

To educate is to guide students on an inner journey towards more truthful ways of seeing and being in the world. – Parker Palmer

Gross National Happiness in the Classroom

A Teacher's Thoughts...

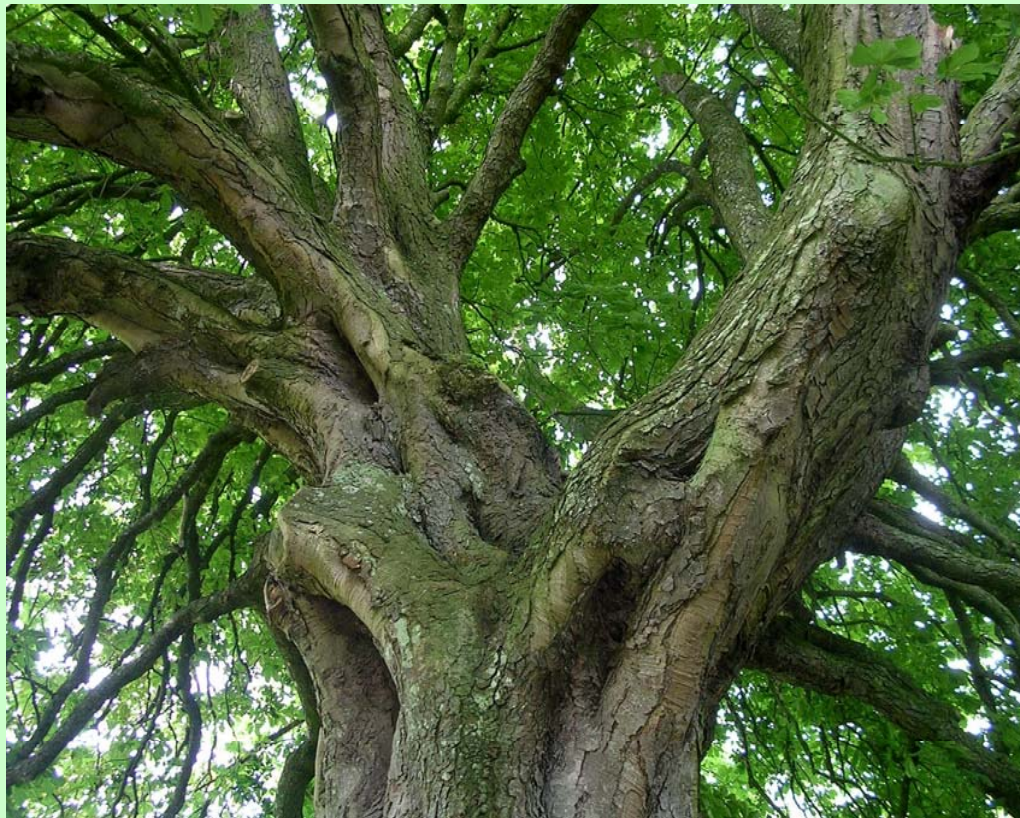
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The world is in crisis!

“If western civilization is in a state of permanent crisis, it is not far-fetched to suggest that there may be something wrong with its education. No civilization, I am sure, has ever devoted more energy and resources to organized education, and if we believe in nothing else, we certainly believe that education is, or should be, the key to everything.” - E.F. Schumacher in *Small is Beautiful, Economics As If People Mattered*

A rare opportunity...

- The crises we face present an opportunity for us to really evolve and make changes that will enable us to be more creative, inventive and connected.



How does this relate to education?

- We must place our role as teachers in the larger context of the world situation otherwise we don't realize the crucial role that we play in life!
- Teaching is not a job, it is a sacred task.
- When we view our role as teachers as a "sacred" task it is transformational.
- The future is in our hands and we must never forget that we have the most important task for civilizations survival!

The Need for Ethics

- “At present, there can be little doubt that the whole of mankind is in mortal danger, not because we are short of scientific and technological know-how, but because we tend to use it destructively, without wisdom. More education can help us only if it produced more wisdom.” - E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful – Economics as if People Mattered*, p. 61
- More wisdom is possible only when education has an ethical foundation.

We All Want to Be Happy!

From *Ethics for the New Millennium*

by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

- No matter what our situation, whether we are rich or poor, educated or not, of one race, gender, religion or another, we all desire to be happy and avoid suffering. Our every intended action, in a sense our whole life—how we choose to live it within the context of the limitations imposed by our circumstances—can be seen as our answer to the great question which confronts us all: “How am I to be happy?” (p. 4)

The Happiness Lab

Students chart moments of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for one week and each night they evaluate their moments of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the following questions:

- *Why were you feeling satisfied/dissatisfied?*
- *Did expectations, desires, needs, or demands have anything to do with your feeling?*
- *Did you do anything mentally to either plan a way out of the suffering or fantasize about a more pleasant existence? Did you do anything to distract yourself from feeling fully the dissatisfaction? Did you do anything mentally or physically to try to prolong your state of satisfaction?*

- *What I learned from doing this lab is that it is easy to get short term happiness or satisfaction from material things. This happiness however is not comparable to the happiness you get from being appreciated of the feeling that you have done something meaningful. – 11th Grader*
- *There is a difference between pleasure and happiness. Pleasure is dependent on circumstance, objects and people. On the other hand, happiness is one's belief about themselves and the world around them. Happiness originates from the internal workings of our mind. – 12th Grader*
- *I have found from this lab, that the things that make me happy are all temporary...All my instances of being satisfied or dissatisfied were all because of an expectation, desire, need or demand. I was able to see how much of how I feel is due to me wanting things and expecting things to be a certain way.- 11th Grader*

It is obvious that our community suffers from unhappiness, regardless of how privileged our lives are compared to those outside the walls of AES. There are some students who suffer from work overload, lack of sleep, unhealthy dieting, lack of exercise and poor social lives. Improving these conditions is critical but it should always be remembered that happiness is a feeling generated from within one's self. There are those in recent history who have witnessed the worst in mankind yet have been able to move on and other who haven't. A Holocaust survivor once said, "They could take everything from me except the way I chose to feel." Ultimately, we are the masters of our own happiness. – 11th Grader

Project Happiness

www.projecthappiness.com

Imagine a world where...

- ...Learning about happiness is considered as important as learning about Science, Math and History.
- ..Young people, regardless of race, gender, religion or social status, are valued enough to be given tools to find happiness within themselves.
- ...We empower young people to be the new leaders in our interconnected world.
- ...Happiness is considered the greatest measure of our success.
- There's a spark of light, joy and creativity inside each one of us. Even with the stresses of everyday life, this spark can grow stronger if we know how to tap into it. It's all a matter of how we look at things. The thoughts we choose influence our happiness... simple things like asking ourselves if our thoughts are making the situation better or making it worse. We can empower ourselves to be happier.

We Are All Basically the Same!

What children learn about ethical conduct in school has to be practiced first. In this, teachers have a special responsibility. By their own behavior, they can make children remember them for their whole lives. If this behavior is principled, disciplined, and compassionate, their values will be readily impressed on the child's mind. This is because the lessons taught by a teacher with a positive motivation penetrate deepest into their students' minds. (p. 183, Ethics for the New Millennium)



The Need for an Ecological Conscience

- If we have the capacity to destroy the earth, so, too, do we have the capacity to protect it. - His Holiness the Dalai Lama in *Ethics for the New Millennium*, p. 191
- Once we have experienced the fierce joy of life that attends extending our identity into nature, once we realize that the nature within and the nature without are continuous, then we too may share in the exquisite beauty and effortless grace associated with the natural world. (John Seed)
- We must shift from ownership to relationship. (Satish Kumar)
- We must not be anthropocentric! All living beings have equal value. Rivers, trees, forests, humans are equal.
- Deep Ecology (Arne Naess)

Mindfulness in Education

Good teachers share one trait: they are truly present in the classroom, deeply engaged with their students and their subject. . . (they) are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students, so that their students can learn to weave a world for themselves. The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts. - Parker Palmer

- Mindfulness is a powerful tool for students, teachers, school administrators, and parents to promote an individual's sense of well-being.
- The practice of mindfulness decreases stress, attention deficit issues, depression, anxiety, and hostility while simultaneously providing optimal conditions for learning and teaching.

Three Key Questions

What are we teaching?

- Content, Skills
- The importance of “love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony.”

Why are we teaching?

- To make the world a better place.
- I want my students to have a sense of *empathy* and *efficacy*.

How should we teach?

- Absorption, Assimilation, Re-expression (Integral Education)
- Knowledge and Experience (Satish Kumar)

Educational Experiences @ AES that Promote GNH values

- Project Happiness
- The Happiness Lab
- Peace & Activism Task Force
- Educators Sangha
- Compassion Meditation

We went down to the bottom floor and each person grabbed a cushion and sat down on the floor. Then we were told to clear our minds completely and think of any one person that we know or we've seen that is suffering. Then from deep inside our hearts, we were to wish the best for this one person. Then we were to think of all the people in the world and do the same for them. I think this is a really good principle of this religion. When you think like this, you are basically telling yourself that every living person is in a way like you and is basically you. When you show compassion for these people, you are not only helping and caring for them but helping yourself. This philosophy is called "I am Thou."

– Anmol

- Mini-course to Organic Farm and exposure to Deep Ecology

On Hope...

- “Hope is a feeling that life and work have meaning. You either have it or you don’t, regardless of the state of the world that surrounds you...Hope is a state of mind, not of the world. Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good...Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.” - Vaclav Havel