

Synopsis of Presentations:

Let's Talk

Public Forum Series
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Forum #1

Native American Approach to Learning

Alden Naranjo, Ute Series Keynote Speaker

You may hear what I say, but you may not understand, or you may not hear it. That is ok, perhaps you weren't ready to understand it. **We may say something good, and it's good even if you don't understand it. One day perhaps you will hear and understand things that you did not understand today.**

One day we will come together and understand each other . The sixties began the changes. A lot of walls came down . We were taught prejudice in school and always wondered why we couldn't all be the same. The elders say we are the same, all equal, no one is better than another. The day will come when there will be a new beginning, a new life, a new understanding when all four colors of man will come together.

We must teach our children something that will benefit them and their children for seven generations. We all have a choice to teach our children something good, in the past we didn't have a choice. Laws have been put in front of us as stumbling blocks. We must overcome these stumbling blocks.

We must teach our children the complete circle, something they can cherish and hold onto. Teach them to speak from the heart not only from the mouth.

It is now time to make the step, now is the time to give the children a hand, now is the time to say something good, then you will know you came forward and did something good.

Wallace Black Elk, Lakota

Columbus brought the first boat people, illegal aliens, to Turtle Island, the island of peace. They brought with them disease, alcohol, weapons and death.

The education represented by John Harvard teaches laws, rules, regulations and the abuse of the rock, fire, water and green. It promotes a philosophy based on gold, using the fire to melt gold, silver, copper. This education leaves out the Holy Father and Mother-Tunkashila and Grandmother Earth. This education teaches about stuff and things-nouns. It does not teach that there are little verbs inside, that everything is alive. The nine parts of speech come in little sacks with no connection. Secretly we hold the power to communicate with all of Creation.

This education teaches people to stay off the grass, to stay on the concrete. This concrete separates us from our Mother and other living things. We are so close, but so far away.

We put ourselves to work when we invented the wheel. Man creates nothing. God created the nucleus and from there came all of life and it goes on and on forever. We build beautiful houses that look wonderful from the outside, but in the back yard is a junk yard.

The English language is not rooted. When we say "See Spot run. Spot says arf, arf." What does arf, arf mean? The puppy has a spirit and its own language. Mainstream education and language does not recognize this.

We are a runaway people. For thousands and thousands of years we ran away from Tunkashila and Grandmother Earth and ended up under the gold dome.

When we learn to count we need to start with 0 - with the nucleus of the atom which is everything. We need to understand that numbers talk.

We have lost our mind's eye. Our ability to hear, taste and smell are very restricted at this time. All of these abilities are centered in the heart. The mind is in the heart. If we use our heart/mind we can communicate with all living things through telepathic waves.

Wallace's teachers, mentors, were the 4-legged, birds, trees, grasses, fish. His parents tucked him away so that the government people missed him when they came to take the children away to boarding school. He was never formally educated. He came to understand the true chemical(telepathic) language of all aspects of Creation and they taught him what he knows. There are only a handful of people left like him. He has come to the concrete jungle to tell the people they are mistaken.

Water, fire, rock and green gave birth to wisdom, knowledge, power and gift. **In God we must trust.**

Tunkashila said "Look at my hand for it is sacred, my hand is the winged, the 4-legged the creepers, the crawlers, fish people, all the way down to the 2-legged.

We must all put our heads together, we are all going to speak the same mind again-all forms of life will communicate. The time will come when we will reunite, sober up and no longer abuse the water, fire, rock and green.

We must leave something for our little people so they can come to a place they call a happy home. Tunkashila and the Holy Mother will not punish us, they will welcome us home. But there is the chance we will commit mass suicide.

To go on from here we must bring all aspects of our culture together-legal, religious, medical, and science in a circle and listen to each other talk. We must remove the lines that separate us and must reorganize, reaffirm, renew and rededicate ourselves so that we may properly educate our children. We must put the Holy Mother Earth back under the gold dome and bring in the water, berries, corn and meat - the source of life.

Enough is enough.

Dr. Emily Bornstein, Psychologist

She is a product of the best education the Western European culture has to offer. Prep school in New England, Carlton College, MA at the Univ. of Chicago, PHD in Psychology from the Univ. of Denver. She has practiced clinical psychology for 25 years with children and adults. She left her field to become a real psychologist. Psyche=soul. She has been studying with and assisting Wallace for 5 years and has found this endeavor far more challenging intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually than the many years of her classical education.

Two things she has learned is to be precise with language and to live life with intention, consciously.

When problem children were brought to her, they were primarily gifted(high IQ) children. She helped them by getting on their wave length, finding out what interested them and pursuing it with them and their behavior problems disappeared. Why are our schools failing these children?

We know much about children and what is best for them that we are not using. e.g. boys are not ready to sit for 6 hours at age six, nothing has ever been shown that hitting children is effective or beneficial in any way, yet we continue to do it.

Our childrearing practices have lead to anxiety-driven individuals stemming from the practice of putting babies in their own rooms alone. Anxiety interferes with learning. Such a practice is inconceivable to the Native American culture.

Native American children act different from ours and parents do not act as we do. Children seldom cry. When they fall down, they are picked up right away, loved and comforted. There are no orphans, everyone is related through a vast network of blood and clan relatives. Every child is raised by everyone. There is a huge security net. Grandparents take charge of the children's education. Wallace learned geometry from his grandmother who did bead work.

In education, if we want to raise children who are good at taking tests, then give them lots of tests. If we want to raise children with an understanding of how the world works, who understand what a frog is about without cutting him open and looking at his insides then we must look at the way we teach. How we approach learning makes a big difference.

We are not paying attention to the wisdom of our own Western European teachers. Socrates talked of education, of following up on the natural interests. Emily found **if you take the time to understand the child, find out his interests and follow up on them you will have an excited learner.**

We are not raising people who are good at paying attention, listening and contemplating. **We must learn to wait, watch and listen.**

Emily hopes that in her talk she has helped to open our hearts and minds to consider other ways to help our little people learn about our beautiful world

Let's Talk

Forum # 2

Education: Birth Through Adulthood

Dr. Harold Whitcomb, MD

The Connection Syndrome: Hope for the Future

Why man has evolved the way he has. Why we are in difficulty. Why we are looking to the schools to do what we don't know how to do. Parents who don't know how to be parents want the schools to be parents.

People used to have children as a means of survival, to keep the farm going. They did not know how to be parents and raised a generation of children who were not connected and who don't know how to be parents.

Original man was organized in clans and lived on grains, then as more and more people came they began to vie for resources and the greed factor kicked in. This fear of scarcity and attendant greed and hoarding lead to a breakdown of the community and family. Early tribes stole from one another, attacked and killed each other. The European heritage has exacerbated this behavior to the present day where the community and family has broken down to the point where many don't know what to do with the babies or the children.

With the unforgiving childrearing practices of the European is very hard for a person to feel the peace and contentment needed to be a whole human being. In primitive cultures the children belong to everyone and have a deep sense of connectedness. In our culture parents don't feel connected, children don't feel connected and the home is often a place of sexual, physical and emotional abuse. One out of four families sexually abuse girls in the home. We are a very violent and abusive country. It is very common for a

mother to have no idea how to bond with her baby. We are raising people with no value for themselves or others which leads to the enormous crime rates we have.

We must look at different ways to help people see that they have value and that life has meaning.

Rather than say to people you must become a better parent we must realize that we have a problem and seek new ways to work together as a team to raise the children in a way that they understand that they have value and are connected to a network of people who care for them.

We are looking to the schools to accomplish this for us. Perhaps it is the schools that will provide the framework for this next step. It will never happen in the home.

Tom Crum

Discovery Vs. Perfection: The Path to Peak Performance

I know of no other people in this town that work as hard and as courageously as the school teachers. In my mind they are in one of the most important professions in the world. All three of my children have been in the school system here and they have had a very positive experience. I applaud the Aspen schools, administrators and parents for the continued hard work at bringing the best possible opportunities for learning to our children. Every parent and teacher in this town would like to see the students on the path to unveiling their full potential and operating at a peak performance level. Why aren't we doing it? The difficulty that I see in accomplishing such a task in today's world is a systemic one. We are operating in a paradigm that doesn't work very well. And this paradigm is not just in our educational system. It's in our businesses, government and personal lives. The paradigm is that of perfection, the measuring of our self-esteem based on performance or a model of someone or something. The paradigm I believe we should be striving for is based on discovery with the emphasis on the fundamental elements of creativity, inquiry and participation. (please see attached). **We must surround our children with people who embrace a new paradigm of acceptance, understanding and affirmation of the individual if we want to encourage peak performance. A paradigm of judgment, control, and fear of failure leads to a life of struggle. It is not a natural state.**

Relationship, resourcefulness and responsibility are the three R's that we must emphasize in our teachers and our children, our homes and businesses. It is within this superstructure that the children will be willing and able to take in information, the traditional 3 r's.

We must understand that we should not be educating our children for the work force.

The rate of change is so great in today's world that it is too difficult to anticipate correctly the specific job skill needs in the future when our children become adults. This is something that we were able to do in past generations and, hence, preparing the child for the "work force" was a driving force in education. Information is changing daily and any education dedicated solely to information will be obsolete in the near future. We don't know what the world will look like in the year 2000 but we must prepare our children to succeed in it. They must be resourceful, responsible and understand their relationship to the world. They must know **how** to learn, **how** to deal with change and **how** to relate to one another.

The natural state for a person is to inquire, participate and create with a fascination of outcome, a willingness to do whatever it takes, spontaneously, without judgment and control which leads to work becoming play through acceptance, understanding and affirmation. It is in this state that peak performance is encouraged.

Schools, businesses and families must shift to encouraging this natural state. In order to do this we must retool, rethink, how we treat ourselves and our children. To change the system we must change our thinking.

When we hire teachers we must continue to look for people who can model the attributes of understanding, affirmation and acceptance. True teaching ability has little to do with degrees. The criteria for real teaching is not acquired in schools, it comes from within the individual. **We can have**

great structures, great curricula but if the environment is controlling and judgmental we will continue to produce judgmental, limited, controlling people.

We must understand that change is the one constant in the universe and we must prepare everyone to embrace change, the unknown, and give them the tools to walk fearlessly forward without the need to limit and control.

Jon Seigle

Curriculum of Choices

In 1990 four school board members with a combined total of 40 years of school board experience and 10 teachers met all summer to look at the forest without the trees and came up with another option for educating children. The concept which emerged they called the "Curriculum of Choices."

Several curricula would be offered within one building. These curricula would arise out of the interest of the teachers and the students. All aspects of a child's education would be offered through an area of interest, by a teacher who shares that interest. Examples of possible curricula are the traditional, outdoor ed and the arts.

Standards would be set that each child must know upon exiting a building to ensure that the child has acquired the necessary information for proceeding through life and the American school system.

This structure will take into account different learning styles and different teaching styles and would use the resources in the community-the arts and the outdoors. No one curriculum would be forced on anyone. Everyone could choose what suited them and their children best.

This concept moves education from the limits of perfection to the power of discovery. It can be accomplished with 0 budget, but the teachers must rethink how they teach. Since it is based on choice a curriculum or teacher that is not exciting or relevant will disappear.

The Charter School Act has created a means to implement such a program. A group of like-minded parents and teachers must simply get together and apply to the school board, a consensus of the community is not needed.

It is an exciting concept that would do well in this community, but breaking through the inertia to change is the challenge.

Prepared by Connie Baxter Marlow
Parents for Choice in Education