

Class metaphors Winter 2009 CTL1110 The Holistic Curriculum

The Perennial Garden - Louie Papathanasakis

The holistic curriculum is a perennial garden: different types of plants requiring different amounts of nurturing and attention that bloom at different times of the season or year.

Some plants are hardy; they thrive with minimal attention. Minimal is likely not optimal and therefore there is a requirement to know each species' needs. Some plants need more individual attention: more or less frequent watering and feeding, pruning for healthy stems, and deadheading to encourage new buds.

Sunlight feeds all plants; some require more than others. Some plants are beautiful and healthy even in the coldest winter with the deepest snow.

A healthy and balanced garden's plants will; bloom at their time in the season, their roots will not interfere with each other – they need their own space to be able to grow. A healthy balanced garden will not have some larger faster-growing plants spreading and taking over from smaller plants.

The establishment of the right environment is essential and the needs of all plants must be taken into consideration. Proper amounts of water, nutrients, sunlight and drainage required.

Finally never underestimate the power of the little ornamental sign that reads "God Bless This Garden".

Team Sport by Lindsay

Holistic education resembles team sport. The team sport experience gives the athlete the tools to overcome obstacles and teaches essential life lessons. Through challenges, the athlete learns about themselves, not only in relation to skill acquisition but they gain knowledge about being-kinaesthetically, emotionally and spiritually. During the game, they learn about healthy relationships and socialization among their team mates and opponents, as well as how to be a good sportsperson in the heat of the game. "Father always said be a good sportsman, lose as if you like it, and win as if you're used to it" (author unknown). Finally, team sport provides the opportunity for athletes to be resilient in the game and to develop coping strategies that can be applied in multiple situations. The game provides the athlete challenges, both positive and negative, and nurtures the development of whole self while developing valuable transferable skills.

The Holistic Educator as a Metaphor

The Holistic Educator is like the sun - it reflects the amazing beauty and love that surrounds us everyday. Awakening us from a peaceful slumber it bestows on us a new day - an empty notebook waiting to have its pages filled.

Giving warmth and life to all it touches. At times it surprises us with the magic of a rainbow. It never lets us down - it provides us with everything this wonderful earth has to offer. It gives us nourishment and warmth.

At the end of the day it sends brilliant red beams of light into the darkening sky giving us time to ponder the splendor and wonder of life. Sandra Girard



Holistic Education is like the Gaia Hypothesis by Sara Belford

The Gaia Hypothesis, introduced by James Lovelock in *'The Ages of Gaia,'* contends that the earth exists through a single symbiotic relationship, in which all organisms coexist in as a self-regulating, self-changing state entity. Formally, Lovelock defined Gaia as, " *a complex entity involving the Earth's [biosphere](#), [atmosphere](#), [oceans](#), and [soil](#); the totality constituting a feedback or [cybernetic](#) system which seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet.* Looking through the 'Gaia' lens, the earth cannot be regarded as a single disconnected sphere of biological and physical elements. Instead, the Earth must be regarded as an intrinsically connected system of systems. One in which no system is more important, but rather, exist symbiotically to maintain a preferred homeostasis on Earth. Like Gaia, our students must be appreciated and valued as a whole being. Each of their strengths and weaknesses, their mind and body, their spirit and personality, interact symbiotically to create their entity. We must consider all components together to truly see our students, value our students and teach our students.

Metaphor for being a Holistic Educator Assignment - J. Fisher

Metaphor of a Holistic Educator being like a race - running a 10km race or a ½ marathon.

Holistic education is concerned about balance, inclusion and connection. Likewise running a distance race requires balance, inclusion and connection.

Balance:

In order to run one needs to be able to find a balance between work, family, friends and self. As a teacher one must balance the needs of each student with the needs of the class, the school, the community and the world as a whole.

Inclusion:

To run one must consider not only themselves as an individual but also their place in their surrounding environment, which include family and friends.

As a teacher one must include everyone's sense of self. Teachers must be mindful of their students' ethnic and religious background, which influence their values and way of thinking and knowing.

Connection:

To run one must connect to mind, body and, spirit.

As a teacher one must connect teaching to their students lives. The teaching and learning must be meaningful and authentic for students in order for them to become deeper thinkers and have ownership of their learning.

Holistic Educator as Subway cart/train - Lara Loseto

A subway train/cart carries passengers- all race, religion, gender and age- to many different places. The subway asks for no discrimination among ability or destination- it just wants to get the passenger to its destination safely and on a timely manner.

Now there are a few requirements to board the subway. Each passenger must come prepared to pay a small fee and ensure that they have all of their belongings. While riding the subway, there are expectations to follow to ensure that mutual respect, fairness, integrity etc. are met between all passengers. There is plenty to learn while riding the subway-in fact- the curriculum is quite differentiated. Passengers can read the local paper or analyze the recent media billboards. Passengers can engage in meaningful conversations with other passengers or listen to their own music. They can even simply reflect on their own about anything...

The subway has a main voice that often leads or guides the passengers of the upcoming destination choices. When the passenger is ready, they can decide to leave the subway and embark upon their destination.

Holistic Educator as a Chef - By: Larissa Schwartz

The chef needs to carefully prepare his/her ingredients for the meal. As a holistic educator, carefully understanding and preparing lesson plans to meet the diverse needs of students is key.

Also, a chef needs to understand fully his/her customers. As a holistic educator, understanding the whole being of the students – the spiritual, the emotional and physical is also, imperative.

The chef also, needs to change and be flexible when necessary when preparing a meal. As a holistic educator, being open-minded and flexible in lesson planning and in providing quality education is key.

Also, the chef needs to relax a bit and prepare meals that are fun and interesting. As a holistic educator, it is important to bring balance into the curriculum and school day. And above all a chef has to be in tune with their spirit as should a holistic educator to create beautiful and creative work.

The Marathon as a Metaphor- Aideen Moss

There are many references to the lonely long distance runner, but these are not necessarily valid. When thinking about a marathon runner, one might only think about the importance of physical strength or ability, but upon closer examination, one comes to realize the importance of relationships and connections in a number of different contexts. Training for and running a marathon can be used as a metaphor for holistic education.

Running requires a balance between linear thinking and intuition. A balance between relationships with family, friends, work, and running is necessary. When emphasis on one of these relationships occurs, then there is imbalance and some of the desired health benefits of running are lost. Quite often a runner uses various visualizations along the route to keep going such as picturing the last 100m of a race and the finish getting closer or closer. Another humorous image to remain relaxed is the image of casting a fishing line to the runner in front and reeling him or her in, so the runner can pass by. It is interesting how such visualizations can help the runner to pick up the pace.

The relationship between body and mind is essential at many times when training for any run. Think of the cold and icy mornings and the runners who drag themselves out of bed for a run, or in the wind and rain, the runners who battle the elements. What keeps them going? It is through the mind's desire and determination that the body is able to continue going when it hits "the wall" in the marathon, or conquers the infamous Heartbreak Hill at Boston.

To run and be healthy, the runner needs to understand the relationship among domains of knowledge. Understanding the science of the body in such areas as nutrition and hydration on a long run is essential if the runner is to finish. Many runners use their numeracy skills to calculate time and distance throughout runs for personal best times. Also, a study of rhythm and form helps to keep the body running without injury.

When training for a run and also during the race a relationship between self and community exists. The runner has become a role model for many in some neighborhoods and helps to encourage others to improve their exercise practices. Similarly, many people along a runner's path offer encouragement for her efforts. The popularity of marathons has increased dramatically over the last decade. Many of these runs are now linked to a fundraiser for a local hospital, so the runner through her

efforts to improve her level of fitness, also contributes to the community through sponsorship. The camaraderie that develops between runners along a course can disprove the lonely long distance runner theory.

With technology today and improved fitness equipment such as the treadmill, indoor runners do not have the same relationship to the earth as outdoor runners. When given the opportunity to run outside, most runners prefer to do so. Whether it is the route one takes or the weather elements, there is greater beauty and there can be greater challenges along the course. Again with technology today, many run listening to music, so they do not take in the sounds around them. The purist prefers to listen to the sounds of her breathing, the wind blowing, the dogs barking, the birds chirping, and even the cars beeping while out on her run.

Certainly there is a strong sense of the ego when running, but for many runners it is the relationship to the soul that brings about the greatest sense of happiness. The openness to accepting the connections and relationships referred to above takes away the lonely long distance runner feeling.

Gardener Metaphor by Irwin

In Hamlet, Shakespeare comments on a garden that is unattended, unnurtured (in his own metaphor about an unsuccessful king). He writes, "Fie on't! 'tis an unweeded garden, that grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature possess it merely". I began to think of a student, as a seed or plant in a garden with others and how the metaphor of a teacher, gardener has an appropriate appeal. How much more positive the "Woodstock Song" of 1969 that says "We are stardust
We are golden
And we get ourselves
Back to the garden"
And from Essays (1625 of "Goodness and Goodness of Nature", "God Almighty first planted a garden; and, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures". Our students depend on our gardening, our gentle pruning, watering, sunshine, as we with them make a determination of vital needs. Each student is a plant needing individual attention where the gardener/teacher recognizes the focus on relationships and connections, as Miller says, "between self and community".
Through care, compassion, respect, our garden of precious seedlings will blossom. It will indeed be golden. Otherwise, it will turn to weeds and effect the rest of the garden.

Raha's Metaphor - a Gardener

My metaphor for a Holistic Teacher is that of a Gardener is to a wild garden.
The reasons for this are:

- You are not just nurturing and making something grow into something it is not, but just nurturing its own unique inner potentials so that they are cultivated and can manifest into the most optimal reflection of the

pupil's inner being.

- I like the idea of a wild garden as it is not a mono-crop production of students that have knowledge imposed on them, so that they come as finished products of an assembly line. They are each unique seeds, even those of the same "species" of a flower, curve, shape, and unfold differently.
- I also like the idea that different plants and flowers are planted and grow naturally together, feeding and supporting each other's growth. It is similar to any ecosystem as each is true to its own uniqueness, it is able to grow and provide that unique quality and purpose in service of the whole.
- I also like that the gardener works using simple tools, not complex formulas or technology. I don't think any of these gadgets are needed for the teaching of truth and helping people develop them. A gardener uses basic tools and care, such as a metal wire to help support a plant that is unable to hold itself up, as well as naturally provided tools in the environment including sun, water, and soil. The most important element the teacher can provide is love.

Holistic Education Metaphor - Allison Kitchner

Holistic education is like water.

Holistic education provides water for learners who are thirsty for meaning in what they learn. The majority of education and child psychology takes individual achievement and success as the goal of learning, but if the only thing learners are given to believe in is their own potential for success, we can not fault them if they see a tragic lack of meaning in their lives; a self-centred existence is indeed pretty dismal. I believe that youth—and all people—thirst for deeper meaning and for identification with something bigger than the self. All human beings seek the purpose-infusing and -pervading source (Greek: *arche*) of life and water is the source of life. It sustains life; it nourishes life. It is the life-giving, life-sustaining, life-infusing quality of water that is the essence of holistic learning. Our bodies are made up of water. Educating bodies holistically is like drawing the water that makes them up back to its source, pulling learners to their deeper meaning not through their minds but through the life-sustaining water that is in their blood. In the same way, water is religiously and culturally significant because it is seen as purifying. Holistic education seeks that pure knowledge which is definitively good, which is unbounded by language or time, which is a receptivity to the interconnectedness of all things. This knowledge is pure because it alone is true in the deepest sense.

The Holistic Educator as an Alchemist – Lilli Lo

As Miller, 1988 simply stated, "Holistic education is founded on three basic principles: balance, inclusion, and connection" (p. 6). A holistic educator needs to break down the three basic principles into wholes to understand how they function in an integrated manner. That said, once the principles are understood, the holistic educator creates connections and relationships with linear thinking and intuition, mind and body, knowledge, individual and community, the earth, and our souls (Miller, 1988). The holistic educator uses a practice that transforms the child into a whole person, as the alchemist uses a process to transform something common into something special.

In basic terms, alchemy can be understood as taking common metals and chemically transforming them into something new, like gold. There are many kinds of matter and

processes (such as, joining, incorporating, and connecting) that are used in the transformation. Holistic education is neither new nor revolutionary; it puts the whole child at the center, fusing and connecting the child through the three basic principles. Like alchemy, its aim is transformation.

An alchemist explores to search and seek ways to achieve transformation. Gold does not have to be what they explore and seek. As with a holistic educator, they also explore and seek ways to connect the child, so that they can discover their “gold”. The “gold” in alchemy for a holistic educator represents, “...identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to spiritual values...” (Miller, 2005).

The journey for an alchemist is a long one to finding the knowledge of transforming ordinary metals into gold. The journey is one that requires perseverance, open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, commitment, and love for the goal. The list is not exhaustive and is representative of what qualities a holistic educator should have to take their students through the journey to wholeness. For both the holistic educator and alchemist, their mind and spirit are affected by the desire to achieve a transformation of something common into something special.

References:

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