Contemplative Practices in a Technological Society

Nurturing the Inner Lives of Youth and Educators: Contemplative Teaching and Learning

Linda Lantieri – Director, The Inner Resilience Program
Who is in the House?

- Were happy at school most of the time in elementary school?
- Feel that the current k-12 education in this country is preparing children well for the complex and uncertain future they will inherit?
- Have some interest in making contemplative practice more a part of your current work interests
- Have met someone for the first time who you think you will probably have more connection with after this conference
- Feel as though the time is right to move the agenda we are talking about at this conference forward in a big way
- Still have some questions about how to do that effectively
Where we are going in the next hour...

- Share my own story in doing this work in K-12 education in a variety of places and situations.
- Identify the unique value added of a mindfulness based intervention and/or contemplative practice to education and a variety of other settings.
- Explore what we can learn from the research and practice in the field of Social and Emotional Learning that may help us be more effective in what we are each doing with this work.
- Explore some things we need to consider as we move forward in the field of education
- Inspire us to be recommitted to being here for the long haul of doing our part in this transformational shift we are in the midst of.
Among the tribes of northern Natal in South Africa, the most common greeting, equivalent to “hello” in English, is the expression: **Sawubona**

It literally means, “I see you.”
If you are a member of the tribe, you might reply by saying *Sikhona*,

“I am here.”
The order of the exchange is important: until you see me, I do not exist. It’s as if, when you see me, you bring me into existence.
What would it be like if our society was dedicated to having all children grow up with this perspective, that their identity is based on the fact that they are seen—that the people around them respect and acknowledge each of them as unique and special.
1. “I see you.”

2. “I am here. I see you.”

3. “I am here.”
As we talk about how to bringing contemplative practices into various other fields from educations to the arts, health, science, and technology, what is your particular calling in relation to this work in the world?

What is the work that is for you and only you to do - or it may not happen?
What would you say?

If you could go to sleep tonight and wake up being assured that all the world’s children will have learned one thing that they would be able to fully integrate into their lives for the rest of their lives, what would it be?
Our response to changing our schools has often been to try to “fix the children, the adults, the institutions we serve in and attempt to: re-form or re-structure our institutions
If you want the tree to grow, it won’t help to water the leaves. You have to water the roots.

Thich Nhat Hanh
We need to transform our system of learning and teaching so that we water the roots of learning not the leaves of schooling.

This transformation will not initially emerge through reinvention of social structures and institutions, although that will occur.

Nor will it emerge through the reformation of policies and priorities, although that too will change.

Rather it will come from altering of mind – the transformation of human consciousness and the emergence of integral and wise minds that will:

creatively live into a new worldview of an interconnected and living planet and a sustainable and interdependent human family.

Stephanie Pace Marshall – *The Power of Transformation*
We need to create a different reality that values and respects both adults and children’s inner lives and also still allows them to function in their worlds as they are whether it be K-12 education or any other setting.
Daniel Goleman’s best seller in 1995 gave us permission to talk about the power of emotions.
Emotional Intelligence Defined

“The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.”

Daniel Goleman
Why Does EI Matter?

- A study of 286 different kinds of jobs at dozens of organizations worldwide found that 21 competencies distinguished stars from average performers.
- 18 were based on emotional intelligence.

- Spencer & Spencer, 1993
Social and Emotional Learning is a process whereby children and adults acquire knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to five core competencies:
SEL Improves Student Outcomes

Science Links SEL to Student Gains:

• Social-emotional skills
• Improved attitudes about self, others, and school
• Positive classroom behavior
• 11 percentile-point gain on standardized achievement tests

And Reduced Risks for Failure:

• Conduct problems
• Emotional distress

Long-Term Impact

- High school graduation
- College attendance
- Employment
- Emotional and mental health

- Criminal activity
- Drug involvement

$2.11 return for every $1.00 spent

Hawkins et al., 2005
Approaches to SEL Instruction = Student Success in School and Life

**Inputs/Approaches**
- SEL Skills Instruction:
  - Self-awareness
  - Self-management
  - Social awareness
  - Relationship skills
  - Responsible decision-making

- Positive Learning Climate/Instructional Strategies
  - Safe, Caring
  - Well-managed
  - Engaging
  - Cooperative
  - Supportive
  - High Expectations

**Short-term Outcomes**
- Greater Attachment, Engagement and Commitment to the educational setting
- Less Risky Behavior, More Positive Development

**Long-term Outcomes**
- Greater Success in School, Work, and Life
Are SEL programs conducted by existing school staff effective?

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What does a vision of k-12 education also need to include in order to help young people and educators develop the skills and dispositions necessary to embody the virtues that could actually transform themselves and the world?

How could we nurture not only children’s and adults’ hearts and minds but their inner lives as well?
Schools with Spirit

Nurturing the Inner Lives of Children and Teachers

Edited by Linda LANTIERI

Foreword by Daniel GOLEMAN

Angeles Arrien
Larry Brendtro
Martin Brokenleg
Geoffrey Canada
Nancy Carlsson-Paige
Zephryn Conte
Marcy Jackson
Rick Jackson
Rachael Kessler
Jacob Needleman
Parker J. Palmer
Laura Parker Roerden
David Sluyter

"These essays show what wonderful transformations can happen when teachers are able to nurture spiritual and emotional understanding as part of the lessons they teach."
—Marian Wright Edelman, president, Children’s Defense Fund
“In that instant I felt like I understood what it means to be a teacher, because I could run no faster than this little kindergarten girl could run.”

Public School 234 Teacher, NYC
When we start to help so many people in so many ways...

We can begin to “do good badly”

Wayne Muller from Sabbath
Those who are helping others need support personally and professionally at the deepest levels of their lives.
So how do we balance and cultivate our own inner lives in such a way that we will be able to be the adults who will be able to offer those very things to our children?
The Inner Resilience Program’s Mission

Our mission is to cultivate the inner lives of students, teachers and schools by integrating social and emotional learning with contemplative practice.
Calming Strategies for Enhancing Attention, Quieting the Mind and Relaxing the Body

BUILDING RESILIENCE FROM THE INSIDE OUT

A Teaching Guide for Grades K-8
LINDA LANTIERI
With an Introduction and Practices Guided by DANIEL GOLEMAN
Two Practices for Building Inner Resilience and Enhancing Emotional Intelligence

- Relaxing the body (through progressive muscle relaxation and a body-scan exercise)
- Focusing the mind (through a mindfulness exercise)
Belly Breathing

I can use deep breathing when I’m about to get a bunch of shots at the doctor’s.

-- Grade 3 Student
Use of the CD Daily to create a “quiet time”

After I do Mr. Goleman’s CD, I feel good.
I feel calm.

-- Kindergartner
You can go to the Peace Corner any time you want

-- Kindergartner
Students Connect with Nature
Integrating SEL and Mindfulness in a K-12 Setting – Where?

An Educational Setting that cultivates SEL and mindfulness

- Staff Meetings
- Explicit instruction in the concepts and skills
- Adult competency building work
- Lunchroom and bus routines and rituals
- Extra-curricula activities
- Leadership styles
- Family Outreach

Approach to Discipline
School/classroom routines and rituals
Incorporating Youth voice

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Possible Benefits of Integrating Social and Emotional Learning with Contemplative Practices

• “The overall insights from brain science suggest that how we focus our attention activates certain neural circuits. With neural activation, the potential is created to enhance the connections in those regions which can help transform a temporary state into a more long-term trait of that individual.”

Dr. Daniel J. Siegel, Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, UCLA
The Feeling-Learning Connection

Without access to our memory we cannot learn.

In order to remember, we need to be able to focus our attention. When we’re focused we’re in a state of “relaxed alertness” and we’re ready to learn.

Our feelings determine whether we can focus or not. When we’re emotionally flooded and don’t have a chance to empty or express them, our emotions hijack us and block our capacity to focus.

Our feelings determine our capacity to learn.

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What is unique about this work in the field of education?

The “inner life” of the individual (educator and student) is being nurtured along with their emotional, social and academic development.

The idea that taking the time to cultivate one’s inner life and train one’s mind in certain ways is valued and important both for the adult and child.

There is an emphasis on the notions of both interdependence and impermanence – everyone and everything is connected and change is a key feature of life.

Roeser, Davidson, Greenberg (2009)
What is unique about this work...? (Cont’d)

It involves disciplined practices in which one repeats the same practice on a regular basis.

The teaching of these practices occurs within a relational context in which personal growth and ethics are emphasized along with learning concrete skills to develop self-regulatory capacity.
Things to Consider for Effective Programming in Contemplative Teaching and Learning

Is there a healthy respect for the principle of “separation of church and state”?

Are the practices that are taught able to co-exist within the cultural, religious and/or secular context of public schools?

Are we paying as much attention to the process of teaching – the quality of interaction between student and learner – as to the content of what is being taught?
Things to Consider for Effective Programming in Contemplative Teaching and Learning cont’d.

What should the qualifications and preparation for the teacher be for this kind of work to be effective?

What do teachers need to know and experience to do a good job in teaching this?

What tools can we use to assess the efficacy of what we are doing with children?

What kinds of practices are best to teach children at what age and for how long?
50 Years From Now....

**Certainties**
- Relationships matter for personal and societal well-being.
- Emotions influence learning and the kind of job we do at what we do.
- Social and emotional skills can be learned.
- SEL requires attentional and intentional support on many levels to be successful.

**Uncertainties**
- Where will education take place?
- How will education be delivered?
- How will technology impact our lives?