

Metaphors for Holistic Educators - Fall 2007

HOLISTIC EDUCATION IS A FORGE - ED DIXON

Life is a journey towards the person whom you were born to become. Everything that you experienced shapes you and, as you mature, your task is to consciously participate in this shaping so that you will discover your original giftedness and use that to help others discover theirs. Holistic education is a workshop that will help you forge the tools you will need to take on your journey. Because the journey will require physical, mental, social and spiritual growths, the techniques for forging the tools you need in each area are provided to you.

Holistic Education is Like a Marathon

Lesia Chytra

Holistic education is the bridging of students' mind, body and soul to educational expectations. It is much more than an end-product, even more than a positive accomplishment. It is a process, or journey, to a destination. This educational experience through holistic education is much the same as running a marathon. The marathon is so much more than the repetitive act of putting one foot in front of the other; it is also a journey, where the mind, body and soul must also be nourished.

In running long distances, preparation is key. Months of various types of training regiments are required. In holistic education, preparation and variety are also key elements. Educators must keep preparation and variety as a cornerstone of their holistic education methods. Every student is unique in their gifts and needs. Holistic educators recognize the importance of preparation and variety, learn who their students are, as well as how they excel, and provide a wide variety of interesting activities in direct response to their students' goals.

During a marathon, the maintenance of the body is also important to the accomplishment of the goal. Nourishment in the form of food and water is needed along the route, as well as proper protection from the elements. Holistic educators understand the importance of body, and the nourishment that needs to be provided in the learning journey. To be their best, students must also be nourished and physically taken care of. Their bodies are an extension of and reflective their home lives, and holistic educators are cognizant of this. The physical is an important factor in a learning experience, and is a direct link to the mind.

The mind is at the center of education, and is also an important aspect of running a marathon. We, as teachers, spend most of our time nourishing the minds of our students, so that they may become creative thinkers. In a marathon, the mind must also be trained, as it becomes a critical piece of the endurance puzzle towards the end of a race, as the runner gets closer to his or her goal.

Finally, bringing together both mind and body, both in holistic education and a marathon is the spirit. Expectations cannot be reached, and goals cannot be accomplished without a positive and motivating spirit. This is where teachers, parents, and friends are needed: for encouragement, for support, and for congratulations. Both education and a marathon are long journeys, filled with highs, lows, achievements and disappointments. Without a support network, the spirit of this journey may be lost. This is why we as holistic educators are so important in the educational journeys of our students.

Holistic Education Metaphor - Matthew McGrady

Holistic Education is much like a construction site. Both are based on the amalgamation of a variety of parts toward the ultimate goal of a Unity.

<p>Holistic Leadership in form of educators and other influences of media, friends, and parents Potentiality The basis of following a plan for a Education model and quickly realizing it may not work in the real world A sense of pride in one's self, education, and role as educator, and or student Integration of learning models, and a variety of perspectives of knowledge Small parts can create larger structures of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding</p>	<p>Construction Leadership unified under a central foreperson but also reliant on past knowledge and other workers Potentiality Site plans, architectural drawings, instructions, etc. Once again may all seem like great ideas in the shop, but when in the field adaptation is required. Pride in one's work whether is be hammering a nail or designing a building Integration of a variety of trades towards a finished product Screws, nails, and bolts are essential to a strong and true construction</p>
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Holistic Educator as Gardener

The holistic educator is like a gardener. The students are the plants, some similar, but of different varieties; some of totally different species. The curriculum is the medium and environmental conditions the plants are placed in to grow. The gardener must determine the right conditions for the healthiest growth of each plant. At the same time she must also consider the overall health of the greenhouse. Sometimes individual plants may become ill. It is then the gardener's job to determine if and how intervention is possible to restore the plant's health. As far as possible each plant should be nurtured so that its positive inherent potential is fulfilled. Sometimes however, the gardener may direct the

growth of certain plants in particular ways so that the entire greenhouse remains harmonious and beautiful.

Metaphor of a Holistic Educator as a Sushi Chef - Hasmig Shahinian

The art of making Sushi is very similar to being a holistic Educator. Making sushi has many steps involved and can only be created with delicate, loving and careful hands. Holistic educators have an enormous task that has many steps involved, they too must also be delicate, compassionate and careful with their students. Sushi chefs have to set up their environment in order for it to be inviting to the customer, it has to have a positive atmosphere and be clean and organized. A holistic educators classroom has to be inviting as well and maintain a positive atmosphere. The customer or the student has to feel welcome in the surrounding area in order to flourish and to return again. Once the customer has placed the order, or the student has agreed to follow the curriculum it is up to the chef and teacher to make sure they follow through on the order. The sushi chef has to find the right balance of his ingredients, in order to make a tasty roll for his customer. The chef must also prepare dishes that have different styles and are appealing to the customer in order for them to enjoy the whole experience. He must also prepare a plate that has the perfect amount of sushi, not to overwhelm the customer, and to make sure that they order more. The holistic educator must also find the perfect balance of curriculum and subjects to be taught, in order for the student to enjoy their studies. The teacher must also execute lessons, group activities, projects etc in variety of ways so that all students can benefit and learn in classroom. The teacher should provide his/her students with a fruitful learning experience and not one that will overwhelm them and leaving falling behind.

Metaphor of a teacher as a photographer - Jessica Silver

To me, photography is an art of observation. It's about finding something interesting in an ordinary place... I've found it has little to do with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them. - Elliott Erwitt

The curriculum is the creation of a photograph and the student is the final product. The teacher as a good photographer using a camera as subject matter can focus the lens of the camera to capture all the elements. The development of the photograph is a slow process and great care is taken to bring out all the aspects of the image with the correct chemical balance and light sources. A photograph can be changed to black and white, enlarged or changed in a multitude of ways in the development process depending on the photographer's intent for the photograph. Once a photograph is set in the developing process it can then be framed, put in an album and shared however the photographer wants to present it. When a photograph is viewed the observer takes away from it what is shared with the image and their own experiences that resonate in the photograph.

When we teach holistically, Life's a Beach a happy place to learn and develop the whole self. The beach metaphor was inspired by the quotation: The larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder by Ralph W. Sockman. As a holistic teacher, my aim is to expand students knowledge and curiosity for learning, or their shoreline of wonder . Kelly Taschner

Metaphor for being a Holistic Educator - The Holistic Educator is like being a Parent - Sherrin Grant

A child is born and the doctor or adoption agency places them in your arms and says, "They are your responsibility now". Go and raise them. That child is a stranger to the parent. The parent needs to get to know them inside and out yet intuitively knows what their needs and wants are even before the child does. You are not provided with a guide book. You are on your own to consult with other parents/colleagues, find your own resources and figure it out one stage at a time.

The parent knows that the child needs a healthy balanced diet and so does a teacher. A mother knows that the child needs a good night's sleep or else they will be cranky and miserable whether they are 3 or 13. So does a teacher. A parent knows when her child is hurting deep inside and does what she can to help the child through it. A Holistic Educator also sees the importance as a part of their job.

A parent knows that the child has all kinds of talents and mysteries locked up deep inside and that she needs to provide many opportunities for that child to become aware of those talents and good qualities.

A parent knows that one day, her baby will need to grow up and fly on its own and prepares them for that day even from a young age. So does a Holistic Educator. A parent may not have ever heard of Howard Gardner yet still incorporates the elements of Multiple Intelligences in their parenting.

A parent guides, listens, supports, motivates, encourages and models a well-rounded life and so does a Holistic Educator because they know that they play a significant and life-altering role in that child/student's life.

The Holistic Educator as a Gardener

The students are like the growing seeds and the holistic educator is like the gardener. She must encourage the seeds to grow. Some of the seeds are confident, and grow fast and eagerly. Some are more tentative, growing slow and steady. As these seeds grow into plants, some burst with healthy, green leaves, but don't bloom. Others bloom with a

rampage of flowers. Some desire to be very productive, and strive to grow as fruit, something so useful to the universe.

The holistic educator, as the gardener must be knowledgeable of how much nurturing each seed and plant needs. She must know how much water. Some seeds need constant watering; others would prefer to be much drier before being watered. Some seeds need to be protected very carefully from the elements; others would rather be in the wide open, feeling the strong sun and wind. Some seeds like to be in the shade, others want sun or a precise combination of each. The gardener must be very aware of every seeds needs. She must take care of herself too, so that she has the energy to garden each day

Musician:

- connects with the instrument
- becomes one with the instrument: more like an extension of the musician, your breath and body connects
- interpret the music: feel it, connect with the sound, hear it, internalize it, feel the vibrations

Mother:

- can personally relate and connect to this metaphor
 - nurturing, loving, unconditional
 - connection: extension of oneself
 - guide, teacher, allow freedom to explore, make mistakes, learn, grow
 - pass on traditions and history (generations)
 - life-long relationship
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Pianist as a Dancer: A Metaphor for the Holistic Educator

By: Janice Chang

A piano is frequently viewed as a still instrument, where both the instrument and performer is limited in movement. It is understandable for a piano to be seen as such, as the physical weight and enormity of the instrument creates an illusion of stolidity. The keys of the piano itself form a pattern of white and black, twos and threes, each rectangular prism the same size and key weight as the others. Everything about the piano is rectangular, angular, and seemingly mechanical or industrialized something a factory can easily produce.

In its angularity, the piano frequently transfers this calculated energy onto its performers, or practitioners, in most cases, and errors are continuously reprimanded and exact placement of fingers a law. Contrasting from smaller and easily manipulated instruments (i.e. strings, woodwind, brass, voice); the measured and balanced edges of the piano contradict the natural circular curvature of a person's arms. The size of the piano keeps

it from being manipulated, and instead, the piano takes control as the conductor, the finished product, or a previously decided conceptualization.

It is this very character of the piano that brings forth the metaphor of a pianist as a dancer. As pianists, we must learn the techniques to evoke the different sounds, moods, eccentricities, intricacies, and emotions of each note. At the height of this learning, we must also be physically and mentally docile in order to unlearn the very techniques of which we practiced so faithfully, with frustration and perfection. Like a dancer, our naturally circular bodies must shape to envelop the stern straight shape of the piano, our fluidity enabling new ideas and sounds to take form and soar through the strength and conviction of commonsense musical ideologies.

Similarly, every educator receives and maintains a similar piano a conceptualization of the world that has taken a somewhat solid shape. However, in educating, mentoring, or guiding hundreds of unique identities, holistic educators naturally take on many roles in order to flow into and around the beings and souls of their students. We have learned to become a certain way, act in appropriate manners, categorize our world, and conform to the status quo. We must now unlearn the very ideas of normalcy in order to embrace the differences, conflicts, and souls of other people. The docility required to become fluid and flexible in thinking, acting, and being is difficult to come by, as it is for a pianist to become a dancer. As it is in holistic education, the meditative practice in the reaching of souls, the calming of our minds and the mind-body focus may lead us into a new way of thinking, a new way of being.

The Metaphor of the Lotus Flower - Natalie Hemraj

The Lotus symbolizes a Holistic Educator who is liberated while living. The Lotus resides in the world, but is not of the world. The Holistic Educator wisely aims at interconnectedness and balance.

The Lotus embraces full wisdom, compassion and gentleness, and has concealed power and grit. The Lotus is free from selfish interests, worries and troubles under all circumstances. Even when Mother Nature releases harsh winds, the Lotus does not writhe in suppressed fury. The Lotus is neither slave to moods nor environment. All divine characteristics are fully awakened in the Lotus flower. The Lotus has a balanced mind and radiates peace and love. There exists a divine, duplicate consciousness of the Lotus as it maintains a twofold experience. The Lotus grows from a small round seed, in the muddy, polluted water. The lower stem begins to rise above this mucky water. The upper stem, the core of the Lotus and the petals are visible to the Sun.

The Lotus experiences both warmth and coldness, and thus, speaks two languages. The Lotus enjoys the bliss of spirituality and holism while still experiencing the world below the water, unaffected and undisturbed.

Correspondingly, the Holistic Educator rises above an education designed only to train the mind to excel in the materialistic realm. This special educator beholds the one Reality the Universe has to offer. There exists harmony between the inside and outside world of the Lotus flower.

The Metaphor of Weather - Talia Osiel

The weather in the air affects all that she touches. The sun warms, the rain wets, the snow freezes, and the wind blows.

At times some plants will be shielded from such conditions by a roof, a direction, a larger plant, while at others times some plants may have no filtration and can be affected entirely by that moment's extremes.

Some plants will have a particular comfort of climate where they are closest to their natural roots, while others will feel as though they have been transplanted to a foreign climate zone.

On occasion, some plants will feel nourished by the warmth of the sun's rays only to be surprised by a sudden rain shower. And while the one enjoyed the warmth, another thirsted for the relief of that rain and was grateful for its arrival.

Mother Nature cannot please all the vegetation simultaneously for they all have conflicting desires and needs built into their genes. Mother Nature cannot force one plant to thrive in another's climate and the more she forces, the less successful she is, and the more lasting harm is caused.

The combination of all weather types is what makes the natural world grow for we cannot be without sun, rain, snow or wind. We need all types of life and thus all types of weather to maintain our whole system.
