Klingbrief

KLINGENSTEIN CENTER
TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

September, 2010 VOL 14

OF NOTE

Does School Serve Students or Adults?

Making Room for the Self in School, by Alden (Denny) Blodgett

In this lengthy, impassioned article, published in this distance-learning University's on-line commentary, the author contrasts vividly the discrepancy between why teachers are in school and why their students are. It is not that the gap between teachers' academic desire to "pass along" the knowledge and students' far more practical, even cynical reasons for putting up with school are new to us; it is that the variety of presentation-part anecdote, part analysis of neuroscientific research- offers an unusually compelling pastiche of this dilemma. Of particular interest are two facets of the article. One is the transcription of a videotaped class in which a talented newer teacher tries to understand, as he returns a set of weak tests, why commitment and depth of skill in his Spanish class are so fragile. The other explores the research of USC's Dr. Mary Immordio-Yang, with whom Blodgett has worked, studies that document the implications of divorcing intellect from emotion in the act of teaching. Blodgett has played many roles in independent schools, has written for NAIS, and remains a consultant for new teachers and alternative schools-a credible, progressive voice in our world.

Peter Herzberg, Brearley School, NY

ConnectEd, Walden University, November, 2009

EDITORIAL BOARD

PETER HERZBERG
Coordinating Editor, Associate Head of the Brearley School, New York, NY

PEARL ROCK KANE
Klingenstein Center Director

CHRIS LAURICELLA
Head of the Park School of Buffalo, NY

STEPHANIE LIPKOWITZ
Assistant Head, Albuquerque Academy, Albuquerque, NM

ELIZABETH MORLEY
Principal of the Child Study Institute, University of Toronto, Canada

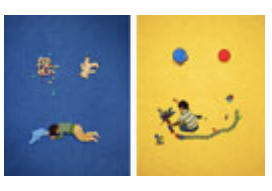
BRUCE SHAW
Essex, MA

ERIC TEMPLE
Head of the Carey School, San Mateo, CA

STEPHEN J. VALENTINE
Assistant Head, Upper School

Klingbrief is a free, monthly publication of recommended articles, books, research reports and media selected by and for independent school educators. The Klingenstein Center for Independent School Leadership provides graduate programs and professional development for independent school educators throughout their careers. For more information about submitting to Klingbrief, please click here.

ARTICLES, BLOGS, AND OTHER MEDIA



Nascent Research on Young Brains and Mood

Can Preschoolers Be Depressed?, by Pamela Paul

"Nothing is fun; I'm bored." While these words could comprise the familiar lament of any teenager, they come from the mouth of a four-year-old boy. Pamela Paul, a writer about children's issues, explores what child psychiatrists term "early onset depression," a condition that afflicts some children as early as two or three years of age. It's a tricky-and controversial-diagnosis when swings in child development are so wide and no adult wants to apply what Paul calls a "momentous label" to so young a child. Chronicling the disagreement about the notion of childhood depression among early childhood researchers, Paul focuses her article on the work of Joan Luby at Washington University in St. Louis. Luby is trying to categorize what real early onset depression is, as opposed to a difficult developmental stage, and ways to manage it. Teachers are often confused by how to address their young students' depressive behaviors, but Luby notes the plasticity of the brain at this age and is beginning to recognize methods that work. For preschool teachers who regularly encounter children who state, over and over: "I'm bad." "I can't do it." "I don't want to" while hiding under a table, this nascent research could be promising.

Bruce Shaw

New York Times Magazine, August 29, 2010

Trend-Spotting Forty Years Out

40 Things You Need to Know About the Next 40 Years

By the year 2050 surgeons will be able to install replacement body parts with organs grown in laboratories, fruits and vegetables will be grown on vertical farms in cities, jellyfish will take over the oceans, scientists will find proof of other life in our solar system and electric cars may be free, paid for in miles the way cell-phone service providers sell minutes. Demographic changes will mean that the U.S. population will expand by 100 million and 1 of 3 U.S. kids will be Latino. These and 34 other predictions for the next 40 years are described in *Things You Need to Know*, in the Smithsonian's 40th anniversary publication. The predictions, based on a poll of notable people conducted with the Pew Research Center, reveal optimism about the power of science to improve lives but also concern about the environment and the implications of population growth. The short, pithy descriptions may fuel the kind of right brain thinking schools are aiming to develop.

Pearl Rock Kane, The Klingenstein Center for Independent School Leadership

Smithsonian Magazine, August 2010

A Dynamic Lecture on a Familiar Analogy

On Music and Passion, by Benjamin Zander

At first glance this inspiring TED talk by the conductor Ben Zander seems to be about passion and classical music, and indeed that is the title of the talk. The underlying messages that resonate through Zander's presentation, however, are some of the deepest truths about both leadership and teaching. Zander promises his audience that they will emerge from his lecture with a nascent love of classical music and an appreciation of its subtleties. School leaders, already speaking to insiders when they address their faculty and staff, still need to be reminded of what the components of inspiration are; a head of school, for instance, might use this talk as a way to engage leaders in deeper questions about how to inspire a sense of the possible in others as well as the correlation between a leader's beliefs in the carrying power of those he or she is leading and the success of the endeavor. The talk will also remind teachers of their own power as leaders in the classroom and how important it is to have genuine faith in the potential of students.

Stephanie Lipkowitz, Albuquerque Academy, NM

TED Talk

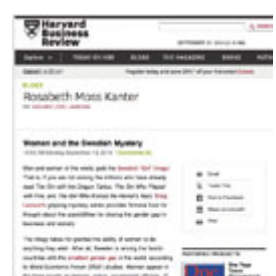
What Does Original Work Mean in the Post-Digital Age?

Plagiarism Lines Blur for Students in the Digital Age, by Tripp Gabriel

From a flurry of recent articles and articles about the shifting nature of originality and proprietary rights and the impact on submission of schoolwork emerges this calm analysis. While the article concentrates on how Higher Ed struggles with the issue, we are negotiating the same foggy terrain. We know that the last two generations' view of proprietary rights represents a vast change from the past (remember the music industry crisis?) but the new cut and paste, social network technologies also force questions about whether the old concepts of plagiarism can be enforced and understood using the same rubric and rationales. The article may end by suggesting that much of this is still intuitive and cheating still cheating by any other name, but all of us in schools will confront this dilemma for years to come, and in ways that might inspire some very thoughtful dialogue about what originality has come to mean in the "post-digital" age. Readers might also want to peruse the scores of postings following the article, which reinforce the relevancy of this debate.

Peter Herzberg, Brearley School, NY

NY Times Magazine, August, 2010



The Girl Who Left Her Mark

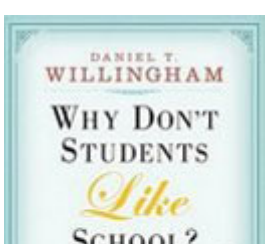
Women and the Swedish Mystery, by Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Rosabeth Moss Kanter provides a wonderful starting point for teachers who may be looking for a teachable moment from popular culture. Steig Larsson's "Millennium Trilogy" has been the talk of the summer in popular literature circles. While the books are undeniably fast-paced thrillers, Harvard professor Kanter examines the books through the lens of gender equity. She quickly explores the portrayal of female empowerment in the books and then concentrates the bulk of her post on exploring what this popular portrayal of female exploitation and victimization may say about modern society, particularly in light of Sweden's egalitarian culture. In her blog post she literally links Steig's work to some of the more interesting contemporary cases regarding personal identity, which provides the reader a truly interactive experience while trying to make sense of the relative importance of the "Girl Who..." phenomenon.

Chris Lauricella, The Park School, NY

Harvard Business School Blog, September, 2010

BOOKS



A Cognitive Scientist Challenges Theories We Too Often Take for Granted

Why Don't Students Like School? A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom, by Daniel T. Willingham

The subtitle of this book, "A cognitive scientist answers questions about how the mind works and what it means for the classroom," is a better descriptor of this book than the title. The title is meant to grab attention and many of Willingham's positions will make educators squirm in their chairs. What? Learning styles don't exist? (Students have different abilities and dominant modalities, but everyone actually learns the same way so content should determine the modality used, not perceptions about the student). Critical thinking is not a skill? (Different disciplines require specific sets of skills that take great practice to master and in order to transfer successfully to other applications). About teaching "multiple perspectives," Willingham writes, "metacognitive strategies can only take you (teachers) so far. Although they suggest what you ought to do, they don't provide the knowledge necessary to implement the strategy." What about right versus left brain? (Evidently both hemispheres are used in "virtually every task'-we are all "whole-brain" thinkers). A cognitive psychology professor at UVA, Willingham has constructed a useful discussion for anyone interested in the place of neuroscience in classroom learning.

Duncan Lyon, Bentley School, CA

Jossey-Bass, March 2009

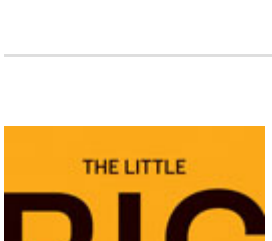
Race Still Matters

Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century, by Helen Markus and Paula Moya

In this landmark collection of essays on race and ethnicity, co-editors Hazel Markus, a professor of psychology at Stanford University and Paula Moya, a professor of English, also at Stanford, have focused their science and scholarship on what race and ethnicity are, how they work, and why they matter. Everyday experiences and commonplace interactions like watching television, voting, shopping, going to the doctor or listening to music, are used to expose persistent misunderstandings, identifying some of the foundations for assumptions and misinformation in our public discourse. The book debunks and challenges, exposes and provides evidence that we are not at all in a "post-race" world, but rather one in which race and ethnicity are powerful organizers of modern society. Though it is not targeted only at educators, *Doing Race* is highly relevant to an understanding of how our schools display their values, and how we teach in intentional or unintentional ways about what we care about, whom we trust, who counts, and whom we include. A strong asset of the book is its interdisciplinary range, using perspectives from psychology, history, anthropology and sociology to broaden and ground the message.

Elizabeth Morley, Institute of Child Study Laboratory School
University of Toronto

Norton, 2010



Practical Excellence

The Little Big Things: 163 Ways to Pursue Excellence, by Tom Peters

Born from a content rich blog, The Little Big Things is a fundamental playbook for independent school leaders. The economic downturn has taught us that we have to "sweat the small stuff" whether we're teaching grammar, recruiting new faculty, or working with parents. Flipping to almost any page of Peters' tome, we find actionable "nuggets[s] of life experience" to make our school communities more functional and vibrant. While Peters himself would say that many of the book's ideas are simple, his compelling and positively overwhelming style will make you want to return to the basics with more vigor - saying thank you more often, listening more effectively, and pursuing excellence in all that you do in schools. For a taste, visit http://www.tompeters.com/ where Peters reads sections of the book, offers synopses, and provides PDFs of some content.

Stephen J. Valentine, The Montclair Kimberley Academy, NJ

Harper Collins, 2010

To submit comments or suggestions, or to request that the newsletter be sent to a colleague, contact Adele Tonge, Communications Manager at klingbrief@tc.columbia.edu.

To support Klingenstein Center scholarships and program endowment, please make your gift here.

The Klingenstein Center
for Independent School Leadership
Teachers College, Columbia University
Box 25
525 West 120th Street
New York, New York 10027
212-678-3156
http://www.klingenstein.org/