score that label a student as 'proficient' or 'non-proficient'.
- Provide accommodations and supports in the assessment process for all children based on their individual needs.
- Allow different levels of capacity, basing evaluation of learning primarily on two factors: (1) effort, and (2) improvement. This allows literally all children to be successful while still challenging them to learn and grow, not destroying eagerness and initiative.

- Provide multiple ways of demonstrating growth and learning – text, art, drama, demonstrations, and more.

Promising practices that move towards meeting these criteria include the following:

- Performance-based assessment strategies used in the classroom organized around key areas of focus
- Use of rubrics for particular skill development areas that can be used as a basis for assessment and reported in meaningful terms to parents
- Community presentations of learning developed from thematic study of key topics or community issues
- Portfolios to demonstrate learning using models as those of the Coalition of Essential School

Reflection: Choose a school or district and read its mission statement. How would you characterize their mission statement? Do they care about developing students to be good people and citizens, or do they only care about creating workers? Do you think the assessment practices in the school match the goals of the mission statement? If the goals are to develop good people and democratic-minded citizens, are assessment practices constructed and integrated into the educational process to support those goals? Are students prepared for assessments and are assessments used to acknowledge, support, and plan a student's learning, or are the results used to stigmatize and perhaps segregate a student?

Chapter Seven: Support Learning

The Spirit of Independence flourishes within a person when they have a sense of power over their own behavior and in their environment and know that they are capable of asserting themselves in positive ways. (Brendtro, et al. 1990) The Circle of Courage emphasizes that children need to be within a supportive group to develop a sense of independence. While this seems paradoxical, it is the supportive group that provides the security and the feedback that guides the development of independence for the individual.

Any supportive group, including a classroom or school, where one of the primary aims is to develop within individuals a healthy sense of independence, must have a full realization that the ultimate goal is for the individual to be free and in control of their own choices and life direction. (Glasser, 1986) The supportive group must base their practices with the goal of developing independent individuals in mind. The WS classroom, with its philosophy of personal excellence and citizenship, is committed to provide the supportive group where all students get the nurturing and service they need to develop the Spirit of Independence. In this spirit, WS feels the need to provide all special services to students in the classroom, rather than on a pull-out basis. WS believes that students targeted for services such as speech therapy or social work are best served within the context of the classroom whenever possible with the participation of classmates, peers, and teachers. WS believes this eliminates any stigma a student feels about being removed from the classroom and any sense of alienation or powerlessness the student may feel about a special need. The student receiving the service should experience the encouragement and acceptance in the supportive group, and the classroom as a whole and supportive group should be strengthened in their ability to empathize with others,

encourage others, and to understand and respect the different needs of others. Essentially, the Support Learning principle embodies the goal for empowering students, all students, to express a positive and constructive power in their own lives, in their influence upon others, and in their environment, with the belief that these empowered students will develop a healthy sense of independence.

Have you ever heard about what Senge (1990) called the *tragedy of the commons?* Here's an example. As you have likely experienced, most schools have limits on the funds they use for the amount of copy paper they can buy. Teachers need paper for their classes and often the supply runs out by the end of the year. What's the solution? Obvious, right? You go to the supply closet and take what you need for the entire year and hide it at home! Does this really work? Well, *you* may have enough paper this year but other teachers will not. If 3 or 4 teachers do what you did a number of teachers may not have paper by the 3rd month. So what is the tragedy of the commons? It occurs when the common ground of the community is sacrificed for the individual needs of one person, when resources needed to sustain these common grounds are taken and used for individuals or separate programs thus weakening the community core. This is, in fact, what happens in too many schools where specialized resources are used to pull students out of classes rather than providing support to strengthen the core common ground of the school – the general education class.

In schools where educators seek to empower children, include all, build community and teach to children at multiple levels of ability, specialized services are restructured to build and strengthen the middle – the general education classroom. Special classes and pull-out services are eliminated. A range of specialists are available to most schools in

most countries to deal with special needs and problems of children – social workers, special education teachers, bilingual teachers, psychologists, nurses, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and others. In a traditional school, most of these people work on their own with limited consultation with others and pull children out of class for various services. In a school working towards personal excellence and citizenship, however, specialists work collaboratively with the general education classroom to meet the individual needs of students and help the teacher create a classroom that meets the needs of all - creating space for all, building community, dealing proactively with behavior challenges, teaching at multiple ability levels (Idol, 1997; Tiegerman-Farber & Radziewicz, 1998; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000).

At a school level, specialists work together to form a *support team*, a collaborative, trans-disciplinary support system for teachers, students, and families. Typically such support teams often meet weekly together to talk about children with special problems and needs and brainstorm together how to deal with the issue. General education teachers and specialists have scheduled planning times at least every two weeks to develop plans on teaching together and address concerns of specific children. (Friend & Cook, 2003; Idol, 1997; Tiegerman-Farber & Radziewicz, 1998; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000).

Reflection: Think of a classroom or school that you know. How do the students there receive special services? If students are pulled out of the classroom, what are they missing while they are gone, both academically and socially? What opportunities are other students missing to help and to learn? Can you picture whole class or small group activities that specialists could do in the classroom that would promote the learning of the individual while allowing all to participate in a culture of caring that supports the development of independence for each student?

Chapter Eight: Build a Caring Community

The Spirit of Generosity is expressed when a person shares what is important and valuable of themselves with others who need, value and appreciate it. (Brendtro, et al. 1990) In order to be a whole and healthy person we must give something of ourselves to the community that we are a part of, and our contributions must be meaningful and valued. The Spirit of Generosity is not embodied in just donating to a charity, or giving away possessions to the needy because we no longer need them. The Spirit of Generosity is truly present when we give something that is important to us to another. It is usually something that may be hard for us to give because of an attachment or because it requires us to invest time, energy, and effort from ourselves, but we give it with a willing heart because of the joy we feel when we know we can give to others the many good feelings and experiences we have been able to have because of what has been given to us. Our ability to care for others is a strong validation of our self-worth.

In the principle Building a Caring Community, that is just what WS students are given the opportunity to do, be generous with themselves. Students are encouraged to use their talents and abilities to help each other individually and as a community. Not only are students encouraged, but students will have the chance to share themselves in real situations while they build a caring classroom and school community, sharing whatever their particular talents are – writing, art, music, math, computers, reading, problem-solving, peer-mediating, organizing, and the list keeps going – to build their caring classroom and school community.

The Spirit of Generosity comes into being within a person when their needs for Belonging, Mastery, and Independence are successfully met. Essentially, when our own

needs are met, we can help meet the needs of others. In WS one of the most important educational outcomes is for the student to be able to participate while as a student, and in the future as an adult in contributing to society in a truly democratic way, with a true understanding and experience of what democracy really is, and to be a willing to give of himself as an educated person and as a good citizen.

Building community in a classroom involves many actions. At its foundation, however, this concept literally links personal excellence and citizenship. On the one hand, we seek to teach children how to help one another, how to care for each other, and how to improve their social skill and abilities to interact with diverse students. Students are learning skills that will last them a lifetime and contribute to their personal success in life (Charney, 2002; Gibbs, 1995; Noddings, 1992).

However, students are also learning how to be part of an effective group, how to build a sense of community and care among people. They learn responsibility for helping the classroom community function so that the needs of all its members are met. They learn how to form relationships with others and how to problem solve when inevitable conflicts emerge. These learnings are both about expanding capacity for personal excellence and contribution to the well being of the group (citizenship) (Developmental Studies Developmental Studies Center, 1994; Gibbs, 1995; Sapon-Shevin, 1994).

The sense of safety, security, belonging, support that students feel in a classroom with a strong community provides the absolutely necessary base to support high levels of cognitive and academic learning. Studies of the brain have made clear that emotions are the literal gateway to cognitive functioning. Said differently, to the degree that students feel threatened, insecure, isolated and rejected is the degree to which their brain literally

shuts down. Alternatively, when students feel they belong to a caring community, the mind has space in which to operate at its highest, deepest, most creative levels. So building community helps us to work towards outcomes of personal excellence and citizenship while providing a foundation for the highest levels of cognitive functioning (Caine & Caine, 1994; 1997; Goleman, 1995).

Students learn individual skills and contribute to the classroom community, not by isolated lessons on social skills but by actually participating in a real, live, complex group in the classroom. Chris Horrocks (March 16, 2005), who works part-time teaching paraprofessionals in a community college and part-time as a special education support teacher in inclusive classrooms, shared his perspective regarding how community is built in a classroom. He stated that the "classroom community is built through developing a sense of shared history by creating opportunities for shared experiences. It is about the basic things like:

- Getting to know other students at the beginning of the year by sharing stories, personal journals and self-portraits, and more.
- Shared story time
- Collaborative writing
- Singing with your group
- Field trips together
- Watching a slide show of the activities your class did this week
- Establishing routines at the beginning and end of the day and week
- Student having jobs in the managing of the class

- Shared decision-making
- Future planning
- Initiating reflective discussions
- Celebrating accomplishments
- Students serving as experts to one another
- Kids helping kids before depending on service relationships
- Developing buddy systems and critical friends and learning pods
- Kids undertake the rituals of welcoming and bidding farewell.

Building community in a class is about relationships. (Wright & Cleary, 2006) That may seem obvious. However, we have seen schools try any number of community building strategies as gimmicks to try to get kids to act how they want them to. In other words, they use these as tools of control rather than tools to build mutually respectful relationships among all involved. Of course, kids are very smart. They can sense a phony a mile away. When educators use these strategies in this way, community is *not* built even though the trappings appear to be there.

This brings us to another huge issue. What about students with behavior challenges – from small, irritating behaviors to those that are very dangerous? If we build community, do we have heaven and, therefore, no problem behaviors? Well, obviously not. People aren't perfect. Conflicts always exist. Students always will have huge problems in their lives they don't know how to handle and this will spill over into the classroom.

However, what we *can* say is that when educators and children work together to build community, where students feel a sense of belonging and care, where there is a

systematic effort to meet their social-emotional needs, there will be *less* behavior problems and more resources to help positively deal with challenges that do occur (Charney, 2002; Kohn, 1996; Rimm-Kaufman, 2006).

In too many classrooms and school, when students display behaviors that are seen to be problematic the central goal is to get them to simply *stop*, to act differently. Where community and relationships are seen as the guiding force, however, the focus is on the *emotional needs* of the child. These teachers will ask a critical question most often not asked in other schools: "*Why* is this student acting this way? What needs are not being met? How can we help her to get these needs met in a way that is not problematic to other people?" Rather than seeking to control the student, adults work to help students *learn* about their own needs, about new ways to get what they need. This approach is called *positive behavior support.* (Albin, Horner, & O'Neill, 1994; Lawrence, 1994; Sprague & Golly, 2005; Sugai, 2002).

Educators who connect community building and positive behavior support also do something else that is remarkable. They are *committed* to caring for, helping and *keeping* children in their classrooms rather than seeking to get rid of them, sending them to a special education classroom or alternative school. These teachers know that zero tolerance, where students may be expelled and worse for even minor infractions, does not create a safe school nor does sending students to separate programs where many students with emotional and behavioral challenges are grouped together. They know that, as in prisons, students learn *more* problematic behaviors in these situations. These teachers know that the *only* way to create a safe school is to build community and give all students opportunities to learn how to manage their lives in a culture of care and mutual support.

Reflection: What are your own thoughts and feelings about meeting the emotional needs of children? Most people think this is absolutely necessary to the healthy and happy development of children. The four points on the Circle of Courage document this understanding for us. What are your thoughts and feelings about meeting the emotional needs of children while they are students in the classroom and school setting? Many people have the opinion that school is not a place where students' emotional needs warrant consideration or attention. What is your own belief about this issue? If your philosophy is to meet the emotional needs of students, then what strategies could you use in the classroom and school to implement your philosophy?

Chapter Nine: Partner with Families and the Community

The Circle of Courage is a circle where the qualities necessary to the healthy development and continued stability of a well-developed, happy, mature, and altruistic person are charted with a constant flow of one quality to the next and with the fixed points of the qualities at East, South, West, and North showing how the qualities balance one another. Of course, each principle of the Eight Principles of Whole Schooling has within it the flow and balance of all four qualities on the Circle of Courage, however, within this book the predominant theme of each principle is compared to its matching theme on the Circle of Courage. When we study the Circle of Courage, it seems like one quality, sense, or 'Spirit' of Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity, needs to be experienced before an individual can flow to the next. Even in Generosity, which seems to be the culmination of experiencing all the other qualities, and seems to mark the degree of highest development in an individual, that of being able and willing to give of oneself, unselfishly, for the good of others, is not a stopping point, but rather it seems to flow naturally back into Belonging. Generosity and all of its products naturally bring about the environment where Belonging can most likely occur, and Belonging seems to be what an individual needs to experience first in order to achieve Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.

Understanding the flow of the qualities on the Circle of Courage is what makes the last of the Eight Principles so interesting. The principle Partner with Families and the Community has two strong themes, both Generosity and Belonging. Students will experience a sense of Generosity when they see themselves and their school interacting with the community because the school has something of value to give the community,

and is valued by the community. At this point in the development of a Whole Schooling school, the students, teachers, and everyone there have established an environment that cultivates a sense of Belonging for all-comers. When new students, teachers, or other personnel arrive at the school, they feel the sense of acceptance and established security that will allow them to meet their own need for a sense of Belonging, so that they too may become confident and be willing to try new things, find their talents and abilities, develop new skills, and experience Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.

Perhaps the hardest thing for educators to do is to reach outside the bureaucracy and walls of the school to connect with parents and people and organizations in the community in which the school is located. After all, teaching is pretty demanding. Moving from just meeting people to really developing a working partnership is particularly challenging. However, the evidence is very clear. When teachers and families develop positive, collaborative relationships children learn better, at deeper levels. Similarly, when teachers and the school as a whole develop working partnerships with businesses, individuals, and organizations the children's learning for personal excellence and citizenship is strengthened (Becher, 1984; Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1994).

Parents of children with special needs in schools aimed towards education of workers have typically gone through much with their children. They parents receive much negative feedback from the school. Their children are rejected and 'sent away' to special education classes or separate schools. In schools working towards personal excellence and citizenship, however, educators *immediately* invite their children into inclusive classes. They meet with and listen carefully to what parents have to tell us about their children, seeking to understand the child's gifts, strengths, and needs, strategies that

work, and interests of the child from the parent. Teachers work to welcome all children into their classes and communicate to parents that they want the input of the family to help the teacher know about the child (Moore, 2000; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1996)

Reflection: Do you remember a time when you were a child and you gave someone a gift and you could tell it really pleased them? How did it make you feel about yourself and about them? Do you remember ever having someone you couldn't please or didn't seem to care or notice what you did, even when you tried to do something to please them? How did this make you feel about yourself and about them? How do you think students' and schools' connections with the larger community involving projects, services, partnerships, and the like contribute to a student's view of themselves, their view of their relationship with the world, and to their education as a whole experience? Think of some services or projects that students of different age, grade, and ability levels could do that would benefit or help the community. Do you think that the students giving of themselves to the community for the benefit of others, this Generosity, helps reinforce the Belonging a student feels within that community? Think of the ways that these types of activities are opportunities for Mastery and Independence, as well.

Chapter Ten: Stories That Tell the Story

Let's hear the stories of two sets of children: (1) Jill, Bill and Phil; and (2) Mary, Gary, and Larry. (You got it! We changed their names.) Let's start with Jill, who has a cognitive impairment (mental retardation it was called until recently), Phil, who has a label of emotional disturbance, and Bill who is considered gifted. Bill, Jill, and Phil went to the same school district, but were never in a single class together because each of them was placed in separate programs for kids who had their same label. The school district served many low income children and it had many schools that were considered 'failing schools' throughout their school years. Consequently, the district structured the entire curriculum around the subjects on which the state standardized tests were based – math and reading.

Bill entered a school for children considered gifted in the 3rd grade and a tracked 'high achievers' program in middle and high school. Originally supportive, Bill's parents became increasingly concerned about his problems in interacting with others and his disdain of those not as 'smart' as he was. Bill graduated from high school, went to Harvard and was shocked that he was not still ahead of most students. He fell into deep depression and shortly withdrew from school.

Jill was in separate special education classes for cognitively impaired students at the end of the hall her entire school career working year after year on her alphabet. She went into a sheltered workshop and group home when she graduated. Jill always wanted to be with other kids and her mother had finally convinced the school to try this in the 9th grade. However, it didn't work. "I couldn't keep up," explained Jill, "and the teacher didn't want me there".

Phil had a tough life. His dad was murdered when he was three and his mother couldn't cope. They moved a lot from house to house. In 3rd grade Phil was put in a program for students with emotional disturbance. He started skipping school a lot in the 5th grade and was in a self-contained program in middle school where his class was locked in one room the whole day, not permitted to interact with other students at all. The kids in the high school called it 'The Jail' (the staff who worked there did also!). At age 14 Phil dropped out of school, went from minimum wage job to job. At age 19 he was arrested for a burglary in which a shop keeper was injured. By age 21 Phil was in prison with a 15 year sentence.

Our other three students (who had the same labels) had an amazingly different experience. Mary, Gary, and Larry went to school together their entire school career attending many of the same classes beginning in elementary school. They had good times and tough times but were close friends when they graduated from high school. Their school also served many children from low income backgrounds. However, an innovative superintendent had vowed that under his watch that they would not narrow the curriculum or put teachers under fear of losing their jobs due to pressures from the state. He established an initiative in which teachers, administrators, and parents collaborated in making decisions about the school and developed ways to connect the curriculum to student interests and resources in the local neighborhoods.

Mary was considered by the teachers in her elementary school to be one of the most able children they had ever known. In Mary's classes teachers had learned to teach at multiple levels and build a community of learners, involving students in studying complex problems of their community and the world. Students in Mary's classes often

delighted in finding work that was challenging for her or getting her to explain complex information in ways they could understand. Later, when she was pursuing her MBA at Harvard and when she was working to start her own computer services marketing business, she thought back how much about management, sales, and communication she had learned with her peers. She was grateful.

Gary had a moderate cognitive impairment. He became particularly good friends with both Mary and Larry. He had difficulty speaking though he communicated in many other ways. He had a circle of friends who acted as something of a social club. They also helped the teacher figure out fun and practical ways for Gary to be learning in all the class activities. His circle began in the 4th grade and continued, with no staff support, throughout high school. By then he had become very interested in politics and had a dream of working as an aide or welcomer for a legislator in Congress. He audited several courses on politics at a local university. As it turned out, the mother of one of Mary's friends was a representative from their small state. She met Gary when at Mary's house on Spring break. Her dad agreed for Gary to move to Washington and work in his office. Mary provided them advice on how to structure support for Gary at work. They accessed funding along with that provided by the legislator to provide additional needed assistance. Gary has become active in national advocacy groups for people with disabilities. He is having a ball and setting a model for people with cognitive disabilities.

Larry's life has been very hard. His parents worked long and hard hours. He saw them little. When he was in the 4th grade, his parents were divorced in a bitter fight. Larry withdrew, became depressed, and lashed out violently at school. He moved in with his aunt who lived in a small manufactured home at the edge of town. Things didn't get

much better at home though. His aunt had problems with drugs and alcohol and was frequently out of work.

It was amazing, however, what happened with Larry at school. Despite the problems he caused, the adults at Larry's school created something of a blanket of protection around him and were afraid he would be taken to another school where he would be dealt with differently. They helped form a circle of friends for Larry, helped him think about his life, and formed teacher to teacher partnerships to provide support in working with Larry. Larry responded bit by bit, pulling himself together. In high school he was on the honor roll and in an assembly received a standing ovation when given an award for a service project with older people in the community. After high school, Larry still struggled but kept in contact with Mary, Gary, and others in their circle. He went to a community college for a technical degree in computer repair. When Mary returned to town, he went to work for her. Both discovered that Larry had a talent for working with customers who were themselves undergoing stress. Mary, Gary, and Larry, along with three other members of their circle, get together once a year for a reunion.

There certainly is a difference between the school experiences of Bill, Jill, and Phil, and Mary, Gary, and Larry, and how their lives were impacted by it. It is pretty clear that Bill, Jill, and Phil were in a school culture where students were separated and segregated. In their story there was not even one example of something that sounded like one of the Eight Principles. Bill never learned to use his gifted intellect to provide leadership, ideas, and support to help others and contribute to creating a caring culture. Although he may have had a sense of Belonging, it was as a privileged person and not with the true diversity of the real world. His sense of Mastery seems distorted, as well, when we look

at the fact that he had disdain for others less smart than he was, and that he became depressed at Harvard when he found all the students there were as smart as himself. His Independence seems to be floundering and he has not yet achieved Generosity. Jill was cognitively impaired and in a separated classroom and wanted to try a regular classroom, only to experience rejection when she was finally allowed. She had no variety or challenge in the work she encountered in the special classroom. Could Jill have had a sense of Belonging in a school where she wasn't wanted in a classroom? Did she have opportunities for Mastery when she repeated only the lessons for the alphabet year after year? Phil experienced rejection because of his troubling behavior. He had a traumatic life at home and school provided no relief or positive experiences to help counteract that. What did confinement in one classroom all day do to Phil's sense of Belonging, or his opportunities for Mastery? For that matter, what were the opportunities for Bill, Jill, and Phil to get any of their needs met for Belonging, Mastery, Independence, or Generosity in their school environments? Furthermore, how could they have even comprehended and developed personal excellence for themselves, learned to fully understand democracy, and been prepared to be a good, contributing citizen?

On the other hand, Mary, Gary, and Larry had quite different experiences which definitely had a positive impact on the course of their lives. In their story we hear several references to some of the Eight Principles. As we read their story, we hear that students are all included in learning together; are experiencing multi-level, differentiated, and authentic instruction; are helping each other learn and looking out for one another; are having opportunities to pursue some of their own interests during learning; a sense of Belonging is intentionally created by adults in the school; and the parents and the

community have a connection with the school that both the students and the community benefit from. Like Bill in the first group of students, Mary was very smart also, but she was encouraged by her peers to challenge her abilities and she helped them learn when they had trouble. Mary went to college and set up her own business and felt her school experience helped her have success. Mary experienced Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity at school. Gary was cognitively impaired like Jill from the first group. Gary, however, was in the same classroom with students of different abilities and was accepted and looked out for by them. He was able to participate in learning activities at his level and to pursue learning about his own interest of politics. He was helped by parents to get a job where he could serve in politics at his ability-level and pursue his interest. Gary also experienced Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity at school. Larry, who had troubling behavior, like Phil in the first group, was responded to very differently at his school. Larry's troubling behavior was recognized by the adults around him as an expression of his inner troubles and unmet needs and the adults knew it needed to be responded to with care, support, and protection and intentionally did so. They worked especially to provide Larry with a sense of Belonging, by keeping Larry at the school and helping him form a circle of friends, and by teachers giving Larry direct support. Larry responded and developed some success in school, became involved in service learning in the community, went to college, maintained friendships, and had a talent for helping others undergoing stress and used it. In this school environment, Larry has also experienced Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.

These stories bring to life an obvious and very important fact: the differences in approaches used in schools are not 'academic', theoretical, and disconnected from real life issues. Rather, *what happens in school matters*. It matters a great deal. The impacts are deep and lifelong. We owe it to Phil, Bill, and Jill to use the practices that we know help students do their best and become their best in school and in life.

Terms

Authentic assessment – A way of assessing students that usually does not include a traditional prewritten test. Authentic assessment looks for students to independently perform a task they have learned or to provide a product and presentation that is representative of the learning that has taken place.

Authentic instruction – An instructional strategy where classroom tasks and assignments are designed by the teacher, and often with much input from the students, to include topics and issues for study and research that are important to students and are close or familiar to them in their everyday lives or their environment.

Circle of friends – A strategy used by teachers and schools as a means of developing and providing support for students from among their peers. A circle of friends is an informal peer support group. Adults can develop a group of students who will provide support for a student who needs help in some areas. A circle of friends can function in several ways, from making sure a particular child has a playmate during recess, to helping them learn social skills, to helping them with homework or various assignments.

Differentiated instruction – An instructional strategy where classroom tasks and assignments are designed by the teacher so that students of different ability levels can respond to the assignment at their own level. It can also be the design of a class, team, or group project where students of different abilities assume responsibility of a task that is suitable to their interest and ability in order to complete the whole task together.

"Just right" learning – This is a term that is intended to become part of the classroom cultural language, so that students will understand that not all students will be expected to do the same work or assignments concerning length, type, sophistication, and level of difficulty. It is a term to describe each student's own appropriate level of challenge for learning and how it is expressed in the assignments and work that they do. It is an important component of learning personal excellence because it is intended to help students develop honesty and responsibility for their capabilities and that the work they produce matches their capabilities.

Multi-level instruction – An instructional strategy where the classroom tasks and assignments are designed so that students of many different ability levels work together and part of their learning is finding ways to work together successfully. Multi-level instruction includes many different ways to accomplish a learning task. Assignments are rarely one-size-fits-all, but rely on individual student's strengths, talents, and learning styles and allows them to bring these things to the learning process. Multi-level instruction classrooms understand that students learn and express learning in many different ways including, reading, writing, drama, performing, art, and so on.

Naïve psychology – An inadequate reference or interpretation of an individual's or human behavior based on shallow or superficial understanding of people's motives for behavior. Vygotsky (1930-31), who originated this phrase, gave an excellent example when he explained that it is like a person who sees trees swaying in the wind and interprets it as that the swaying trees are causing the wind to blow.

Pull-out instruction – A term used to describe when a special education student is pulled out of the classroom and taken to a separate location for some form of instruction, often by a teacher consultant. It is also used to refer to the student being pulled out of the classroom for other special services, such as social work, psychological, or speech and language therapy.

Push-in instruction – A term used to describe when specialists, such as special education teachers, teacher consultants, social workers, etc., enter the general education classroom and provide services to special education students while they are included in the general education classroom and in the context of some classroom activity which can include classmates and the general education classroom teacher.

Service learning – A learning strategy that is generally intended toward positive character development of students and in helping establish goodwill between the school and the community. Service learning can encompass a broad variety of activities or projects that benefit others in the community, or even students in younger grades. It can include tutoring, mentoring, volunteering at hospitals or community service agencies, or organizing fundraising and food drives for people in need. Service learning makes students aware of the greater world outside themselves, sensitizes students to the needs of others, and allows them to experience the power and ability they do have to help others and effect change in the world.

Whole Schooling Assessment and Planning Tool

Directions

Whole Schooling is an effective approach to building effective schools in which diverse students learn well together based on the Eight Principles of Whole Schooling and associated practices.

The following pages provide a document by which teachers may engage in self-assessment regarding their skills in implementing practices associated with the Eight Principles of Whole Schooling. Teachers, teacher teams, and administrators may work together to analyze strengths and needs and use this information to set targets and strategies for improving teacher skills and practices.

To complete the survey, indicate to what extent a particular practice is true with reference to your own teaching practices. Use the following anchors to rate your 'skills and practices': never true, rarely true, often true, or always true. For the column labeled 'importance' indicate how important you believe a given practice is in teaching diverse students together well. Use 'not at all important', 'of limited importance', important', or 'crucial' ratings to indicate the degree to which you agree that each item is important in teaching diverse learners together.

This survey was developed by Michael Peterson, Lynne Tamor, and Umesh Sharma for the Whole Schooling Consortium.

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Additional Resources

Reclaiming Youth International/Circle of Courage: www.reclaiming.com

Whole Schooling Consortium: www.wholeschooling.net

International Journal of Whole Schooling:

www.coe.wayne.edu/wholeschooling/Journal_of_Whole_Schooling/IJWSIndex.html

Reclaiming Children and Youth (Journal): **http://journal.reclaiming.com**

Artwork

The Circle of Courage artwork from the cover and on page 28 are works of George Blue Bird. Color posters are available of the picture of the Circle of Courage in the center surrounded by the four representations of the points on the circle in 19" by 28" prints at 1-888-647-2532