



The Promise of Integrating Conflict Resolution into the Curriculum

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Not long ago, a teacher told me that she didn't know how she was going to be able to teach the lessons on conflict resolution, given the increasing pressure she felt from the district to teach academics. "It's not that I don't want to, I just don't have time. They keep sending me wonderful curriculum to teach but never cut something else I am doing; or at least give me more planning time to help me make sense of all that I am expected to teach."

Over the last two years, I have heard variations on this comment from dozens of teachers, at all grade levels, and it has pushed me to ask the questions, "are we going about teaching conflict resolution the most effective way?", "Is there a more effective, perhaps even more strategic, way of doing this so that it will last over time and truly become a part of our culture?" These questions prompted me to pursue the strategy of integrating conflict resolution into the core curriculum and in this article I will lay out the foundations of what this strategy is, what it entails, how it is being used and the promise it holds.

Integrating conflict resolution into the curriculum is not new. Teachers from around the country have begun to make this transition both out of interest and necessity. But, for many K-12 schools and educational institutions, conflict resolution programs are primarily "add-on" or "stand alone" programs that aren't yet fully integrated or infused into the school's culture or curriculum. According to Dr. David Johnson,

"even if conflict resolution and peer mediation programs are effective, there is reason to believe that they will not become a long-term part of schooling. Innovations in schools traditionally have not lasted unless they had demonstrable effect on student achievement."

Any of us interested in the furthering of conflict resolution education of our youth should take heed of this powerful statement. If we are to succeed in creating a world where our youth and adults can effectively solve problems without violence or estrangement, where we can bridge our deepest differences, and where social and emotional intelligence is valued and taught, we must make this an everyday part of our education, not something separate. As our world becomes increasingly inter-related, we must help our students and citizens learn these inter-relationship skills at every point of their educational development. If we do not, we are failing them in their preparation

for the 21st century.

So then, what do we mean by curriculum integration? Heidi Hayes Jacobs, one of the country's leading spokespersons for the process, describes it as "carefully designing a set of experiences for kids, within a range of disciplines in an organized manner in order to enhance the learning." This definition represents a comprehensive strategy that educators may use in creating an integrated curriculum. It seeks to integrate many different curricula, not just conflict resolution. For most conflict resolution educators, an integration strategy may have a less comprehensive focus and will instead focus on integrating one discipline into a series of others-what is generally called "content" or "subject" discipline integration. This strategy perhaps holds the greatest promise for our work because it is the easiest, the most effective, and-because there are numerous real life, engaging applications in a wide variety of subject areas-it also adds richness to these many subject areas.

There are other ways integration can happen and each of them has advantages and disadvantages. Those of us attempting to use an integration strategy should at some point know what they are and how they work-even if we are only using the most basic of integration strategies.

Two years ago, I helped convene a group of practitioners and professors from around the country who were actively interested and involved in integrating conflict resolution into the curriculum. Our goal was to share how each of us were integrating conflict resolution and to help move the field along in this potentially important area. It wasn't long before we realized that not only were we talking about the different types of integration but also about a broader concept called infusion. I realized then that when you make a decision to help your school or institution move in the arena of integration, it is important that you and your audience are clear on the various distinctions and the accompanying strategies.

So briefly, let me explain what I mean when I use the terms infusion and integration. Integration is used here to describe a strategic way of bringing subjects (content disciplines) and over-arching themes together in order to help students make connections among the disciplines. Within integration, there are five (some people claim up to ten) ways to integrate curriculum:

- Content/Subject Discipline-creating a distinct knowledge bases/set of skills (integration within a discipline)
- Parallel Discipline-timing the lessons between units (integration between two disciplines)
- Multi-Disciplinary-constructing a deliberate design between 2-3 disciplines leading to a focused center (integration among 2-3 disciplines)
- Inter-Disciplinary-developing an organized learning center using all disciplines (integration including all disciplines)
- Integrated-creating student centered issues (integration involving all disciplines focused around student initiated themes and interests)

It is generally held that each integration strategy becomes more complex and sophisticated as more disciplines are involved, and it requires more planning time for authentic, useful integration to occur. It is very important to note that integration and single discipline education should work together and not have to compete with one another. Like the whole language/phonics debate, the strategy of integration and single discipline education should not be an either-or debate but rather a both-and dialogue. Most experts agree that each strategy has its own strengths and weaknesses and the strongest strategy includes using both single discipline and integration together. Thus, for conflict resolution education, it would behoove us to consider creating both a separate course as well as integrating its concepts, skills and practices into other courses. It is commonly held that some times topics are best taught by themselves, and likewise at other times topics benefit from integrating them into a larger context. Each teacher and school must take sufficient planning and professional education and development time to discover how to make this work best.

Infusion, on the other hand, is sometimes used as an umbrella term used to describe the teaching and modeling of conflict resolution concepts and skills throughout the classroom and school culture. In school settings where students spend a majority of their time with the same group of students and adults, a community and culture is formed. These communities have great impact on students' lives and therefore educators can make great strides in the education of young people when the whole school culture is examined and infused with the program goals, in addition to specific content curriculum. Infusion in this respect is a long term goal that deals with the biggest picture; integration is a powerful strategy within the goal of infusion. Both are critical if we are to make conflict resolution education a long term part of schooling and both will be part of this article and issue.

Because the middle school movement has been the focal point for educational reform for the last two decades, many people know the term integration to mean "inter-disciplinary collaboration" between teachers and their content areas. Educators know collaboration as the critical process that ties an integration strategy together. It impacts not only the planning process but is also carried over into one's overall teaching strategy and further infused into the collegial relationships and educational decision-making processes. Deborah Meier, in her book *The Power of Their Ideas*, eloquently documents the academic success that collaboration among staff brought to the East Harlem school district, which is now being touted as a success story by the Department of Education.

Collaboration should exist as a balanced part of an overall teaching, learning and decision-making process-but, one that also includes the appropriate use of individually directed processes.

So, collaborative teaching strategies represent the third element of a three pronged approach, which includes: 1) content integration, 2) collaborative teaching strategies, and 3) classroom and school culture infusion. Let's take a look at each of these three areas individually.

Content Integration

Imagine yourself a social studies teacher who will be integrating conflict resolution in your teaching. How would you go about it? First, think about the conflicts that exist in the subject matter: the Second World War, the Boston Tea Party, the Declaration of Independence, the Norman Invasion, the Spanish Conquest. History reads like a series of conflicts, controversies and conquests, so finding a way to teach about conflict, managing emotions and intergroup relations is natural. In fact, bringing conflict resolution into history may be just what students are looking for to make "dead stuff" (as one student put it to me) more real and interesting. When you can make real life transferences and give students opportunities to analyze how these conflicts, controversies and conquests happened and what might have prevented them from happening, students can become engaged-they can see how "those other people" may not be so different from themselves, of course taking into consideration their level of skills and overall consciousness about managing change, new ideas and cultural invasions.

Language arts and English literature teachers are equally able to integrate conflict resolution into their classrooms because most stories are based on conflict which, at some point, comes to resolution-productive or unproductive, fair or unfair. In literature, we find some of the most eloquent and richly woven interpersonal, intrapersonal and intergroup conflicts that exist, and they are often in forms with which students can easily relate. The key is to help students make the connection to their own lives, their own experiences and their own feelings. Again, if you are a language arts or literature teacher, what kinds of books come to mind that might be appropriate for learning about life's conflicts? Hamlet? Rolling Thunder Hear My Cry?, The Butter Battle Book? Yertle the Turtle? Then, think about the concepts that could be interwoven into your discussion or activity and find ways to weave them in appropriately.

Teachers of other disciplines-including math, science, sociology, urban planning, European history-are also be able to incorporate conflict resolution into their daily learning by allowing themselves a moment to think about the conflicts or controversies that exist in what they are teaching. Math teachers can talk about problem solving and problem analysis. Science teachers can incorporate the conflicts that occur in nature, especially those between nature and humans. Physical education teachers can look at the conflicts that exist in competitive games. Art, music and drama teachers have only to appreciate the power of conflict, differences and disequilibrium to create great works in their fields. All that is usually needed is a reason for doing so, and as we have seen they are many.

Integrating conflict resolution into one's teaching should be made simple for those using the strategy so that any teacher can take a basic concept, such

as win/win (or interest based bargaining), and use it in their curricular material with their students. If they are new to the field, the teacher can (and should) grow along with their students in learning the concept. For most of us, the basic concept of interest based bargaining has a depth that even advanced practitioners are still learning to appreciate. Having an advanced understanding of conflict resolution shouldn't be necessary before beginning the journey.

However, most teachers will need a sufficient understanding of and training in conflict resolution to be able to teach it simultaneously with another subject. How much? This is probably an issue for the field to decide, but I would suggest that a minimum of one and preferably three to five days of training would be required-of course dependent upon 1) the level of interest and related experience that the teacher may have and 2) the extent to which a teacher integrates the critical concepts, skills and processes.

A teacher attempting to integrate conflict resolution must be familiar with the key concepts, skills and processes in the field and ideally have had some experience with and follow up discussion about using them. Some of the best work compiled on what K-12 students should learn (and thus teachers should know) comes from work developed by Donna Crawford and Richard Bodine, entitled "Age Appropriate Sequence for Acquiring the Foundation Abilities of Conflict Resolution" in the program report Conflict Resolution Education: A Guide to Implementing Programs in Schools, Youth-Serving Organizations, and Community and Juvenile Justice Settings. This list is age appropriate for Early Childhood to Grade 2, Grades 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Basic concepts learned in kindergarten are expanded and deepened as one progresses through the grades. Some of the best work compiled on what college students should know comes from Mediator Communication Competencies by Bruce McKinney, William Kimsey and Rex Fuller. There is still more work to be done, including defining the appropriate intersections between conflict resolution, social and emotional learning, intergroup relations, and civic education.

For some, it can be useful to distinguish concepts from skills and skills from processes in addition to listing learner outcomes and abilities. The term concepts refer to some of the basic ideas, principles and values that make up the cognitive understandings of the material. Some of the basic concepts one would integrate include: conflict is a natural part of life and an opportunity for all parties to benefit, learn and grow, and feel empowered; resolving conflicts productively requires separating the person from the problem; and certain factors and behaviors escalate and de-escalate conflicts.

Different from concepts are skills. Skills are tools that, once developed, turn into an ability that one can use to act upon the conceptual basis of the field. Some of the basic skills include: active listening, reframing, neutral questioning, impulse control, emotional awareness, perspective taking, critical and creative thinking, consequential thinking, analyzing rules and laws, standing up against violence and injustice and facilitation of meetings, among others. These skills are the critical elements that when put all together form the various processes of the conflict resolution or appropriate dispute

resolution field. The basic processes span the intrapersonal to the intergroup and include: reflection and internal decision-making, cooperative groupwork, classroom meetings, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, organizing for change, and non-violent resistance. Processes are different than skills in that many different skills are used in most processes. For example, negotiation, a process, requires the skills of listening, caring communication, problem solving and agreement writing. As one becomes more facile with the elements of conflict resolution, one can find a myriad of ways to include concepts, skills and processes in one's lesson plans.

It should be noted, too, that the field of conflict resolution has natural overlaps with other distinguished and related fields such as social and emotional learning, multicultural education/intergroup relations and law-related/civic education. Many practitioners and educators already integrate basic parts of many, if not each, of these fields and serious integration initiatives will seek to make even more appropriate connections. Including diversity/anti-bias education, social and emotional learning and law related/civic education principles as basic tenets of conflict resolution education should be the goal of any comprehensive program and efforts are being made nationally to do this. The recent NIDR/CREnet conference "Diversity and Conflict Resolution: Exploring the Connections" exemplifies the important efforts being made to make these links possible. Identifying the naturally related basic concepts, skills and processes of each of these fields is one of the tasks of the National Curriculum Integration Project, a collaboration of seven leading conflict resolution practitioners and organizations funded by the Surdna and Compton Foundations that I am directing.

Indeed, some see the field of social and emotional learning as a larger umbrella which incorporates conflict resolution education, one which may even have a more lasting impact on educators seeking to address long term issues of developing emotional intelligence, problem solving competencies and creating knowledgeable, caring and responsible students. I believe it is critical for the field to discuss its definition and boundaries if it is to continue as a viable curricular component in today's educational environment.

Let's look at some specific examples. Mary is a K-1 social studies teacher who, after taking a five day course on conflict resolution for educators, realized that she could always find ways of talking about the key concepts of conflict resolution in her class. She mentions to the kids that feelings are important to share when talking out a problem; she shares that conflict can bring two people closer together. Once she understood the value of peaceful conflict resolution, she found numerous ways to talk about creating peaceful relations in her class.

Sandra uses summarization in her art class by pairing students and having them share their paintings to each other with the listening party learning to summarize the key points of what the speaker said before she or he gets to describe her or his own. Science teachers can have students practice critical thinking by looking at all the various consequences of a decision or act (prediction). Language arts teachers have students practice giving "I" messages from certain characters in books they are reading-either in their

journals or during a class discussion.

Finally, when teaching about the invasions of Native Americans by White Settlers, Marty, a fifth grade social studies teacher, had students engage in a conflict resolution process. She has them analyze the conflict based on what happened, how people felt, what motivated them to act, what the parties' needs were and what agreement was reached (was it productive? non-violent? lasting?). Once this was done, students could role-play the situation to give them a real life feel for the substantive, psychological and even procedural tone that existed. The teacher sometimes suggests that group situations be categorized into different processes: arbitration, mediation and negotiation and compare the results afterwards.

The same is done in a language arts class by having students role-play different characters. Students analyze books and stories not only based on plot, story development and completion, but also conflict styles and their effectiveness. Imagine what Hamlet might say to his father if they sat down to talk it out, non-violently but passionately. This is key. Here students can learn a key concept; that negotiation doesn't mean rational problem solving only-it must include emotional expression, however intense, and it takes both practice and empathy for doing it well.

The opportunity for role-play places students in actual situations where feelings, needs and the contextual framework of historical issues is researched and re-created. This creates a powerful sense of history that can be translated into real life experience. Out of this, real life connections are made. Teachers can ask key discussion questions such as, "how do you think this is different than what is happening now in Bosnia?" "What feelings most surprised you?" "How would you have reacted if you were that person in that age?" "Have you ever been in a situation like this in your present life?" And "what do you think they could have done differently?" Students learn best when academic learning is active, emotionally engaging, and applicable to their real life. When these elements are created, not only do students learn about history or other permitted subject matter, but they also learn about conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and issues of prejudice, discrimination and oppression.

In fact, one needs to be cautious when combining conflict resolution education with the often intense, oppressive and prejudicial issues of yesterday and even today. For example, would you attempt mediation between a slave and a slave owner? What would you say to a student who thinks everything should be negotiated? Many of our conflicts contain serious power imbalances for which simple conflict resolution principles and techniques are inadequate. Teachers should know the limits of their knowledge and the appropriateness of various skills and processes. Power imbalances require that any mediated processes ensure that victims are not re-victimized, that oppressors have "admitted guilt" before any monitored mediation and that issues of forgiveness, reconciliation and restitution be discussed. For most of us, this is difficult but real territory.

Given such cautions, some of the best discussions come about when talking

about such charged issues of right and wrong. Teachers and students create a "learning partnership" where answers can be discovered through dialogue and engaged inquiry. Issues of right and wrong are best learned through reflective thought and discussion, not simple moralizing. We must talk about these issues. Life is more than a series of unconnected facts and events. Real people engaged in real, often violent, acts. We have the opportunity to bring the whole of history and life with us, not just arranged facts which support a certain world view. Already there is an opportunity within the curriculum to learn about how discrimination was handled and how it could now be handled differently.

Learning is about growing; growing is about changing; changing is fraught with conflict; and conflict is filled with power. But, just how was that power used? To what ends? And for what consequences, known or unknown? Most students I know would perk up if the discussion turned to power and conflict.

Once teachers have seen the potential for integrating the richness of conflicts, emotions and intergroup relations into their subject areas, they can then turn to incorporating these types of skills and processes into their teaching strategies.

Collaborative Teaching Strategies

I have often found it hard to actually name our work in one or two words. Once people capture the essence of an idea they can then find many applications for its use. Recently, I returned to a school with which we had worked with for over a year and found that only a few teachers were still teaching conflict resolution in earnest. Others had moved on to literacy as the big push. I was told that teachers wanted to teach reading and writing more than they wanted to teach conflict resolution. (I wondered if this was another aspect of conflict avoidance, but I didn't ask.)

When I turned the conversation toward how mediating behaviors could be used in the classroom to enhance student learning, I found a charge of energy. They had discovered and research was showing that when students feel they are an integral part of their learning, when teachers help form "learning partnerships" with students, when teachers are "guides on the sides" and not "sages on the stages," reading scores improve. Teachers became mediators between the known and the unknown. They became facilitators that followed students' interests and empowered them to go further into learning and mastery. In this technological age where information and knowledge change with great rapidity, this is a critical skill to have.

From this I learned that what is possible with integration is for teachers to use what has been called "mediating behaviors." This includes facilitative (socratic) questioning, inquiry and dialogue, summarizing, restating, and reframing, and "mediating processes" such as cooperative learning groups, student initiated learning circles, role-playing, storytelling, journaling and reflection time, and goal setting sessions. Many of the critical elements of teaching excellence that these teachers mentioned were based on "mediating behaviors," which seeks to empower the learner to solve and create instead

of seeking to employ the teacher only to fill and impart. The emphasis here is more on learning and less on teaching.

Teachers then made the critical connection between learning strategies and collaborative conflict strategies. The success of one could be applied to the other. When teachers are more interested in teaching than solving conflicts, perhaps the best way to reach them is making sure to show them through the doorway of these "mediating" teaching strategies that can enhance academic achievement.

"Mediating behaviors" is also only part of a whole equation. It also includes "non-violent behaviors"-those behaviors which seek to stand against violence not just to mediate differences. This represents the critical bridge the field of conflict resolution needs to make when considering itself a part of a violence prevention strategy.

In addition, "emotionally intelligent" and "culturally sensitive" behaviors greatly improve the academic success of students and I believe should be included as a part of the basic goals of conflict resolution education. Teachers could employ "emotionally intelligent" teaching strategies of gatherings, community building activities, reflection time, and journaling; and "culturally sensitive" teaching strategies of using multiple intelligence activities to meet all cultural learning styles, cooperative groupings, and teaching from and about different cultural perspectives. There is much more that can be explored here and successful educators will make the effort to review their teaching strategy repertoire with these elements in mind.

These practices not only can be used in individual classrooms, but also among teams of teachers as they cooperatively discuss what connections exist and how to plan for these connections and as they design culturally sensitive educational opportunities which enhance academic excellence and prevent culturally motivated conflicts.

Classroom and School Culture Infusion

Next, we come to the opportunity of further infusing these "mediating, emotionally intelligent, and culturally sensitive" behaviors into the classroom and school culture-a task that becomes more possible when all members of the community understand the overall goal and how they can participate. Many programs already seek to infuse various processes of conflict resolution into their classroom community, like "peace places" or "talk it out corners" and classroom meetings. These processes are the easiest and most obvious elements of how teachers can introduce the basic concepts and skills into their classroom culture, but there are more. Teachers can employ classroom mediators, teacher-student negotiations, and teacher-student mediations.

For many educators, an important step is to infuse these "mediating behaviors" into a learning partnership with their students when time is short, it becomes all too easy for teachers to implement these processes as a way to "fix" or "help" kids without adequate modeling or equal participation. Infusion should be based in the profound principles of empowerment, emotional

intelligence, and social justice, not just social and emotional control. For many teachers, giving up perceived control and power over their students (and hoping to have them behave and act in ways that benefit adult needs) is a major shift in their role, relationship and sometimes even world view. And, teachers aren't the only ones affected when we consider the implications of this work. Principals can shift the way they lead their staff; deans and assistant principals can shift the way wrongdoing and rule-breaking is handled; paraprofessionals can shift the way they talk with and listen to students; even superintendents and boards of education can shift the way that policies are developed as well as the manner in which educational priorities of school-communities are decided. If we consider culture to be "the ways we do things around here," infusion becomes less a series of items to check off and more an ongoing discussion by a committed group of leaders towards a common goal. Perhaps the best way toward true infusion is to make a list of all the ways the school community interacts-with students, parents, teachers and support staff-and then look at them one by one to assess how things are presently being done and the possibilities for infusion.

Look at discipline, for example. Are "mediating behaviors" used by those involved? Is the problem seen from the student's perspective and needs? Is a cultural bias involved?

Was the discipline referral at all caused by the lack of emotional intelligence involved, either by the student or the teacher? Was an attitude of caring, belonging and firm, clear limits emphasized? Was discipline based on punishment only or was it based on the principles of respect, relationship and reconciliation? Was the student or adult given a chance to talk safely about what led to the egregious act? Other areas to consider include grading, parent-teacher conferences, playground/school grounds, meal time, integrating new students, community service, sports activities, and meetings.

Creating a culture of non-violence is a worthy goal for any culture. If we are to infuse non-violent, mediating behaviors into our culture, it will take time. Our first step must be to decide that this is our goal-a challenge in itself. Then we must educate ourselves to what we consider as "violent." This may change as we mature and become more sensitive and aware. Then, we must stand up against the violence we face-including estrangement, discrimination and injustice-when it occurs. This is a task of a lifetime, one that only leads us further into our realization of greatness.

Other Integration Strategies

Returning to the issue of integration strategies, let's look at certain examples of integration other than simple content integration. If two teachers were to use parallel integration, they might look at the timing between each of their lessons. For example, if the social studies teacher is teaching the conflict dynamics of the Second World War and the language arts teacher is teaching about the heroic, emotional resilience of Helen Keller, they might plan their units so their classes might occur during the same week. Parallel integration focuses on placing two themes in conjunction with each other so students can more easily make the connections between the two.

Multi-disciplinary integration brings two or three disciplines in a deliberate design. Imagine a science, social studies and language arts teachers planning a unit on discrimination. Students could learn about the how discrimination occurs in history, in science and in literature. In addition, each of these fields could also approach discrimination through their special teaching strategies, i.e., historical case analysis, scientific hypothesis and comparative literature.

Inter-disciplinary integration means having all the disciplines focus on a broad theme-one that can bring together all the different disciplines, like conflict, prejudice, oppression, belonging, community, or emotional intelligence. Each of the disciplines brings their own special talents and skills to the topic. We only need to review the topics we are asking our students to learn about as we enter the 21st century and give teachers staff development time to be creative.

Finally, integrated discipline means truly listening to the students and having them guide the focus of learning. Teachers only need to be sufficiently versed in their disciplines so that a problem or issue can be handled from a variety of discipline perspectives as it arises. Interest in the war in the Middle East? Create activities that discuss how it relates to other pieces of literature. Study the scientific advances from each culture and talk about how science has been both a proponent and "blind eye" towards peace. Have students graph the incidents of violence and the efforts towards peace. Create a play where the Arabs and Israelis learn how to find common ground. Educators are only limited by the lack of time, an inability to be creative and habits of teaching in ways which do not support the integration of subject matter.

Conclusion

As our world becomes increasingly complex and inter-related, integration ought to become an essential part of our nation's educational strategy. There is simply too much information to cover topic by topic and those who are left to learn that way will miss the larger context in which life exists. Students who learn without a relevant context often become pawns for someone else's interests and motives. Conflict resolution education programs can grow and sustain themselves by using the strategy of integration and infusion. It makes learning more interesting, more useful and more real.

While integration and infusion represents a critical strategy overall, we should also continue to push for a distinct conflict resolution education discipline-not just in colleges and universities, but also in our K-12 system. Conflict resolution education is vital for our world today, and integration should co-exist among other teaching strategies in an overall effort toward a broad-based even holistic education.

Schools may start with simple discipline integration and move towards more comprehensive and complex integration designs as they have time, interest and resources. Integration can start with the curriculum and continue into the culture and even one's own self to further develop one's teaching presence.

In this issue, we will hear about how integration works in a variety of settings-

in colleges and universities, in high schools, in achieving academic excellence and multiple intelligences, and in helping teachers deepen their teaching presence.

The field of conflict resolution education is now nearly twenty years old. It has grown from roots of peace activism, researchers of conflict resolution, advocates of non-violence and members of the legal profession to represent a respected field and discipline that is known, if not implemented by, a growing majority of schools and institutions around the country. We can continue its growth by helping it become an integrated and infused part of our educational mission and culture-both because conflict resolution education belongs in school and because integration is a promising educational strategy for teachers, students and conflict resolution practitioners alike. We only need look around us in the world today to see the importance of creating youth and adults who can stand against violence, discrimination, estrangement and injustice and for mediating, emotionally intelligent and culturally sensitive behaviors that lead us towards an engaged peace and our innate greatness. Integration can bring the benefits of conflict resolution to our youth, bring out the richness of many subject areas and even bring out the best in our schools-socially, emotionally and academically.

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