

People for Education annual conference 2017

Keynote speaker Jean Clinton

Dr. Jean was a very engaging speaker with lots of educational and interesting information. Here are some of the points that she made during her speech that spoke to me:

Connection is Key. The power of relationships

The wisdom of the elders; Consider the interest of the next 7 generations when decisions are being made.

Well being is that positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met.

Kids will do well if they can; not if they want to!

Don't normalize anxiety, teach ways to cope.

Education should be more about lighting the fire then filling the pail.

People are made not born; nature vs nurture

Expectations should be altered not lowered.

Tyranny of cognitive seduction!

Social vs academic distress; ? what is worse vs does it matter what is worse.

'For Children to be successful they need to have a sense of self and spirit. They need physical and emotional safety. They need to feel a sense of belonging and meaningful learning experiences. They need to have supportive relationships and healthy minds and bodies.'

'All young people need: strong foundational skills that support perseverance, adaptability and self awareness. The capacity to communicate, collaborate and imagine a solution to complex problems. Knowledge and habits that will allow them to take care of their physical and mental health. A deep understanding of the roles and responsibilities of citizenship and the capacity to engage as citizens. Curriculum and school based programs that will prepare them for a range of possible futures.'

Supporting teachers in the learning environment; giving them the tools they need to teach successful students

Pushing the Limits- Panel #1

I found this panel and their experiences and knowledge very inspiring. The education process that they have been involved in and their willingness to share the hurdles and accomplishments they have experienced brought out an very educational discussion.

Here is what I took from each speaker;

Kelly Gallagher-McKay

Kelly is a professor and author. She states that we should share in the joyous part of everyday. Everybody in the system needs to be involved to help the children being taught; the teacher, the parent(s) and the Child. Her question she wished for us to ask the school and the board in which our children learn was;

How is my child's school preparing my child for the troubled world they live in?

Nancy Stienhower

Nancy is a retired principal and student achievement officer. She states that we need to listen to all parties involved in education. Social justice approach to learning; making the everyday issues a learning point for students. Having them learn in real time with real problems and letting the children be involved in the real problems and solving them. Her question she wished for us to ask the school and the board in which our children learn was;

What are you teaching that matters to my kids; how does it matter?

Aaron Warner

Aaron is a teacher. He states that for a student to be successful, there needs to be a personal investment. He has created a program in his class that he did not ask permission to start. He gives Children two hours a week to work on a project of their choice. He has very little guidelines other then they need to have questions and show something in their work. This gives children time to research what they like and build or write or create something that is a topic of interest or a passion for them. He states that children are often labeled at a young age and often label themselves. His question he wished for us to ask the school and the board in which our children learn was;

How are we investing in each of our students to empower and engage them?

Ingrid Palmer

Ingrid is a mother of 2 children with learning disabilities and sits on a community Parents for learning board. She states that a child's relationship with the teacher is pertinent to the child's academic achievement. For some children meeting the teacher before school starts and forming a relationship and keeping the lines of communication open are important. Her question she wished for us to ask the school and the board in which our children learn was;

How are the school systems building procedures to keep everyone informed?

Aaron Prosper

Aaron is a student at Dalhousie University and he sits on many boards representing his indigenous ancestry. He feels that students can restrict oneself based on labels vs actual ability. He believes that a person's culture is a foundation for who they really are. He states that people need hope, meaning and a purpose. His question he wished for us to ask the school and the board in which our children learn was;

What are you doing to go beyond the calls of action and what are you doing not to treat those as a check box?

Academic vs Applied workshop;

I choose this workshop as my eldest daughter is going to high school next year. I have to say that what I thought this was about and what it was actually about were very different and I was pleasantly surprised.

This workshop was based on a new streamline program being offered at 2 high schools in the TDSB; Oakwood and Jeffries. The principal and department heads at Oakwood came together to organize and enforce a new all Academic class program in grade 9. They decided that the label on most applied students was not fair and that if these students were given the structure, support and tools to succeed in a Academic class that they might be able to get away from that Label or gain the confidence to want to do well in school and feel that they can do well in school. This system was for all students. They had to re-educate teachers and develop a curriculum that kids wanted to learn. Students were set up for academic success; they were given the supports they need and a plan to succeed. This was only for grade 9 student as a base for their High School career. Classes were capped at 25 students, they offered a 2 week pre high school course and a 2 week credit recovery course. They encouraged teachers to think outside the box, to engage the students. No mainstream books; they focused on making good readers, writers and thinkers; not necessarily university students. They did not de-stream and it was not about lowering academic standards. It has become a successful program. Putting the kids first.

Principal's statement, the 3b's: Believe you can; bust your but, and be the best that you can be!

Panel#2 Assessment and Reporting.

Sam is an informative on the PISA test; Norah is Head of the EQAO testing and Ian is a Representative from the Ontario Teachers Federation

I have to say that this was my least favorite session/panel of the day. The talk surrounded that importance of standardized testing and in some cases of how it is done and how the information is interpreted. There were lots of discussion on PISA and EQAO why they are in place and what they cover; math, reading and writing. There was mention that it didn't cover everything that was taught and there was question if it covered everything that mattered.

The discussions were somewhat pointless to me on this topic as they don't plan to change how they do standardized testing or what it covers. The data from the tests paint a small picture in regard to everything the children are learning. I have to say that all informants were well versed on what they were discussing but it was Ian's points that I sided with the most and all the speakers come from teaching backgrounds.

Fundraising and Equity

As a parent Council Chair I gained knowledge and ideas from this workshop. The speakers were very engaging and informative. Taking Parent Council back to the basics of creating opportunities to improve student learning by increasing educational accountability in a positive learning environment. Our job is not to fundraise or at least not just to fundraise. We need to make sure that we are helping keep the lines of communication open between parents, teachers and kids. Promoting strong relationships between parents and teacher; parent and other parents; and students and teachers. Making sure when we fundraise it is for a cause.

I liked the suggestion of having one or two strong fundraisers and that they should be engaging and fun. I like the idea of having a fundraising committee and a policy for this committee. I liked the suggestion of a talk to the teacher night with engaging worksheets and community building inside and outside of the school. It was suggested that the "one Winner" or "class winner" be removed as fundraising rewards and encourage that the school will win with a reward; suggestions were a longer afternoon recess, movie afternoon, teacher shaves head, but in either case that the whole school became a winner!

It was nice to see that other parent council members were willing to share their ideas and suggestions. I think that sometimes we forget that we are not in competition with other schools; that we all have the same goal by helping our children's schools and with doing so helping our children and future generations. As I move forward this year I will keep in mind all the statements I heard during this workshop and share them with as many other parents that I can because ideas start discussions which help grow ideas.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the People for Education's conference.