

**Notes from Sessions: Teachers Resistance and Action Network Annual Meeting
May 4, 2013, Oxford, Ohio**

Session Title: Curriculum, Assessment, And Local Voice

Conveners: Catherine Haerr, Dianne Suiter

Participants: Nathan Warvel, Gary Weilbacher, Tom Bensman, Arch Griev, Kevin Lydy, Patty Stone, Mary Webb, Sarni Bensman

10:15am Table 1

Discussion:

Teachers feel they lose their voice or they leave. There is a great deal of fear of reprisal if they don't 'go along.' Administrators also feel this pressure. There is something externally that is exerting this pressure on all of us. If teachers/leaders don't have a common language to counteract the pressures coming at them, then we have no way to communicate authentically with each other.

District-wide academic/learning calendars are huge barriers to student learning realities. Mary resists the academic calendars, but is able to identify the standards and learning goals her students are working on. They also do well on the tests.

There is a set of assumptions about learning that hinders voice and agency. Districts buy into the external pressure and, in turn, apply that pressure to teachers and leaders in the district.

We need to follow the money. How do we counteract Exxon commercials? How do we better educate the public about the deskilling and deprofessionalization of educators?

Would the NEA put out a commercial – information about some of the critical issues?

In order for us, as professionals to have a voice, the community – the local citizens need to understand what is actually happening. We need to try to change the public perception of what an educated individual is so that education is valued.

Arch doesn't have much faith in a national solution. Sees it as imperative to bring it back to the local voice. Catherine says it needs to be strategic. Start with the parents who get it. Nathan says mobilization is critical. But it will have to get messy in the meantime.

Nationally, personal relationships are very strong, though, for most teachers with parents. We're not tapping into that strength and using it to further our cause.

We need to look at alternate forms of assessment and use it. Structure the dialogue with the parents to look at meaningful issues. We need parents to understand what is important and how the assessments measure it or not. Parents who would see that individualized needs of students drive the assessment would support it.

We need to let parents know that this is what the district/education wants your child to fit into (the box s/he needs to cram into) and they will see the fallacy and weakness of that. They would begin to see that their child's education has been coopted in order to fit all students into a mold.

How do you organize a group of parents locally, when poorer parents are not listened to as much as wealthier nonminority parents are? We need to look at nonviolence as a means of protest for parents. We also need to help parents backward-design for resistance: What are parents' goals for their children for life and the learning for that? Then, telling the parents that the main goal in education is to get the students to pass the test, which has nothing to do with the goals the parents identified.

Teachers want to resist, but the fear of losing their jobs is high. Could someone from outside come to the local settings (but not on school sites) and help train teachers/leaders in how to resist, resistance techniques?

Session Title: Current Movements and New Resistance Strategies

Conveners: Jocelyn Weeda, Kevin Talbert

Participants: Scott Sanders, Sue Bartow, Ryan Gamm, Diane Huffman, Megan Kreaps, Emilie Camp

10:15am, Game Room

We need to have consciousness shift in schools – morally and ethically

If we are going to get to action, we need to think about Framing Resistance

- Framing issue – What is the norm that is being resisted? You can't have resistance without a thing that you are resisting.
- How can we engage in a movement that is going toward something not just against something?
- What are we about and how do we find like-minded people to move forward?
- We need to move towards helping teachers (in-service and pre-service) a movement in which there is a strong belief system that we have a professional teacher core and educator core – share in values that honor the lives of kids and have the conversation or mindset of teachers that deliberate about what it means to resist.
- There is resistance in the head and then there is resistance in action. How are we creating those connections to allow collaboration or discussion?
- What is the role of teacher?
- What is the professional language?
- What does it mean to be autonomous?
- How do I question this?

Recognizing when and where resistance occurs – teachers using alternate space (can't say what they want in classroom)

- Language/thinking is important. Some new teachers have no conception of what else curricula without testing could be.
- Why and how are some people able to persist and resist in the face of the test?
- If teachers are provided time and space – change can happen.
- Teachers have autonomy – there are things you can ask for or demand.
- How can we continue resistance communities after college? It is often the case that after we teach pre-service teachers that their voice is necessary in the struggle, they often feel alone in the “real world.”

Can we change our ways of resistance?

- Sometimes we are only using the “typical” spheres of influence – meaning resistance only occurs during protests
- Physical resistance – How can we get 4th graders to occupy the principals office?
- Social Media resistance network, teacher to teacher, fits into time/space structures
- Can we make connections to others in our state?

Session Title: Teaching and Student Resistance in a Culture of Demoralization

Conveners: Carmen Scalfara, Al Beauchamp. Participants: Kevin Lydy, Tom Poetter
10:15am, Lounge

Discussion and Individual Points:

- Teaching to the test takes time away from other teaching possibilities
- New teachers are observed no less than 6 times in a school year. Kevin Lydy has 3 mentees he is responsible for at his school.
- The “structure” of schooling is imposing on new teachers
- Both students and teachers can go through episodes of demoralization
- (Tom P.) What about Moralization? What are we doing to change the “restrictions that impede authentic learning?”
- (Al B.) 20-25 minutes of instruction time and the students want to shut down. We had a lengthy and productive conversation on the lack of engagement in classrooms.
- (Carmen) Why are teachers in the business of motivating students? Other countries (perhaps some less fortunate) have students that don’t need extrinsic motivation to want to learn.
- (Kevin L.) How does America value education?
- (Tom P.) How can we help kids in school to “Feel Good” about what they’re doing in school?
- (Al B.) Motivating a student to try to understand key math concepts: “What is the answer to this problem: $(-1)^2$?”
- (Al) How do you reclaim a student while thinking she did it on her own?
- (Kevin) What about the cultural aspects of parenting and family? How does the family and school conflict?
- (Al) Students will say: “I never had a teacher like you!” Implying: Black, Male. Not only does Al embody the physical characteristics of a Black Male but he also is fronting a “white” agenda: doing well in school. Al feels like being a black teacher who doesn’t “perform” as a typical black male hinders him with students.
- (Tom P.) Asa Hilliard “The Maroon Within Us” Chapter entitled “Do We Have the Will to Educate All Children?” Tom mentioned that this chapter by Hilliard could be a good reference for some of the issues surfaced about teaching African-American students.
- Conflict in the classroom
- (Kevin) What does it mean to be “black? He mentioned and discussed the PBS special – The Mythology of Race
- (Al) Sometimes the key issue in demoralization is race. Sometimes school is “radical” to students who have tough home lives. This is the place where they meet people out of the norm and do things out of the norm.

Session Title: OTES Incentives, Merit Pay

Conveners: Kevin Longley and Nathan Warvel

Attendees: Mary Webb, Al Beauchamp, Arch Grieve, Sarni Bensman

11:15am, Table 2

Discussion:

- No teacher wants to fail at their profession. Where does money come from for assessment literacy for teachers? Teachers expected to create assessments for SLO's but lack training. Teachers feel like Battelle's guinea pigs.
- Schools will not get RTT funds unless they do "these" things (political). Many RTT funds going to a few employees (teaching coaches) that are explaining SLO's to staffs, so money is wasted.
- Teaching is a service profession, not a doctor at a hospital who earns money based on how many people do not die.
- Organize (specialize) school to meet needs of individual students (diversity) because there are too many obstacles to overcome before teaching begins.
- All or nothing attitude of merit pay (all kids have to grow) isn't realistic. What if 90% grow, no pay? How is growth defined? What is successful growth?
- Those who can pass test will, those who can't will still show growth. You can't show growth in schools where there is a high turnover of teachers. If pay is connected to low performing schools, then no one will want to teach at these schools.
- Incentives need to go to teachers who are in lower socio-economic schools.
- Teachers are not in the Profession for the pay...but at the same time they are not willing to give up what they have earned. However, many good teaching candidates never reach the classroom due to lack of \$. Society pays for what it values. Capitalism drives America...\$30,000 can't sustain a teacher...if they have capitalist mindset of 5 TV's, new car, new home...etc. New teachers in debt, and only earning \$30,000.
- It is an assumption that if I pay you more, then you will work better. It's not about \$.
- Why not pay all teachers the same salary? Because teaching is a profession, not a factory with an hourly wage. Experience matters in the classroom. What is a good fair salary? Who determines that? If salary is same, then less competition between colleagues, therefore more focused on teaching.
- Socialist view: High salary, equal pay, competitive to get into program (like Finland and France!), with mentoring provided

Session Title: Building Collaboration

Conveners: Diane Huffman, Patty Stone

Participants: Emilie Camp, Scott Sander, Tom Poetter, Sheri Leafgren

11:15am, Game Room

- To make a change you have to have people working together. . . No advantage to working alone. . . You need a coalition.
- What drives collaboration? Common goals, Strength in numbers, Trust.
- Teachers are asked to do so many things that prove accountability that also take time away from developing engaging lessons for the students.
- Where do we go from here? TRAAN's goal is to have teachers know that there is a safe place to discuss common concerns and that there is a support network for them.

Session Title: Media Matters – Combating the Perception of Schooling

Convener: Carmen Scalfaro: Attendees: Ryan Gamm, Tom Bensman, Kevin Talbert, Catherinne Haerr, Dianne Suiter, Kevin Lydy, Sue Bartow, Carmen Scalfaro, Jocelyn Weeda, Gary Weilbacher, Megan Kreaps

11:15am, Patio

Discussion and Individual Points:

- How do we educate parents about what the real stories of teaching are?
- (Kevin T.) Are we believing the stories about standardization?
- (Kevin L.) A popular mindset among parents is education may be doing poorly for other students but my child loves his/her teacher.
- (Jocelyn) Kids don't know that the standardization movement affects what makes a good teacher.
- (Dianne) "What are your goals for your child?" should be on the minds of parents.
- (Kevin T.) We should reconceive "teacher"
- (Catherinne) Ohio schools are now looking at the ACT as a universal indicator of knowledge instead of the OGT
- (Kevin L.) How do you make the tests less valuable?
- (Tom B.) School "success" measured by invalid test scores.
- (Ryan) Teaching / schooling is a commodity.
- (Kevin L.): What does it mean to be a teacher? Public thinks they can do it or that anyone can step in and be a teacher. Public needs to "see" what actually happens in the classroom from a teacher's perspective rather than a student's.
- How do we reverse media portrayals of teachers and teaching?
- (Kevin T.): Personal branding. Teachers should look for ways (via technology) to (re)create or (re)define what it means to teach.
- (Tom B.): Ask. Use parents to share "good" stories of what's going on. If a teacher is appreciative of your teaching methodologies, ask them to "spread" the word.
- (Kevin T.): How to READ the media. We don't teach our students how to understand the narratives that are represented in the media.
- (Tom B.): How about "home visits?" Can teachers leave the confines of the classroom to be more effective and reach families? Meet at a neutral site?
- (Jocelyn) Some parents would feel they are under surveillance. Teachers are already asked to do 4000 things, never are they asked to do less.
- (Dianne) Teachers/Parents/Communities MUST DEMAND change.
- (Catherinne) Vote NO
- (Megan) Community is doing fine but you need to do more with less.
- (Tom B.): Hostile takeover of school (literal and metaphor)
- (Dianne) How do corporations resist when they are facing hostile take over?
- (Kevin T) How do teachers have a safe place to have freedom of speech?
- (Megan) Organizing people/strategically making change = critical commitments.

Session Title: Giving students a voice in their education

Convener: Nathan Warvel, Gary Weilbacher, Sarni Bensman

Participants: Scott Sander, Kevin Longley

1:30pm, Table 1

- Example of teaching situation in Madison, Wisconsin, where Two teachers formed a team and in the first two weeks of school, the teachers involved their students in setting the curriculum for the year. The curriculum grew out of two types of questions concerning self & world. There were 60 students total. Program was successful but discontinued because of mounting pressure from students, teachers, and parents.
- How do we involve the students in voicing their opinions/needs in education?
- Virtual Teaching Strategies that promote levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- School has not replaced the dinner table, passing down of values, respect, etc. Who fills the gap that exists in the family?
- Because of the focus on testing and teacher evaluations tied to it, students and teachers are becoming afraid to fail... is failing not an integral part of learning?
- Does the whole system (American Public School System) need a complete reconfiguration?
- Do students really have a voice, especially if they don't even know they CAN have one?
- Can we get a critical mass of teachers upset, not just a few "rebel" teachers?
- Have we reached the critical mass of pain before we will collectively stick out our necks to resist?
- Tired of preaching to the choir, "singletons" falling on their swords. What can we do to grow the tipping point towards real change and do we know what we want or even have a unified message?

Session Title: Mobilizing Community Members and Parents for Political Action with and for Teachers

Convener: Emilie Camp

Participants: Tom Bensman, Tom Poetter, Al Beauchamp, Sue Barlow, Patty Stone

1:30, Table 2

Discussion Notes:

- Business involvement in education, not just begging for money, but working together for the common good of the community.
- Involving other organizations in education, not just for money, but for common interests.
- Asking parents for help, building relationships through parental involvement in school/community.
- Discussion about school liaisons, (similar to resource coordinators in Cincinnati Public Schools).
- The responsibility of teachers to re-educate the public on what we are moving/working towards and why we resist current policies.
- Need to connect the resource coordinators with the teachers.
- Chicago closings, need for this activism, the anti case, as Lewis says, it breaks up the community (those in favor of the closings claim schools are doing the communities a disservice, while Lewis (Union President) argues that the closings are in fact doing the communities a disservice by breaking them up as kids are dispersed to other schools.
- Comer's "school development process," wrap around schools. We can't ignore poverty and this approach brings it front and center to schools and kids, recognizing the role schools/communities can play in addressing it. Need for a vision, to make clear the role of resource coordinator- concerns with lack of vision/clarity.
- Former administrators good for the resource role because they are invested in the communities.
- What are the downsides to having the community center onsite? What does it challenge? For example, who chooses the physicians, psychologists, etc for the clinics embedded in schools? Issues with teachers and administrators recommending treatment? Is there a loss for choice for teachers and their families when it comes to insurance covering?
- Need for challenging deficit orientations of communities, parents, and schools – the common factor is the students.
- Need for defining purpose for schooling.
- Discussion of the potential for community gardens

Session Title: How to Provide Safety Nets for Resisters, both teachers and leaders

Conveners: Dianne Suiter, Kevin Lydy

Participants: Jocelyn Weeda, Arch Grieve, Kevin Talbert, Catherine Haerr, Mary Webb, Ryan Gamm, Sheri Leafgren, Megan Kreaps, Diane Huffman

1:30pm, Patio

Two Prongs to this discussion:

- Resisting in the Classroom through/for instruction
- Resisting education writ large and the pendulum nationally and locally

Important to be ‘out’ in our activism and be safe. Not to have to go behind the ‘curtain’ to say what I’m thinking. In the classroom, teachers can use the standards to their benefit in defending what they do that is good for students and learning. Seek out like-minded teachers in your school.

Resistance is about both what you do as a teacher/leader and what you refuse to do. Taking the time to talk with students about how they think and feel about themselves and each other.

Catherine talked about situations in which administrators were not supportive, but Dianne Suiter mentioned that administrators are often the easiest to fire by non-renewing.

There were stories about teachers speaking up in a group where everyone is quiet, but then, later, was approached by members of the group who applauded what was said.

There was talk about “private space” versus “public space.” Kevin Talbert talked about teachers/leaders being able to be out in their activism without the fear of backlash.

Sheri - Resisting is not simply hating testing; hating testing is simply a means of explaining that they don’t align with the vision and what schools are all about right now. Teachers need to use the language of the testing to challenge them.

Catherine mentioned that teachers will be able to find those teachers that are resisting.

Diane Huffman mentioned that the Resident Educator program encourages confidentiality between mentors and mentees, which devalues the role of school administration.

Dianne Suiter talked about separating the resistance within the classroom versus resistance out in the public sphere.

Arch mentioned utilizing nonviolent resistance. Gene Sharp, father of nonviolence in peace movement, has defined and discussed this well in *Six Pillars of Power*. Also may need some branding type of activity to help with identification of the work, both for those doing the work and for those who aren’t involved in the work.

The idea of utilizing a common color or something like that to send a message of solidarity (e.g., what Middletown did—K-8 building that was committed to creating democratic schools (school meetings with students running them, non-graded classes, lots of family participation). Dianne Suiter mentioned that there are teachers that “get it,” but are scared to death about doing anything about it because of the consequences.

Arch asked for a clarification about what the common definition of resistance is. Catherine explained a variety of examples of resistance behaviors.

Sheri mentioned that if teachers think they’re alone, they won’t act. Thinking that they are not alone will help out.

Kevin Talbert announced that resistance is not a positive look; resistance is good, but it needs to carry with it the idea of some other ethical alternative principles or ideals.

Arch wanted further clarification of what that “thing” is that teachers are resisting. Catherine added that there are different goals as well as tactics.

Sheri mentioned that Alfie Kohn addressed a group of superintendents to list the characteristics they want their children (or youth they care about) to develop. He had them separate them into those that are supported by schools and those that are squelched. He talked about “obedience” versus “adventurous.”

The idea of offering choice as a goal or an option.

Arch asked about what kinds of choices, to which the idea of choices about schools, curriculum, whatever else comes into the mix. Giving kids the ability to think about their life and how it might be otherwise. We want them to learn to look out for each other. We also want to be mindful of the moral work of teaching (ala John Goodlad). It’s important to convince the community about what is important in teaching and growth, and that the things we’re assessing are not a part of that.

Kevin T. hinted at the idea of choice as technical details (what I teach, how I teach it), but challenged the idea by thinking of choice in terms of a moral aspect (talking to students about what they want to do or where they want to be).

Deb Meier – A system of accountability exists among the students and teachers.

Arch mentioned that the “enemy” is the state and federal governments thinking they know what’s best versus schools knowing it for themselves.

Sheri mentioned that the academics are enhanced by the ethical aspects of education.

Catherine thought that there needs to be common language for teachers (Arch mentioned that we need a teachers’ version of a Hippocratic Oath) that can challenge what the

government states is important. Accountability comes from our relationships and learning how to be human. The academic is enriched by the relational element. A 'hypocratic oath' of teaching would help to ensure a common language to discuss the important things. If the oath involves doing no harm, then teachers have something to fall back on to defend their work.

Kevin T. mentioned that, within the community of teachers there are those who believe that high stakes testing are intrinsically and morally beneficial.

Sheri mentioned that labeling a school as "failing" ignores all of the wonderful other things that are happening.

Catherine went back to "common language;" that doctors and plumbers can explain why what they're doing is the best and works.

Dianne Suiter explained that we can't dictate what all teachers believe because of what Kevin Talbert mentioned about teachers that want the tests, etc.

Arch mentioned that we need the solidarity of larger group so that when a teacher is criticized by an outside group they are essentially criticizing a larger group of people. Interest conversion: We could put a federation together to draw all of the little groups into some kind of united representational group. Each group would keep its own agency, but would also representationally be a part of the larger federation. One of the problems is that currently most of the groups that are out there are comprised of entire schools that opt in. Individual teachers can get validation from this. But this wouldn't necessarily help individual teachers who are in fear of losing a job.

Teachers need to be able to validate and justify why they are teaching what they are teaching based on a common, agreed-upon set of goals and principles and ethical or moral reasons. It also needs to be phrased in the same breath of why we feel certain practices are not effective at achieving those goals.

Dianne felt that teachers could join up with those organizations that allow for people of like-mindedness to connect. Dewey has been talking about this stuff for years. There are a lot of people who do what they do (testing/standards/walkthroughs) who perceive what they're doing as right and important. Maybe it's not about having a common language, but rather, the ability to explain to someone what I'm doing and why. This might be more powerful. Being a member of TRAAN would help to describe what I believe. The safety net is in being a part of something larger. An individual-based organization would exist to speak out against those educators who disappear or get leaned on and could tell their stories.

Sheri mentioned that the fears of being "fired" might be perceived and not based on reality

Diane H. liked the idea of documenting incidents when teachers have been let go due to resisting.

Sheri mentioned that we need to use the language of corporate to define for ourselves what it means.

Kevin T. brought up the idea that we can't ask teachers to become martyrs, but we have to prepare teachers or make preparations for teachers for the repercussions of resistance. There needs to be some training for teachers/leaders on how to get your ass kicked and survive it (a la the Freedom Riders training at Western Campus). We can't continue to create martyrs unless we help to prepare them for how to handle it and not be a martyr. Think of it as nonviolence training and how to sustain and live within it.

We need to be able to have the knowledge to justify what we're doing. Could also begin to use the language being used nationally and reframe how we define it, and getting that information out to citizens. It's also important to have the knowledge and language being used statistically with the tests to inform what we see as important and how we're doing. We need to get psychometricians in to explain statistically that we can't do what we're doing with testing information.

Sheri mentioned that quantitative justification of decisions don't carry the weight that is attributed to them.

We talked about how scientifically insignificant the tests are (Catherine's example of describing how so much of what the tests deal with are things that the teacher has no control over).

Session Title: How Do We Counteract Corporate-Based Reform While Keeping Relatively Safe From Retaliation?

Conveners: Gary Weilbacher, Dianne Suiter

Participants: Catherine Haerr, Sarni Bensman, Ryan Gamm, Jocelyn Weeda

3:00pm, Table 2

Discussion:

Strong teachers are beginning to walk away from education to other professions due to corporate-based standardization and assessment. In Sarni's school, teachers are told they need to come in early and stay late to meet and discuss testing. The teachers see it as nonproductive use of time, but are afraid to speak up for fear of retribution. No one backs other teachers up if they do speak up, due to the same fear. In another incident from another state, a principal left a meeting in which teachers were trying to discuss some specific things they felt were harmful to kids that they were being asked to do. In abruptly leaving the meeting without hearing them out, the principal turned around and said from the doorway to the teachers (including the head of the union in the district), "You all need to be thinking about where you want to be placed next year." We're not sure that even teacher unions are feeling effective in creating safety nets for teachers to speak up.

Issues presented:

- Good educators leaving education due to corporate reform
- Teacher unions are not necessarily feeling safe
- Teachers are afraid to speak up and increasingly will not back each other when someone does speak up.

The curricular/instructional pattern seems to be (nation-wide):

- An instructional calendar is created identifying dates at which all students at each grade level will be 'taught' specific material
- Districts then write 'common assessments' for all students evaluating their 'learning' within that calendar
- All students are then sorted into 'Enrichment and Tutorial' instruction based upon the results of those tests
- Additional Benchmark testing is conducted throughout the year to help predict state test results

The structure currently perpetuates white, middle class power over content and pedagogy. Discussions around the 'achievement gap' furthers buy-in to the perceived need for the 'same' education for all students (regardless of individual needs) and the judging of student learning from the 'same' tests, regardless of the research that clearly shows the bias in standardized testing against minorities and children in poverty.

How do we organize our teachers, leaders, and students to counteract this? Seattle may have provided some good modeling. The teachers were united, had parents and students

with them, and stood up in resistance, in spite of threats. Retaliation works best with individuals. It is very difficult to enact retaliation at entire groups of people.

No one seems to have followed and ‘outed’ the amount of money that is being spent on standardized testing. Some of the problem lies in our decisions in education about what we will spend money on.

States can opt out of NCLB money. Districts spend more money on the testing than they take in from federal funds. The public needs to see this in plain language and figures.

Upper Arlington had a group of parents who opted out of testing for their children, but the district came back the next year and told the parents that if they did that again the school would not be funded.

In Pennsylvania educators are quietly telling parents that if they opt out ‘for religious reasons’ their school and child will not be given a 0. This could be a way out for parents – and a way for teachers to utilize parental trust to build resistance.

Perhaps a class at the university level (may have to be outside of NCATE) could be taught to help teach resistance methods. (ala The Freedom Riders) Could meetings off-site be set up to help educators learn resistance methodology?

Universities have a responsibility to send students into classes with excellent teachers. But this frequently does not happen. There can also be a culture created in cohort classes on campus in which students are not to talk about anything negative they might have experienced in their placement classes. Thus, nothing is in place to help students process what they’ve seen, unless it falls within ‘admiration.’ Pennsylvania State has a good model for counteracting this, and for providing additional support and sense-making for students.

Healthy partnerships with schools that bring professors and educators together to discuss their work on a regular basis can bring quiet, behind the scenes, support for healthy resistance. Professors can provide validation and ideas for teachers.

We should also spread awareness that we can look to bloggers like Diane Ravitch, Deborah Meier, Susan O’Hanian, and Mercedes Schneider to gain information.

To look at the problem further:

- Follow the money: it will tell the public what is happening
- Figure out how to increase voice: blogging sites, training for resistance techniques
- Raise our own standards for professional voice and decision making
- R awareness in pre-service teachers at university level, where there is room for autonomy and room for agency professionally.
- Find ways to ‘take back’ our own profession through the use of our professional voices.

The overwhelming cultivation of a culture of fear is at a critical level. Accompanying this is a growing habit of accepting what people in power say, regardless of factual information, and raising no questions. There is a reciprocal growing habit for some in power to simply keep stating information they want to be reality over and over, also regardless of factual evidence.

We should invite Michael Moore to a TRAAN meeting to hear our discussion. He needs to make a Moore documentary!

Session Title: What are we here for? The Purpose of education

Conveners: Sue Bartow, Patty Stone, Al Beauchamp

Participants: Diane Huffman, Emilie Camp, Arch Grieve, Sheri Leafgren, Scott Sander, Kevin Lydy, Patty Stone, Nathan Warvel, Mary Webb

3:00pm, Table 1

This was a compilation of three questions: one about assessment – what did we want from assessment, one about the structures (mental and physical) that block us, last one ... (I'm not sure about it, Sue)

Discussion started with what's good in assessment – how can we reframe it and find what's good and useful?

What are we resisting and what does it mean to be a teacher resister? What do we stand for?

Is there a larger driver here and smaller applications?

Can we construct something like a Hippocratic oath for this group?

Should we change the name to something more constructive than "resistance"?

Looking at the value of standardized tests – diagnosis, information, we know it's limited. What are we doing with that information? How to de-emphasize it?

What really is riding on this report card thing? Is it just hot air? Is it smoke and mirrors? Like the IOWAS ("when I was in school") were just disconnected? Were they used diagnostically? He's asking if the negative consequences are just smoke and mirrors or is it not even there actually? Empty threats? Less than we fear? Implication of fear is a build up that, if we stop and look, reality might be less threatening.

We could start looking at Dewey's pedagogical creed

We make decisions based on coercion, tradition, intellect. Want to be making decisions primarily based on intellect.

Characterize for this group what is foundational about education

Schools and mission statements – connecting everything to this mission, helping students understand why this is valued (extrinsic) and seek/incorporate intrinsic motivation

Regardless of where we are at we believe these things about education

Can we find a common good? Dewey's Pedagogic Creed

Brief discussion of frustration: times when people shut down and refuse to participate – in this case it's an anecdote about students – Are they shutting down from refusal to participate with another group member or is it an expression of student resistance?

In schools we value competition more than collaboration. Externally opposed values

Can we decide our own valuing system? What if we gave our own stickers? Hysterical but empowering story about kid seeing through the sticker myth and wondering what it could mean for our movement.

Mention of authentic assessment – clean water act proposal to the EPA, for example.

Lots of better conceptions are out there (authentic assessment, project based learning) that don't have traction today.

If you didn't win the race, what's the benefit of running? Clarify the extended benefits of running (in this example) to all involved. We need to explicate those for constituents.

Allowing students to find value in activity/experience – the value is something YOU determine (the student, the individual)

The implications of school beyond school – bringing outside of school into school – helping students see that value of bringing people into school

Spinning triangle of three Ss – school society self – a modern version/compression of Dewey's thinking

Including the soul – Sheri's illustration of triangle with slingshot – hysterical but should be explored, examined

Discussion moved to benefits of contained classroom and recent moves that lower the grades in which that is still possible. Students coming out of university now who are only certified in one or two subject areas – starts at 4th grade now.

Descriptions of the school day and how it feeds disconnection in all directions. The disadvantages of dividing by subject matter instead of the self-contained classroom. – new teachers coming out of college can't teach a self-contained class

The impediment of subject matter licensure...
The decline of the middle school model

Session Title: The Corporate Takeover of Curriculum

Convener: Kevin Longley

Participants: Tom Poetter, Tom Bensman, Megan Kreaps, Kevin Talbert

3:00, Game Room

Discussion:

We have a deeper educational problem....testing is pushing out other subjects (eg., visual arts) therefore cheapening education, breaking down democracy, and there is very little resistance to this. Once these classes are gone, they won't come back.

NY- principal fired security guards, used budget to create an arts program, school test scores have gone up.

There is a natural connection between music and math.

Virtual credit recovery...

Artist in residents....at risk students became stained glass makers...became employed due to community resources.

Foreign language...instruction have been traditionally poor, focus on grammar and not speaking. Underperformed and now we have to defend it, indefensible.

Inevitable rush of technology, but what are the value of teachers.

Waldorf curriculum...development appropriate music curriculum.

Carnegie unit....tradition? teachers need to do a better job of expressing values, then taking on structure of education.

Tradition....Standard practice of common school...age groups...doing since 1600's...culturally imbedded, we haven't changed the norms.

What kind of structure would best benefit students/families today?

How do we have this conversation today? Corporate influence....grade-branded products.

Parents untapped power source, but need to be informed.

We haven't given the public any ammunition. We have to be informed to inform others.

Anti-tax movement...more teachers you cut the more excited the anti-tax people are (save \$). Reduce things we cover in school to save \$. Tea party not economically sound (ideology).

Moral and public good sentiment that doesn't transfer to older generation. Some pay taxes forward, while others feel they never benefited from schools therefore vote no for tax levies.

Can't win an ideological battle, but can win an informational battle.

School system has ideological norms that may not be known, but need to be known.
Schools need to send more info to media.

Part of a teachers job now, is to be an ambassador to the public (for the children).

OSA...one on one talking to people and asking what they care about and making that political. If we want parents/community members on our side we have to have these discussions.

Disconnect between community and school district bc district took away activity bus from township kids....public still mad 20 years later.

Charter/voucher movement has diminished teacher force.

Intellectual work is not valued by politicians/public.

The national journal...article about the middle class.

Quick fix is loved by public, but a quick fix doesn't exist.

Is the salvation of the public school system the private school system?

How do you run a school unlike a business?

How long can the reversal of fortune with vouchers hold up...how much longer can private education not be held accountable? How long can they take state \$ and not be tested.

Closing Session Notes

Convener: Tom Poetter

Notes Provided by Jocelyn Weeda

4:30pm, Auditorium

Our Project for Closing Hour – Tom asked permission from the group to structure the closing session as follows: Everyone has a chance to speak, we discuss our reaction to the day, and we discuss moving forward... The group agreed, and proceeded.

Reflections on the Day –

- Feeling hopeful – education is a mess, but so much can be done – feels good.
- This has helped me in my practice and to have effect on others.
- We should do this again and talk about where we are and give each other support.
- Allowed me to get out of my comfort zone.
- I feel respected and validated by this community especially when I felt the opposite from others in my other spheres (family/community/nationally)
- The motivation to resist is the kids – if we don't get it right we give kids small or nonexistent opportunities. The feeling of defeat is strong, but hope gives us the chance to resist the nonsense.
- Hopefulness comes from not being alone.

Major Themes of the Day –

- Boundary/border crossing – K-12 and Higher Education crossings, also talk of parents and community crossings – crossing to a new mentality (can we learn something from how companies have resisted hostile corporate takeovers?)
- Time to do something...tired of complaining – though conversations are important.
- Unite and rise up instead of divide and conquer.
- Resistance is civil disobedience – the real problem is obedience in the eyes of things that are unjust. Sometimes we feel helplessness, but there were always people who took actions that were different and power comes from being extremely knowledgeable (Howard Zinn).
- Stories help us to be heard – we have to understand, be knowledgeable, and “put a stick in the machine – jam it up.” (Sheri Leafgren)
- I have to resist in order to move toward something – the purposeful end. We are resisting and draw the line in the sand but also telling why... not only are we resisting this but how does that fit in to what we believe this is.
- MLK Jr. used Resistance as a method.
- Support for fearlessness comes from us. We need to honor small moments of resistance. Small risks are important, too. Huge culture of fear – if we are hoping to get people fired up – showing places of small resistance. Being knowledgeable.

Action Plan

- We need to agree on what we stand for individually and as a group

- Suggested that we modernize Dewey's pedagogy creed
- We could set up a facebook page where we can share thoughts and stories of resistance – network of individuals that we would like to share our stories of resistance. Arch agreed to begin.
- As we write things, we have got to put them in common language that citizens can understand.
- Need to have a framework of guiding principles and take responsibility to make it more public because teachers can't do it alone.
- Training in resistance – resistance workshops - How you can be more active politically and do it on the ground? (eg., National Opt Out Organizers) Discussed that there need to be levels of resistance training – not all are ready to be martyrs.
- Could we collect information of successful organizations that are also resisting?
- Plan another meeting – Summer, Fall and Spring
- Join Facebook, Blog, and email to stay in touch.
- We need to continue to find more ideas, meet informally once in awhile, give a list of ways people actually resist, speak to case histories of people who left jobs and why – so they don't disappear.

Tensions about the name of the group, especially with regard to the word "resistance"

- Term resistance may be too harsh – working for agency and empowerment – we should look to be proactive.
- We stand together – we need fighters because what we are fighting is pervasive and embedded in the system of education.
- Discomfort is good and gives us an edge.
- We are advocates for kids, public education, democracy. Should we use advocacy instead of anger? TRAAAN (Teachers Resistance Action and Advocacy Network)
- Language discussion – language is powerful – the term resistance connotes a fearlessness – it's time for us to take risks.
- We are of differing levels of privilege – we need to acknowledge this and be sensitive to the fears of others
- Important to understand that Teachers do not have the same legal rights as professors. Any statement about curriculum, pedagogy, or school policy – can lead to dismissal.