

Selected quotes for this Studies Project:

"The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom."

—**bell hooks**

"My purpose is to allow people to move closer to actually being creatures of free choice, to genuinely reflect individual creativity and emotion, freeing the body of habitual tensions and wired-patterns of behavior so that it may respond without inhibition to do what the person wants."

—**Moshe Feldenkrais**

"The habits we form from childhood make no small difference, but rather they make all the difference."

—**Aristotle**

Selected readings:

To be shared at the event:

excerpts from Thomas DeFrantz' *revelations: the afterlives of slavery in dance*

Alfie Kohn

Choices for Children: Why and How to Let Students Decide [Choices for Children](#)

excerpt follows:

"All around us we encounter individuals who not only are unwilling to oppose that which is wrong, but who seem not even to see that something is wrong. They open their front door, survey a landscape of suffering and injustice, and quietly close the door again, declaring with satisfaction that all is well. All around us — including in the field of education — we meet people who have lost their capacity to be outraged by outrageous things, people who, when they are handed foolish and destructive mandates, respond by meekly asking for guidance on how to put them into practice. If they ever had the gumption to analyze ("Is this really in children's best interest?") or to object (when the answer to that question is no), it has long since evaporated.

Even if our only goal were to understand the world more accurately, we would need to maintain a questioning stance. Intellectual progress demands that we refuse to take things at face value, refuse to accept everything we've been told, refuse to assume that the conventional wisdom must be right. Science, as Richard Feynman remarked, can be defined as "the belief in the ignorance of authority"[9] — a statement that might be dismissed as hyperbolic were it not for Feynman's eminence as a scientist.

Of course, that same questioning stance is demanded not only by a desire to understand but by a desire to act, not only to find out what is true but to do what is right. There are social and political realities that fail to meet even the most elementary standard of moral acceptability. Rather than socializing children to accept things the way they are — accept them as desirable or, just as bad, accept them as inevitable — we need to help children critically analyze the status quo in order to decide which institutions and traditions are worth keeping and which need to be changed. In short, we should help students "talk back to the world."

Nel Noddings

"What Does It Mean to Educate the Whole Child?"

(<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept05/vol63/num01/What-Does-It-Mean-to-Educate-the-Whole-Child%C2%A2.aspx>)

excerpt follows:

The Aims of Education

Every flourishing society has debated the aims of education. This debate cannot produce final answers, good for all times and all places, because the aims of education are tied to the nature and ideals of a particular society. But the aims promoted by NCLB are clearly far too narrow. Surely, we should demand more from our schools than to educate people to be proficient in reading and mathematics. Too many highly proficient people commit fraud, pursue paths to success marked by greed, and care little about how their actions affect the lives of others.

Some people argue that schools are best organized to accomplish academic goals and that we should charge other institutions with the task of pursuing the physical, moral, social, emotional, spiritual, and aesthetic aims that we associate with the whole child. The schools would do a better job, these people maintain, if they were freed to focus on the job for which they were established.

Those who make this argument have not considered the history of education. Public schools in the United States—as well as schools across different societies and historical eras—were established as much for moral and social reasons as for academic instruction. In his 1818 *Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia*, for example, Thomas Jefferson included in the “objects of primary education” such qualities as morals, understanding of duties to neighbors and country, knowledge of rights, and intelligence and faithfulness in social relations.

Periodically since then, education thinkers have described and analyzed the multiple aims of education. For example, the National Education Association listed seven aims in its 1918 report, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*: (1) health; (2) command of the fundamental processes; (3) worthy home membership; (4) vocation; (5) citizenship; (6) worthy use of leisure; and (7) ethical character (Kliebard, 1995, p. 98). Later in the century, educators trying to revive the progressive tradition advocated open education, which aimed to encourage creativity, invention, cooperation, and democratic participation in the classroom and in lifelong learning (Silberman, 1973).

Recently, I have suggested another aim: happiness (Noddings, 2003). Great thinkers have associated happiness with such qualities as a rich intellectual life, rewarding human relationships, love of home and place, sound character, good parenting, spirituality, and a job that one loves. We incorporate this aim into education not only by helping our students understand the components of happiness but also by making classrooms genuinely happy places.

Few of these aims can be pursued directly, the way we attack behavioral objectives. Indeed, I dread the day when I will enter a classroom and find *Happiness* posted as an instructional objective. Although I may be able to state exactly what students should be able to do when it comes to adding fractions, I cannot make such specific statements about happiness, worthy home membership, use of leisure, or ethical character. These great aims are meant to guide our instructional decisions. They are meant to broaden our thinking—to remind us to ask *why* we have chosen certain curriculums, pedagogical methods, classroom arrangements, and learning objectives. They remind us, too, that students are whole persons—not mere collections of attributes, some to be addressed in one place and others to be addressed elsewhere.

In insisting that schools and other social institutions share responsibility for nurturing the whole child, I recognize that different institutions will have different emphases. Obviously, schools will take greater responsibility for teaching reading and arithmetic; medical clinics for health checkups and vaccinations; families for housing and clothing; and places of worship for spiritual instruction.

But needs cannot be rigidly compartmentalized. The massive human problems of society demand holistic treatment. For example, leading medical clinics are now working with lawyers and social workers to improve housing conditions for children and to enhance early childhood learning (Shipler, 2004). We know that healthy families do much more than feed and clothe their children. Similarly, schools must be concerned with the total development of children.