

A 21st Century Educational Leadership Platform through the Eyes of My Heart

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Curriculum Leadership Platform Development

Focus	Explanation	What Are Your Beliefs?	How Should These Beliefs Be Reflected in Practice?
Visions	Ultimate purposes of education	I must teach and prepare students for life with all of its intellectual and social-emotional components, incorporating life skills at every grade level pertinent to Piaget theory of metacognition.	See document
Students	Students' needs and how they learn	I must teach the students who are in front of me in the way they learn best, which requires an intuitive intellect, a desire to be a life-long learner not set in my ways and constant collaboration with colleagues to assess and reassess what is working and what is not.	“
Teachers	Role of teachers	Teachers owe it to the profession to remain current in their knowledge while holding on to certain tried and true components of teaching like keeping your heart in your work and realizing why you are in the classroom. Students need teacher who love them because it will reflect in their effectiveness. Listening to students and being constant observers of behavior, trends, challenges and successes will make for a better	“

		learning environment. Always remember that they are still kids.	
Content	Subject matter and its organization	Since I am an ELA teacher, the key to life for me of course is being able to read. Reading first, writing well and finally expressing information verbally – that is my mantra. Communication skills consist of all of these and they are all quite vital. The common core has made an almost myopic stress on informational text reading, writing and discussing and I see the value in that. I do however feel that imagination-building is lacking in the presence of the standards. That needs to be added. It sparks the brain to want to learn some of the more mundane school required assignments.	“
Context	Environment of the classroom and school	My school and classroom should be welcoming and inviting to ALL students of every age. The story ‘Eleven’ by Sandra Cisneros says it best. The young girl is having a bit of monstrous birthday in school with a bully teacher. By the end of the day she comes to the conclusion that although she is turning 11 ‘today’ she is also 10, 9, 8,7 6,5,4,3,2,&1 because all of the experience from those years still	“

		<p>dwell within her. We must prepare the students to be responsible, mature citizens of the world and reach them to that end by appealing, as needed, to the inner child in them allowing them to fall and get back up again in a safe nurturing environment. There should also be mandatory field trips for every grade level (at least 3 per year) to get them out of books and off the computer and doing experiential learning!!!! (Federal/State money should mandate this!)</p>	
Planning	<p>How curriculum should be planned and who should be involved</p>	<p>Curriculum is a tricky thing because there are so many variables. I do believe in a consensus – built curriculum can be one level of the process. Then a core group of highly effective veteran educators and alternate-route educators should have final say. People who have been out in the workforce and then are successful in the teaching arena bring a wealth of insight about what kids needs to prepare for the rest of their lives.</p>	“
Assessment	<p>How students should be assessed and evaluated</p>	<p>The reality is that there should be a standard assessment that is grade leveled. However, with critical thinking assessments it is hard to accurately level critical</p>	“

		<p>thinking. My solution would be to create mock assessments for the students to do and practice with that are exact simulations of the test. I know that this test-based curriculum has been designed to prove to the people who are supporting education financially that the students are learning. It is a quantitative data tool, but just like in politics there is the Electoral College and the popular vote, there should be a softer more cultural-based, multi-sensory based curriculum tool that can be created to balance the findings from the hard data.</p>	

I couldn't have scripted the conversation I had with one of my eighth grade students this past week better if I were a clairvoyant Hollywood screenwriter and bearer of a sixth sense. In the middle of reviewing their ELA Unit 1 assessment results, I was also preparing them to acquire library cards for the classroom library. Since the library is filled with my own books and many of them are of very high quality, costing me a pretty penny, I require my students to have signed consent from their parents before partaking in the borrowing process. There is also a need for them to sign and agree to the borrower's contract. Since I figured that most of them had never contemplated what a signature was let alone having a unique one of their own, I proceeded to provide a colorful index card to each student asking them to simply write their name at the top. Once that was done, I asked them to create a signature that was theirs and could be replicated at will whenever it was necessary for the foreseeable future. After modeling my own signature –the one I created as an adolescent – I juxtaposed it with the one I use today- a much fancier one.

At first they gave me slightly dumbfounded looks, but they all gave it a try. You could see the joy in their faces as they began to take ownership of a very vital yet underemphasized lifetime requirement of world citizenship. One of my students looked at me almost gleefully and said, "Mrs. W-R, some teachers really provide us with information that we will need for life." I took it as a compliment. When asked to elaborate he simply said that we learn so much, but we don't connect all of it to real life. You teach about things we can use later. (personal communication, *JA*, November 9, 2016)

I share this story for my platform because I feel that is the lynchpin of who I am as an educator and the reason I was drawn to teach. We prepare students over a 12 to 17 year span of time to live on their own an additional 50 plus year in the world. Students must be better prepared for the realities of living, surviving and thriving in that world. School only represents a small but important nurturing, testing ground for the real deal and too often as educators, we don't realize that we need to infuse more life skills into the equation, keeping in mind the different stages of metacognitive growth spurts. Piaget rolled out the research supporting this and a lifetime of research by others confirms it. I couldn't have had the students prepare their signatures before the middle school years – it wouldn't have been relevant. There are hosts of life skills that should be incorporated into the curriculum and each grade level. For the lower grades, these must include creative play and use of imaginative thought.

My vision is to teach and prepare students for life with all of its intellectual and social-emotional components, incorporating life skills at every grade level pertinent to Piaget theory of metacognition. I will align life skills in all their various forms with their cerebral, critical thinking skills, which will enable students to converse and relate to other students all over this country and the world. Students should have cross-curricular experiences learning peer -to-peer as well as teacher-to-student. There should be a fluidity to learning, connecting the dots from lesson to lesson. I would call this a scope and sequence pivotal to helping teachers, district-wide, have a guide to teaching and giving students a better sense of what they are learning. Since vocabulary building is a key communication skill I offer several approaches to promoting growth in this area, elaborated in my curriculum views.

The role of the teacher is key and though some 21st century theorists have advocated that students can learn just as easily on-line as in person, I find this thinking flawed and robotic in nature. I must teach the students who are in front of me in the way they learn best, which requires an intuitive intellect, a desire to be a life-long learner not set in my ways and constant collaboration with colleagues to assess and reassess what is working and what is not. It also requires facetime which is a human side of any learning experience. There are diverse experiences that students have before they come to school. We live in a world where the digital age has open doors even wider to life outside of what we know. This digital age doesn't negate the fact that students still need to develop skills that require them to write information down and to have hands on learning. What would happen if a surgeon did your triple-bypass over the internet? Very scary and Jetsons-like! There is a neural connection to learning through handwriting information and tactile experiences that we mustn't ignore. Multi-sensory learning is also very effective because it engages all of the intrinsic learning styles – tactile, visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Human being learn through different multi-sensory modalities and learning styles. Teachers must be able to teach the students in front of them, be aware of the possibility that many have undiagnosed learning differences (It has been reported that 1 in 5 students/people have some degree of dyslexia and that dyslexia is more prevalent than autism. Those of us who are impassioned about this topic are working to increase data finding research, legislature and awareness on a global scale so that these students will no longer feel on the periphery.)

Teachers owe it to the profession to remain current in their knowledge while holding on to certain tried and true components of teaching like keeping your heart in your work and realizing why you are in the classroom. Students need teachers who love

them because it will reflect in teacher effectiveness and student growth. Listening to students and being constant observers of behavior, trends, challenges and successes will make for a better learning environment. Always remember that they are still kids. Professional development was designed to insure that teachers stay current and it is helping, but some teachers need coaches early in their careers (and even throughout) who will provide support without judgment and evaluation. I am currently investigating a company that has developed, in its early stages, an online coaching network, where teachers can connect at various intervals in their day, even allowing the classrooms to be simulcast to these coaches, to get valuable feedback. This would keep the fire alive in the young-to-the-profession teachers and keep all teachers passionate about their profession. On the other hand, if people have burned out completely, they should be assisted and encouraged to seek an alternate career.

Although I am an English language arts teacher, I do have thoughts on a broad scale about educational content. I often create opportunities for students to do math skills in their language arts class. I find this refreshes their core knowledge and allows them another opportunity to practice skills previously learned. Reading is the key to life for me of course, and there is now much reading in math classes with word problems, etc. It is crucial for students not see each subject in isolation, but learn to make connections. That is a vital life skill. Reading first, writing well and finally expressing information verbally – that is my mantra. Communication skills consist of all of these and they are all quite vital. The common core has made an almost myopic focus on informational text reading, writing and discussing and I see the value in that. I do however feel that imagination-building is lacking in the presence of the standards. That needs to be added. It sparks the brain to want to learn some of the more mundane school required

assignments. Math is a form of reasoning and critical thinking, which must be practiced inside of and outside of the classroom.

My school and classroom environment should be welcoming and inviting to ALL students of every age. The story 'Eleven' by Sandra Cisneros says it best. The young girl is having a bit of monstrous birthday day in school with a bully teacher. By the end of the day she comes to the conclusion that although she is turning 11 'today' she is also 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, & 1 because the experience from all of those years still dwell within her. We must prepare the students to be responsible, mature citizens of the world and reach them to that end by appealing, as needed, to the inner child in them allowing them to fall and get back up again in a safe nurturing environment. There should also be mandatory field trips for every grade level (at least 3 per year) to get them out of books and off the computer and doing experiential learning!!!! (Federal/State money should mandate this!) Field trips experiences are like going on line and Skyping/Facetiming a class in Japan. They are vital to growth and well-roundedness. Last year, my eldest son, who speaks Chinese fluently, addressed my class of 4th graders in Chinese and then took questions from them about his experiences at Peking University where he spent 5 months. How was this accomplished? He was live on my iPad. This was an extremely rich experience for them because it made the curriculum more relevant to them and brought the subject of Chinese Paper Sons to life for them. They saw someone who looks like them speaking in Chinese, which makes all things possible for them.

Curriculum is a tricky thing because there are so many variables. I do believe in a consensus -built curriculum can be one level of the process. A core group of highly effective veteran educators and alternate-route educators should be given the gavel to have the final say. People who have been out in the workforce and then are successful in

the teaching arena bring a wealth of insight about what kids needs to prepare for the rest of their lives. Businessmen and women who wish to contribute to the conversation should be shareholders but not simply because they have a financial stake. Power brokering in education can lead to seeing children as widgets and not as human capital.

The reality is that there should be a standard assessment that is grade leveled. However, with critical thinking assessments it is hard to accurately level critical thinking. My solution would be to create mock assessments for the students to do and practice with that are exact simulations of the test. I know that the current test-based curriculum has been designed to prove to the people who are supporting education financially that the students are learning. It is a quantitative data tool, but just like in politics there is the Electoral College and the popular vote, there should be a softer more cultural-based, multi-sensory based curriculum tool that can be created to balance the findings from the hard data.

In conclusion, my platform is a liquid document. There are constant changes in the world stage and the characters on the world stage, which are factors affecting education. I will say though, that when I give my students the choice of a Wordly Wise quiz in Google classroom or a paper pencil quiz, the majority of them prefer the pencil to paper quiz. Why do I bring this up in my platform? Well, sometimes we find innovative solutions in education that are not for everyone all of the time and so we must strike a balance between the tools are our disposal and the needs of the students who are in front of us. My mission will always be to prepare a generation for successful lives in any way we can, so that when they get out into the world they are equipped to make choices and have options.

Thank you and goodnight!