

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Right to Learn in Public Education

Introduction

This is a long paper hopefully introducing you to the reasons why I think we need to transform public education, and how, as quickly as possible in order to guarantee a world for both adults and most imperatively youth to live in, now and in the future. Without great change, the continued momentum of our current and historical habits spell rapid decline, in this and coming years.

All humans are born with the gift of intelligence, which in one explanation exists in two basic forms, inner and outer. Originally, indigenous humans lived with the use of both inner and outer intelligence, they born with inner connection to what was around them, and outer shaping abilities of their external world. As time passed, however a cycle of change began, drawing humans away from the inner, intuitive intelligences which had afforded them the sense of connection to all things, to other people, and animals and the earth, this, however, still living in the DNA and lives of indigenous peoples, and quietly, in all.

As the cycle moved away from connection, rationalism and thought became the primary mode of Western interaction with the earth and peoples. These are outer intelligences, the binary and beyond thought qualities of this intelligence becoming the basis of the technology which governs the institutions, interactions and social networks of much of our present world.

Without the inspiration of connective intelligence, with which we are endowed, our world has become thought driven without the inner deep knowings to guide us toward the well-being for all.

This paper will look at the lives of indigenous peoples, autism spectrum individuals, and additionally at quantum physics, and we will see how inner intelligence still abides in us and can be the balancing power to correct the fulcrum of intelligence imbalance that is threatening our world.

The Threats

Each day, month, six months, or year lost is creeping closer to more and more dangerously lopsided results from our outer intelligence, the primary focus vector we are in. Our inner deeper intelligences must be called upon again, to then work with our outer intelligences, enabling us to make fully informed choices which will benefit all and the planet.

How Correct the Situation?

By whom, and when must this vector be re-directed? By all, and particularly by current teachers and students, they paramount in a shift of perception and spurred efficacy if things are going to change. This must be strong enough to compel youth and others to sit, in their own way, literally or in other individual or group action, as Greta Thunberg sat on the courthouse steps, an act strong enough to rattle the climate change denial in many adults.

Students consciously or unconsciously, feel the dark dawn of the Rachel Carson “silent spring” approaching, with real poisons and errant thought/systems threatening all of life. If parents want to hold onto our current educational focus and practices instead of pleading for change, ask what they see in the coming days and years in the lives of their children, based on how our world is functioning now.

I am a former elementary school teacher, retired now, continuing to do nature and humanity-connective teaching, also strongly focused on our educational system, and the all-important, critical need for it to transform. Humanity’s future depends on this and other great shifts.

A few changes are being made, in a few places. Some select schools are focusing more on a theme-based or project driven connective curriculums; a few are attempting to give less homework in order to allow more free time for personal creative in-roads to discovery and knowledge. These are good changes! However, to really get the momentum needed to reorient our approaches to solving the world’s problems, these approaches and others must happen soon, as a foundational shift, incorporating more of these inner directional orientations in our current educational system.

My appeal is to students, parents, teachers, administrators, for all will be needed to start the movement now to create a safe, inspired, and a bountiful future for students and the planet. For what we think, is what we create.

Section I - The Outer World, Where Our Thinking Has Been

To start:

When we read this paper's title words above, by Thomas Jefferson, "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," most do not realize that humanity *had long* known happiness, that we walked away, and that *it is imminently and importantly available for our rediscovery*. Rediscovery means finding once again something that was prior known or owned. Finding happiness again, it will be experienced both as the essence of life and our road back to freedom, to balanced living, and good fortune.

There have been wars ever since we left happiness, with much loss of life, war being one force to oppress freedom. One such war rages now, as President Putin of Russia tries to decimate the resistant spirit and defensive/offences forces of Ukraine in 2022. This unbelievable to our eyes, as every smart phone around the world, with cell service still intact, sees the ancient and 20th century atrocities of war, formerly read or reported by the news, but never seen in the very moment that people, who dress and live as ourselves in the 21st century, are bombed to death, flee for their lives, or are willing to fight to the death to defend their country.

And yet, as wars have raged over time, we know that at the core of each person's life, no matter where, has simply been the desire that they and their children have a happy, healthy, safe and meaningful life. These are obvious, world-wide, understandable drives. They are where we need to be.

So, what is the new script we need in order to create such a world?

Moving toward the answer

It was once questioned:

"Why are you only looking in that one spot, under the street lamp, for your lost key? The response: "Because that's where the light is."

(For some not getting this, the key could have fallen anywhere, including in the darkness.)

Let's say happiness is the Key, these words just happening to be abundant with meaning. Somehow, we having lost it, where have we been looking?

Greater and greater over time, but accelerated starting in the 17th century, we have been looking for life's fulfillment primarily with our rational intelligence, this largely resulting from the work and writings of Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes, their joined life span from 1561-1650, the two doing the bulk of their work at the same time. Their individual work, joined together, formed the basis of the modern Scientific Method, and the Humanists following, further solidified the view in the scientific and hence educational world that *human reason* is the primary measure of what can be considered "true."¹

And, as outer progress in the world fed back upon itself, the degree of dependence on reason and linear thinking has increased, hugely so with the development of the computer and tech overall, allowing for binary, virtual thinking, in all of its developments, this continuing the "thinking only"/outer intelligence feedback loop now at warp speed.

So how has this history of structures and modalities for the use rational or binary thinking affected our world?

Sugata Mitra, particularly famous for his "Hole in the Wall" experiment (shared later), has described the *human* computer system that existed long before real computers, it having a continued profound effect on us. Mitra's story is of the British Empire and its need to keep all in the empire in connection and up to date with what was happening centrally in the British government. A solution was found.

Much like workers in an assembly line warehouse during the Industrial Revolution, individuals, young and older, sat in rows in a room where information was disseminated to them, for study and memorization, to be retained for use as their local part in some operational function of the empire. This was all based on the foundational belief that rational thought is the answer to creating a world that functions well and for the benefit of people.

We continue to disseminate information in our schools largely in the same way, this carrying on the modality meant to support the thinking-based societies we have created.

Reason/rational/cause and effect thinking can tell us about the functioning of our outer world, which, if we look at it recently and particularly now, we can see that with just thinking as our primary focus, we have and are creating a great deal of world turmoil and devastation.

Rational thinking is based on duality, dual relegated not to just science and a binary computer systems of 1's and 0's, but to life in general: up and down, hot and cold, yours and mine, white or black, educated and not educated. And, we can quickly see how natural and necessary dualist thinking can easily lead to *separatist thinking*: have and have not, ruler and subject, and even healthy, and not, this congealing into those with position, power to control, assumed entitlement, and those without and subjugated.

And, very importantly, primarily thought-based education, with its intense work expectations and concept/fact testing, has caused a great deal of stress in a great many, if not most students. You may know of Vicki Abeles, the creator/producer of a number of films related to education, whose first movie was titled, "The Race to Nowhere."² This title came from an interview with a student (Abeles traveling near and far for information and interviews for the movie), he a junior or senior in high school, sharing his experience of the pressures and stresses of the long preparation for applying to colleges.

His words: "It's a race to nowhere," with the academic load, community volunteer time, after sports necessity, evidence of a shining interest or talent, late into the night homework, all these a demand of time and effort repeating each day; it continuing in a modified fashion in college. Not only in the US, but Asian academics, East Indian, and South American, I believe, and others, (read a book on some years ago), all have very high standards for tested academic achievement, and many students choosing to end their lives due to the stress, both here and there. Further, tragically, the pressure for children to mentalize their world has started younger and younger.

HOWEVER, *in contrast to all of that in our outer world*, we have also an inner world within each of us, a world of feelings and emotions, intuitions, knowings, inspirations and beyond. Certain feelings and emotions can lead to separatist thinking and living, the account of most of human history, *or instead we can have feelings and an intuition of connection that joins people together and creates the awareness that we are connected to the land, we all have basic shared needs, and that we are interdependent on both people and the planet.*

And, to be noted as an introduction to my path forward, the truths of the universe live not just under a microscope, in the view of a telescope, or a satellite feedback as it orbits the earth. The truths of the universe live right beside us in our everyday experiences and histories, as plain as daylight if we direct our exploring attention there, also.

So please, follow me as I focus our attention into past histories, our current daily lives and discoveries, and back out again to the bigger picture of how we can create “the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible,” a phrase emanating from a current life explorer, Charles Eisenstein, his third book having this title.

It has been said our Attention is our most valuable asset, as we learn to direct it to different questions, perspectives and understandings.

Section II – Needed Resources From Our Inner World

Part A. – Our Connection Based Ancestors: Native Americans

I live in the San Francisco bay area, and knowledge is growing here, but also nationally and worldwide, of the thousands of years that indigenous peoples lived with each other and the land sustainably and successfully, for up to possibly 18K in our area. How could they have done such a thing? Only by living in connection with each other and the land.

Nine years ago, I headed up a team to begin building a Saclan Miwok Village in the back nature area of the Lafayette Community Garden (CA), a beautiful cooperative vegetable and flower garden that now thrives after its twelve years of growth.

During the summers prior to Covid, I taught children, 7-14 years old, about indigenous values and living, in a one to two week-long camp. I did not want this to be an informational camp, but one of experiencing the connectedness to nature and of the presence of inherent values living in each of us, values by which the Natives long thrived. These values still live near the surface within young people, for in them, those values have not yet been totally supplanted by our society’s outer world values which have removed us from connection. (However, with Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other sites, young people have quickly lost most of a connection to what is around and truly deep within them.)

The longevity and sustainable values of indigenous living:

Kinship with all living things	Respect, reciprocity and generosity w/all
Wisdom passed thru elders	Tribelet chief/tess oversees care for all
Infractions reversed thru praise	Social restraint and moderation, for peace
Boys give first kill to elders	Girls give away their first basket
Traditional ways/ not progress	Never using more than needed

Sacred: that which gives and is given,
and the knowledge that remembers these values

These values of connection to one another and the planet, inherently known by all humans, are today resurfacing in a rising number of people due to our present times of great crisis: fires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, military conquests and battles, famine, homelessness, and value-challenging border crises.

Life needs and connection values were clearly responsible for the huge longevity of indigenous here in California, as an example, their need and ability to trade in order to thrive. Trade was integral to life, from coast to inland, to the higher elevations and lakes, and back again, this for seafood and shells in exchange for acorns, for soaproot to make glue and brushes, as well as acorns, for obsidian from those higher inland areas, with many more items traded. And how was this negotiated? Meeting at a trading point or village, both sides would lay out a tremendously generous offering of food and trading opportunities. Both sides doing this assured that reciprocity and good will was mutually present, despite they not even speaking the same dialect.

These exchanges went on for thousands of years, along with tribe practices to steward the land, burning controlled fires to encourage robust growth of plants contributing to the ecosystem, and discouraging overgrowth of those apt to run rampant. These were and are honed inherent intelligences, ways of knowing their/our place in belonging to the land and each other, in sustainable and joyous living.

These, and similar practices, are characteristic of Natives in their original habitats, it very friendly to them here in the San Francisco bay area, it seeming more challenging to us, for instance, in the desert. However, nature provides, as evidenced by the Hopi and Navajo cultures living well and in harmony with nature, all indigenous originally knowing this of nature's provision. Captain Cook on his first trip found Natives happily living a simple and joyous life. In gratitude for their offerings to him, he left them modern clothes. Perfectly happy and preferring their own practices, the clothes were left in a pile on the ground.

And it is to be noted here, that although there were many, many population attacks by those who later invaded Native lands, killing and plundering, also bringing disease and harmful land and culture re-purposing (this from the 17th through the 20th century), sufficient Native peoples survived for their *ways of life* here in California, and elsewhere, to live in their memory. They now stand strongly and proudly for their right to recall, research, bring forth and resume their nature-based cultural values, identities and traditions, these Native ways alive deep within them.

And, it is an altering and clarifying inner shift to remember that we all, originally, came from indigenous roots, no matter where we were born.

Part B. – Others Connection-Oriented: Autism Spectrum Individuals, Neuro-Diversity, Rising in Numbers Daily

So, what is this intelligence that gives rise to peaceful, joyful and sustainable life? We must re-cognize and re-embrace this knowledge, which *is* inherent. I first saw it and recognized it as an adult, while teaching. (What I share below is from when I began to discern what was going on with spectrum individuals, back in 1998, of which many of these aspects have become apparent to educators and are evidenced in some of their approaches and supports.)

I was a mainstream teacher for 15 years, in both southern and northern California, teaching 5th and 6th grade from 1971-76, and then teaching 3rd grade, from 1998-2008 in northern California (raising a family in between). I was hired in '98 when K-3 and 9th grade class teacher/student ratios were reduced to 1 to 20, *and, right when more attention was being paid to the rising numbers of students with learning differences, they very soon referred to with specific “deficit” labels.*

My 3rd grade classroom, not a special education classroom, was right away and throughout the ten years, increasingly, populated by a number of spectrum-different children, those having ADD, ADHD, dyslexia, Asperger’s Syndrome, and autism.

The following explanations are lifted from paragraphs in Heart Centered Minds, one of my many papers at my website of the same name: HeartCenteredMinds.com. Two other papers there might be of particular interest: “Educating All from the Inside Out,” and “Medicated Loaners as School Shooters?”

Here is a telling comment by Dr. Castellanos, whom, at the time of my research, was the head of the NYU Child Study Center:

“The idea that not all children are born perfect, is a very hard one to deal with.”

Indeed it is an idea that either states and accepts that many, many children are imperfect, or it is the driving question that compels us to look deeper. Parents are having to face this ‘apparent’ imperfection more and more (yes, as spectrum numbers continue to increase in 2022), and it is this assumed ‘imperfection’ and its frequency, that made me feel we were missing what was truly happening.

It was while teaching many, many of these children, labeled with ‘disorders’ that I discovered they are very intelligent, many with extraordinary abilities or propensities, inexplicable to the scholars, and yet undeniable. What I found was a basic paradigm-shifting answer hidden within the complexities of what we call ‘disorders.’

I will balance the conversation here with the fact that not all on the spectrum are what is called “high functioning,” meaning a very many, maybe most, can navigate their lives in this world we have created, well enough, yet with some definite challenges. Whereas, there are others who have a great deal of trouble in our world, they needing daily help in order to function in basic health and relational ways, requiring near constant support.

However, even with many of these individuals, from what I have seen in my research, is that given the opportunity to follow *any* particular inclination they might have that gives them interest or joy, and is not self or other-destructive, may well be their path to peace and a degree of connective living, giving them a sense of worth and belonging. Please keep this in mind when reading later in this paper about Kristine Barnett, her experiences told in her book, *The Spark*.)

Now back to what I saw in my spectrum students:

Nearly right away, I discerned that their propensities come primarily from the student being oriented more to their right brain than their left. The left brain is the center of our long emphasis on rational thinking and linear operations, now amplified by tech. Non-linear, the right brain in all of us is open like a satellite dish, drawing information, inspiration and an inherent knowledge from a large field, it actually the quantum field of which I will speak briefly later.

Some may take exception to my using the terms right and left brain as overall catchalls for the information I share. However, knowing that the brain is very complex when looked at in detail, it’s two hemispheres have long been known by these terms, and my use of these words paints the picture of what I intuited, and of what runs true in these students. We can refer to an elephant’s head, ears, feet and tail without having to know the structure, nervous system details, etc. about each.

Right/heart brain-oriented kids are bright. A right brain orientation is indicated by any or all of, and more: keen intelligence, thinking outside-the-box, often in patterns or pictures, guided by inspirations, “ah ha’s,” drawn to nature, music, science, engineering, art, movement, hands-on activities, intuitive and empathic understandings of people and ‘moral’ action, and wanting to help the low person on the totem pole, wanting to help the world. These last few “helping” qualities indicating the feeling heart’s intelligence involved in all of this also.

However, given the gifts from this open reception, spectrum individuals lack a linear left brain filtering system, which normally sequences and channels linear data and information coming in. Without this filtering, they can easily be overloaded with an onslaught of all that comes in, particularly linear information, this along with other differences for them that cause trouble in our usual schooling of them, compounded by society’s great focus on linear thinking and processing at this time.

As a result of lacking what I’m calling a left brain filter, spectrum individuals are also identified by just how difficult it is for the student to use left brain skills such as: to adjust to a changing schedule, to organize, to listen and keep their attention on, finish and turn in routine assignments, as well as it very difficult for spectrum individuals to be confronted by confusing outer situations: lots of commotion, noise, bright colors, a lack of routine, just to mention very few.

Very often poor small and large motor skills also accompany a right brain orientation, often evidenced in trouble with handwriting and a lack of physical coordination, these things governed more by the left brain. (You may have seen Jill Bolte Taylor’s TedTalk, “My Stroke of Insight,”³ a left brain stroke, and she experiencing what it was like to be without the left brain’s filtering and sequencing functions, and with both the over-whelming *and* the positive openly receptive aspects: what it feels like to be on the spectrum.)

One final prominent characteristic common to all these individuals is that they are less socially ‘adept’ by what some would consider our normal standards. This is because, without a left brain filter they cannot ‘read’ the subtle nuances of social communications, fraught with idioms, current trending words and phrases, and also difficult-to-understand body language. Being alone, with another like them, or with a computer, is far easier for most.

My desire to advocate for these kids, they being hard-wired toward this different orientation, drove me to do research, where supportive evidence was abundant

regarding these gifts in the textbooks and reference books written to address disorders.

In *Driven to Distraction*,⁴ a well-known book about ADD and ADHD, author Dr. Hallowell describes these gifted traits that also apply to many other ‘learning disorders.’ I have joined quotes from a few pages into this summary:

“You might describe many with ADD as having a “special something,” a hard to-pin-down yet undeniable potential... In fact, there is a powerfully positive aspect to ADD, and learning disorders in general, a positive aspect that is as yet ill defined, something good... (These individuals) can be highly imaginative and empathic, closely attuned to the moods and thoughts of people around them... They also see new things or find new ways to see old things. They are not just the tuned-out of this world; they are also tuned in, often to the fresh and the new. They are often the inventors and the innovators, the movers and the doers. Good Do-Bees they may not always be, but we should be wise enough not to force them into a mold they’ll never fit... If that potential can be tapped, the results can be spectacular.”

The authors of the research books I read, were compelled to also site the scores of great people throughout history who excelled despite most being labeled learning-disabled in their youth. Newton, Mozart, Lincoln, Grant, Edison, Churchill, Einstein, Poe, Dickens, Roosevelt, Dali and hundreds more, excelled beyond the norm. Einstein, dyslexic, and who did not speak until he was seven, envisioned sitting on a light beam, thereby understanding the function of light and other forces, his brother helping him formulate what he saw in the linear mathematical equation: $E=MC^2$.

These individuals called upon their right brain strengths to discover, create, or serve in some way, they coupling their compelling inspirations and connective intelligence with the formative use of the left brain, theirs or another’s. Einstein famously said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” By that he meaning the ability to imagine and envision, for example, he thinking in pictures, is more informing than just linear, thought-based information.

Looking at spectrum learning problems overall, one or more of the following general characteristics can be seen with each of these “differences,” in lesser or greater degree: increased sensory, emotional and physical sensitivities, a lack of left-brain-linear filtering and processing skills, language and/or attention

difficulties, inabilities in social interaction, and for some, disruptive or unusual physical movement, and/or diminished small and large motor skills.

However, these all indicate their orientation to a greater openness, allowing for the many intelligent gifts they have. Without what we consider their ‘limitations’ side of the coin, they would not be open to bring forth gifts that have bettered our world for eons. And right now, their numbers are still increasing. (See the 2006 TedTalk by Sir Ken Robinson, “Are Schools Killing Creativity?”⁵ 19:24.)

(Also, after having written all this, including this suggestion to watch “Are Schools Killing Creativity?,” I found Robinson did two more talks in 2010, “Bring on the Learning Revolution,”⁶, and in 2013 “How to Escape Education’s Death Valley,”⁷, both explaining more about why this change is crucial, he covering the fundamentals I discuss here.)

I have redefined the meaning of ADD, it not Attention Deficit Disorder, but **Attention Differently Directed**, and this orientation *attention difference* is true for all on the “Autism” Spectrum: ADD, ADHD, dyslexia, Asperger’s Syndrome and autism. (“The Autism Spectrum” has recently been chosen as the name for a spread of learning differences lying between and including ADHD and autism. ADD, dyslexia and Asperger’s Syndrome, which all have their own specific differences from the others and every individual their own mix of these various qualities, have been moved into this new title: ASD, Autism Spectrum Disorder. This is said to leave room for the growth of information as it is gained about all these differences, and is also said to not change support for any individual’s more specific prior diagnosis. (I am concerned that the prior known differences will be lost in the mix.)

Returning to our discussion:

What has been found by many, is that by allowing these spectrum children their deep interest and passions, they are compelled to share their understandings and discoveries, guiding them to then develop and use their left brain to put their knowledge in a sharable form for others, often learning things that they were not drawn to or were unable to focus on earlier. Also, speaking from their realm of individual interest and knowledge, they can leave their seclusion inclination and freely share with others, answering questions, interacting, or if still more reclusive, others assisting in their interaction with the world. (I will speak in more detail of this later.)

It is the depth of intuitive, beyond-their-age knowings and empathy that also signals their right brain orientation, for it is in the right/heart brain that we are joined in being and feeling with others, wanting a sense of wholeness and health for all.

Spectrum individuals are here to help shift our awareness to the full use of our connective and shaping knowledges, intelligences and skills which also lived fully in the lives of Native peoples.

Reflecting back, Native living was in all ways connective and sustainable.

*They were naturally balanced in both receptive/connective and defining intelligences, as the human brain was created/had evolved. Their connection and natural knowings of how to get along with each other and with the land, was their natural right/heart brain connection, joined with their ability to “shape”(left brain) their harmonious knowings, inspirations and values into useful life skills. This included their hunting and gathering skills; dwelling, tool, and basket making abilities; and along with these, living in a social framework that promoted and maintained respect, caring, generosity, overall well-being, and the continuance of this balance of knowledge for *thousands* of years.*

Transition

So, what should be the role then of our long preferred left brain, used so very much today? *Current left brain mental solutions, **unconnected** to the depths of knowings fielded by our right/heart brain and by our deep feelings of wholeness there, end up being a continuation of separatist surface, superficial and unintended destructive remedies, which further exacerbate our problems, confounding us and our good wishes to improve the crises our world faces today.*

*Instead, first connected once again through the right/heart brain, the left brain is to define and “shape” our deepest inspirations and insights into approaches that truly solve the great problems we have created with the over-rational and purely left linear, cause and effect, and fact mode we have been living. **And, as another indication of these inspirations, back when we were much more balanced as young children and youth, were the natural interests, talents, abilities, and passions in each of us, these perhaps also discovered later in life.** (More on this later.)*

Part C. – Giving Students the Right to Follow Their Inner Direction: Person Centered Planning

Bringing all of this now to our current educational world, I have recently linked up with Ray Darwin, who taught in the Transitions program for those 18-20 years old with disabilities and differences, in Benicia, CA for many years. Transition planning is a process to help students with differences, who have had an Individualized Education Program (IEP), to decide what they want to do after high school, helping them figure out how to get there. The program is to help these special teens prepare to be more independent young adults.

Ray has been an invaluable additional source of knowledge, and an example of how following one's own inner direction, *i.e.*, interests and deep desires in life, contributes to the well-being for all of us, through inspired explorations and projects, they adding to the goodness and richness of life in our daily surroundings.

Ray didn't realize, when he was working with students with differences (spectrum individuals and those with down syndrome, primarily), that he, himself, is actually on the autism spectrum also, myself seeing that as he shared his life story, which has closely echoed that of Forest Gump. Bullied for being small in elementary school, and reclusive partly due to that, Ray started running around the playground which he found he enjoyed and was good at. He in fact ran so well, as he continued to run, he was requested to be on the track teams by school coaches in his junior and senior high school years.

Ray was not doing great but well enough with his grades, and based on this passion for running, he was told he could go for a PE degree in college. Which he did. He was then drafted to serve in the Vietnam war, but was lucky enough to be a flight navigator, this fulfilling his dream to be a flyer in some aspect that he had had since childhood, for his father had been a pilot.

Returning home safely, and using the benefits offered by the G.I. Bill, Ray went back to education and attained his teaching credential in special education. He started out teaching many after school physical skills programs for those with differences/disabilities, and later ended up in that Transition job in Benicia, with two instruction assistants, teaching youth 18-22 how to ride a bus, visit a restaurant, go to the laundromat, etc., he feeling so satisfied that these simple skills could open, vitalize, and honor a life.

Then there came Person Centered Planning⁸ for these individuals, for whom Ray led many family/friend gatherings giving those individuals with differences (disabilities), the chance to feel and be a part of the real world. This sense of belonging resulted because the program allowed *the different learners, themselves, to express their desires and make their own choices in these meetings*, as to what they would like to do in the outside world.

Up to that time, evaluations of what was needed and steps forward for these students had been made from the outside by those positioned to guide them. Then suddenly, this twenty years ago and *now* mandated by the State of California, the PCP (Person Centered Program) puts the individuals themselves, if able, at the head of the meeting where family and friends gather by invitation to offer their thoughts about the individual's interests, strengths, and challenges.

As his or her desires are aired, by themselves first, about what is needed now, and perhaps what they would like to be doing in a year, in three and then five years, a current desire is to be explored with the help of those gathered with them. The supporting others suggest possible steps, sometimes even teaching the person a skill or making a connection to someone they know related to the goal at hand, perhaps the family member or friend even assisting in getting a job related to the individual's interests.

These meetings were and are very successful and motivating for all in the room. I personally would love to see updated PCP meetings for the many young adults with differences/disabilities, whose families do not know how to get them out of their bedrooms where they are on their computers for most of the day. With the right in-person instruction, they could be empowered to get to and take public transportation to their smaller downtown areas, having been taught how to and then escorted by crossing guards to navigate cross walks at the major stop lights, say at mid-day, which locally can be a time of less traffic.

From there they could move onto sidewalks to the coffee and other shops, meeting with others, there to socialize and perhaps get a job, for locals can be very supportive of these individuals. Learning further skills to use public transportation or Uber or Lift to navigate to other commercial centers, libraries, their community college, etc., would take them all further into life and deeper into self-satisfaction. *These individuals should feel they belong in the real world, also!*

Part D. – My Proposal: Person Centered Planning for All of Education

So now, how does Person Centered Planning relate to general mainstream education, the educational discussion up to now applying to individuals in Special Education, or just with less involved learning differences. Look at the empowerment now given to those individuals discussed, and at the core, they encouraged and recently mandated, to follow their *interests and passions*, even if the PCP leads them into *exploring for what interests them*, for the first time.

We need the core essence of the Personal Centered Planning process to apply to every student!

The entirety of the *rest of life* on the planet is guided by unseen forces that dictate, to a greater or lesser degree via instinct, life abilities and behavior. *Only humans, born with just a couple survival instincts (sucking and holding on), have free choice to entirely design their life*. And, we each have a right and left brain hemisphere with which to feel, connect, think and formulate/create our lives and the well-being of humanity and the planet.

However, what has modern society and education done with that? With tunnel vision, and particularly modern tech, we have largely continued the British Empire model, feeding almost exclusively rational, pre-digested information to individuals to memorize and maintain for use in some already existent approach for service or solutions in our world, or new approaches still primarily based on left brain cause and effect thinking.

I was told once by a nutritionist that fast food is dead food. Many facts are dead retellings of old, now outdated and past attempts in the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness, some successful, but none enough, evidently, to avoid the crisis point we are in. Solutions now must come from our inherent connection, and natural heart inner knowings, interests, passions and talents, which will then be *shaped* by our measuring and detailing left brain abilities.

Those here on the spectrum, which we all are to some degree, but those in increasingly large numbers, are here to point us in another direction, this made clear by our understanding of their connected orientations and their inspired solutions, based on an inner sense of belonging, and wanting to help the world.

And, our understanding of indigenous wisdom, this becoming so prevalent as to how they lived here in sustainable and life affirming traditions, has also come at

the time when we must turn to those same connective intelligences, serviced then by our shaping intelligence, in order to uncover and bring forth real social and physical solutions with which to right this world, if humanity is to continue here.

We found no key under the old light, because the places just discussed have been in the shadow. However, they are now increasingly coming to light.

Part E. – Insight, thought and feeling shape our world via The Quantum Field

Earlier in this discussion, it was noted that the direction of human attention swerved greatly to the left brain, after a history of a more balanced vision of life. That strong swerve was the nearly magnetic pull of rationalist thinking that took over the western world especially in an analysis of the objective world. However, the limitations of rationalist thinking left much of the universe and our experience out, it leading to no all-encompassing, scientific Theory of Everything, nor a true road to well-being.

Not surprisingly then, the early 20th century birthed a scientific attempt to understand how *else* life functioned, it looking more to the unobjectifiable and less definable aspects of our experiences in life, beyond our 3rd dimensional explanations.

Excepting possibly String Theory, which is still out there in question as far as I know, there has been no Theory of Everything found. That turns out to be the case *because* there are laws that govern the outer world, while different laws govern the ramifications of our attention, feelings, thoughts and emotions.

Quantum Theory, and including Quantum Mechanics and Quantum Physics, first notably researched and written of by Max Planck, and others following, such as David Bohm,⁹ and most recently, Amit Goswami,¹⁰ explains how our mere observation, plus our feelings and thoughts, change the actions of photons, they influenced/directed by our thoughts and feelings into the actual situations of our lives.

(The basis of this scientifically is the famous Double Slit experiment performed by Prof. Mordehai Heiblum, and his team Ph.D. student Eyal Buks, Dr. Ralph Schuster, Dr. Diana Mahalu and Dr. Vladimir Umansky, in 1998.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/1998/02/980227055013.htm>.

“Once an observer begins to watch the particles going through the openings (two slits), the picture changes dramatically: if a particle can be seen going through one opening, then it's clear it didn't go through another. In other words, when under observation, electrons are being "forced" to behave like particles and not like waves. Thus the mere act of observation affects the experimental findings.” (First page, fifth paragraph of article.)

We are, in essence, a 3D copier of thought and emotion that prints out the life circumstances we create before us, or said another way, the light of our consciousness shines through the filmstrip of our thoughts and feelings projecting, and actually creating, the physical reality/movie of our life, in every moment. Thoughts and feelings are the energy that govern the movements of the material components of physical life, our actual lives.

(If you would like an in-depth dive into the quantum realm and our lives, you can read the books by Amit Goswami, PhD., or watch the movie: “Infinite Potential: The Life and Ideas of David Bohm,” (2020). Early on in my writings, I intuited and began calling the realm of information open to our right brain the quantum field, a little hesitant about making such a statement, but then this was confirmed to be true by these and other quantum researchers’ work and words.)

Just in this morning to my emails: “...how a person perceives and frames the moment generates one’s reality.” Shauna Shapiro¹¹

Known in India for thousands of years, and other places, (science now very close to this in most domains, already in quantum theory), *intelligent awareness, is prior to, and then is consciousness, pervasive to the whole creation, it the cause and sustainer intelligence of all form and activity, it living also in us. This is why **our conscious attention** on a photon can change the photon’s activity.*

Native cultures have forever known that all things are alive as the presence of the Great Spirit, which *Was*, before creation, and lives on *In* the creation, including, in us. Indigenous, therefore, have deep gratitude for nature’s continuing sustenance for all of life when we are connected to this deeper place within us (in our right brain and heart inspiration), indigenous aligning to this in their ceremonies, prayers and daily practices.

Openly receptive in our right/heart hemisphere, we are fielding/receiving information and broad knowledges from the vast intelligence of the quantum field. Once in the heart’s deeper receptive intelligence, at any time in our life experience, we can identify that as a feeling of belonging and knowing outside our usual

thought mode, it coming from and extending throughout a place we cannot define (defining is left brain), but which one can definitely know and feel. This is most easily experienced in an “ah ha” moment, in awe itself, but also as our intuition, inspiration, and in the inherent basic life values we all know within. “Out of the mouths of babes,” occurs because they are still very connected to this vast field of connection and knowing when they are young.

That all said, we can see, either we continue to operate primarily with left brain thought, worsening where we already are in crisis. OR, by using both our deep connective, and then shaping intelligences, we can rescue humanity and create a world of harmony and wellbeing for all and the planet. The human brain was created/evolved with these crucially complementary intelligences to field and shape harmonious and sustainable life practices. A recent reference to this, I heard the phrase: “The lost genius of childhood.”

Part F. – Where Does Inner Connection Live? Very Noticeably In Our Interests, Talents and Passions

I mentioned interests, talents and passions in regard to spectrum individuals earlier, and these three attention vectors definitely do exist in us, even and maybe most strongly at an early age.

However, these three perceptual roads are soon set aside and forgotten now, as we teach very young children, even just in preschool, how to focus primarily on left brain letters and numbers. This is when children should still be free to experience life with both intelligences, inner and outer, most of us feeling, often or at some point, childhood’s great joyous connection to life and nature without divisive, troubling, and soon self-conscious thoughts taking us over. Living thus, we are to have been in our full intelligence, exploring and grasping the relatedness of things, the qualities of dimension, volume, gravity, light and shadow, etc. along with social interactions with others, learning to build skills that affirm our sense of belonging and caring.

As I share in my Bio at my website HeartCenteredMinds, raised in the 50’s, I felt very connected to life as a child, and the feelings of my first through third grade teachings fit right in with my experience of riding my bicycle in the glorious afternoon sunshine, in and out of secret pathways I thought only I knew about. The gentle curriculum was learning to read, the basics of math, about family, community and world connections, along with time for art, singing subject-related songs, enjoying the playground, and so forth.

Nowadays, all that ends far too early, before the body and brain have practiced maintaining a balance of connective, and shaping intelligences, this originally intended so that the balance could be continued as more was introduced with a larger focus on letters, numbers and the outside world. Ideally, the connective inside knowings and learnings were to have been maintained in a good, balanced education. (Much of Native childhood learning was, and continues for some to be, first in observation and play-imitation of adult skills, followed by true skill development as growing older.)

In our modern education systems, interests, talents and passions should be noted and generally supported from the very beginning and on through a balanced education, for these things are our special blueprint of who we each are and what we are each meant to be interested in and excel at in order to contribute the best of ourselves to the world. Why else are those special interests and passions, unique, in each of us? *These are within us in place of instincts.*

Speaking with a friend just yesterday, he shared how his sister-in-law had wanted very much to study the prominent individuals who greatly influenced our thoughts and approaches in the realm of psychology, Freud, Jung, etc. She instead was told that first she must study all those people and approaches that had come before. Psychology was a real interest and drive for her now at a mature college age, but because of this demanded preliminary study, she dropped out of school entirely, she not internally geared to study for study-sake.

The better and needed way to guide individuals young and old, is to engage the energy of their deep interests and support them from there in going forward in a balanced way. In this young woman's case, had she been able to study those she was deeply interested in, she would have *needed to know* of the those earlier in order to make a case for her full knowledge of the subject in writing a thesis, giving a presentation, etc. Thus, the motivation to the brain to fill in *linear or uninteresting (to the individual) information, is to create a need or a reason to know it*, which becomes self-directed, person-centered motivation. And unlike our current ways, that information is not memorized and forgotten, but is integrated with the passion information, all of it retained for inspired use.

Kristine Barnett:

A very interesting correlation of this exists and is written about by **Kristine Barnett**, in her book, *The Spark*,¹² which describes at length how she raised her autistic son, and helped a great many others with autism, by not subjecting them to

the long hours of repetitive naming of objects pictured on flashcards, used primarily in the ABA (Applied Behavioral Analysis) trainings of years ago, which left children tired and unhappy, and the therapists, as well. (Words and language are linear skills, with which autistics and others on the autism spectrum can have difficulty.)

Instead, Kristine found it was best to allow her very young son, 1-2 years old, his ‘over-interest’ in light and shadow, his repeated pouring out the contents of cereal boxes to understand volume, his creating webbings of intricate design with colored string, strung from chair to sofa, to table and lamp and back again, or in whatever shape he envisioned and brought to life. Letting him do these things, *enabled* him to focus more eventually on words and speaking, then sitting with others in a practice pre-school good morning circle, etc.

This went on for years, Kristine balancing her son’s need and talent to intuitively explore, with his growing abilities to be in a classroom, *the right/heart brain exploring actually helping his left brain skills developing*, such as in learning words, speaking, and doing math. (When teaching, I used a similar practice to help a smart 3rd grader with ADD focus on a math practice sheet, which was to let him go out for 15 minutes on his own to the class garden bed in the courtyard nearby, he then returning and comfortably doing the linear work he could not focus on before.)

Kristine also learned that *largely enhancing a passion can activate shaping intelligence*, such as when she helped a non-speaking teenage boy by laying out letter flash cards (an interest of his and her own son), on the floor *all around him*. This ocean of letters became the connective inspiration and thus the chemical brain impetus from which, in the next moment, he first spelled, and with encouragement, then spoke his first words. The point here: following and even enlarging on *passions* of the right/heart brain: flash card letters, light and shadow, time in the garden, the *left brain* then starts operating, learning the shaping skills also needed for participation in life.

Partial Summary

So, we need to fix our world. We need to focus on our connective intelligences to balance our lives and find the true solutions we seek, the following guiding us there:

- Our current greater awareness of connective Native living and values
- The number of spectrum individuals continuing to increase, they oriented more to these connective intelligences and inherent values; they having a hard time in our left brain linear world
- Person Centered Planning now only for a small portion of students, this to focus on their right/heart centered connective, value-steeped, inherent interests, talents and passions, PCP (Person Centered Planning) now needing to be a general education/life approach early on and beyond, for all students

Part G. – Why All The Movement Away From Connection: The Cyclic Archetype

What we have been exploring here is the archetypal cycle: of connection, to disconnection, and the return to connection.

The child’s book *The Giving Tree*, by Shel Silverstein; “The Prodigal Son” story in the Bible, and “Siddhartha’s Journey” all tell the cyclic story which starts out in the fullness and wellbeing of connection. Soon, however, connection is left behind, and a feeling of emptiness results. Attempting to fill up the loss of that belonging, an intensifying search begins for what was once known as whole and fulfilling, the new outer-only focus building to a time of great challenge and turmoil. Moving thru the turmoil with discernment and an inner call, realization and a new understanding result in a re-alignment with connection and fulfillment once again.

On the return to where connection remains, there is commitment, a renewed freshness, and full enthusiasm to reclaim what makes inner sense and feels right, now understanding and deeply valuing what had in earlier times been an innocent, and not understood bliss. Children are blissfully happy, they born in connection, this experienced particularly in their times of freedom. If/when lost due to circumstances or growing older, the connection is pursued, it hopefully can be regained and deeply understood. This is a natural cycle that is a part of life, and so, tolerance and forgiveness for our circling away are an important part of the story.

T.S.Elliot:

We shall not cease from exploration,
and the end of all our exploring will be
to arrive where we started and know
the place for the first time¹³

When must our current world return? Now!! Our pursuit of our forgotten happiness, life and liberty has an end, for it lies within us. We are and have always been connected to all others and the planet, in our deep knowings of essential shared values, these fueled by our interests, talents and passions; those values and passions the indigenous knew, know and value; also in the deep heart callings from within, particularly in a crisis, those feelings now resurfacing strongly as we watch the war in Ukraine, and our other serious world challenges.

All humans want and need food, water, shelter, safety, love, health, sufficiency, social connection, nature-relatedness, and some sort of philosophical or spiritual underpinnings, all creating belonging and a sense of meaning in life.

With these embraced as natural, pursuit ends and happiness or joy arises as a sense of the fullness of belonging returns and connects us to who and all else which belongs also. This entirety is the expression of life in balance, with the freedom to be our best, as individuals, in community, and now needed: respected connection and sovereignty world-over, including for all of nature itself. Inner and outer intelligences and our interdependence on others and the planet, are the answers for our rescuing our planet and humanity.

Section III – How Do We Re-Purpose Public Education for Balanced Use of our Intelligences?

Part A. – The Recent Past

How can we approach this *Now* in education? It is 5:00 a.m. on the cycle of our return back to the dawn of connection, or undeterred, to some resulting larger negative reality.

We cannot be afraid to start the return, for the road lies within each teacher and student in our intuitive known life fundamental values and truths. Happiness, joy and inner and outer intelligences live in each of us in this way, and by re-embracing these values and our deep desires to honor them, we will find the path to their presence in our daily actions and creations. Even to glance back at history, at times very briefly, we can see and learn where we strayed.

Starting now, in every grade in school, teachers need to play the important role given them, to educate (to draw forth) from children and themselves those goals for our desires to create a better world, guided by the inner knowings, interest,

talents and passions in each individual. (To teach, in contrast, is only to deliver information.)

Back in the 70's when I was first an educator, these goals were more in place than now, (but not as fully as things could go now). Then, during individual reading time, students often free reading in books of choice, certain students were called to small group lessons to help support reading or writing skills for that particular group of kids. (And, perhaps some similar things are happening now, the emphasis needing to be: letting individual interests, talents and passions lead the way.)

Something similar would happen in math, perhaps those ready to go further pulled out for an instruction time, while others had meaningful math activities to do also, this the time of centers of activity, in this case perhaps math manipulatives, etc. And so on through chosen subjects, perhaps history, as a subject, taught all together but not with the goal of memorization, but the curriculum, ideally now, focusing on exploration on certain trends and pivotal situations and their benefits or detriments for society.

Some schools in the 70's, mine for one, even removed shared walls between neighboring classrooms so a larger age span and groupings of students was possible, based on interests, abilities, or whatever and however else was beneficial. "Tribes" was a program at the time built on quarterly changing themes, with all disciplines tied into each theme.

Part B. - Following Discovery: Sugata Mitra's "Hole in the Wall" and Extended Experiments

(You may know of this):

I saw a TedTalk from 2010¹⁴ in which **Sugata Mitra** said *he embedded a computer in the wall of his large tech facility in India*, this because he was concerned about how children in unwelcoming areas to teachers would be educated, the vicinity around his building very economically repressed. Prepared with the face of his computer positioned toward the outside, a group of the local children soon surrounded the exposed computer, and as Mitra explains it, within two days these non-English speaking children learned how to use the computer enough, even with its English only programs, to download and install games to play, this before smart phones were readily available for their helpful tech information. Some doubters had said that probably workers leaving Mitra's tech building helped the kids.

So, a following experiment by Mitra took a computer 300 miles out to a rural area, where No tech was happening. The result was of the same amazing abilities to explore and learn by the children there, they telling him upon his return two months later in a rather disappointed and disapproving tone, “We need a faster processor and a better mouse!”

Then Mitra really wanted to see how much children can teach themselves without a teacher. He took a computer to another remote area in India and informed a group of 26 Tamil speaking 12 year olds that there was a difficult (biotech) problem on the computer, in English only, that they would not be able to understand and solve, and telling them that he himself did not know the answer.

Two months later he went back to check on the young Indian group, and when he asked if they solved the problem, they said, “No, we could not do it.” He inquired, “How long did you practice on the computer?” “Every day,” was the answer. Then one girl, who had taught herself to be the teacher of the others, explained, “Apart from the fact that improper replication of the DNA molecule causes genetic disease, we’ve understood nothing else.”

Pretty astounding! This definitely beyond Mitra’s expectations.

My checking on his progress in 2018, a video from 2015¹⁵ showed Mitra’s focus was to repurpose classrooms. First eliminating most of the individual desks, he instead set up four computer stations, each computer on a large table, the computer to be used by four or five students at a time. He then gave the kids a Big Question to solve, like: “Do trees think?” or “Why did the dinosaurs die out?” He gave this second question to a group of ten-year-old Italian students, they speaking only Italian and he English. When they turned to him for guidance, he indicated he did not know the answer, “and then I left.” (Ted Talk audiences laugh at this repetitive closing, yet inspiring remark by Mitra.)

The students used Google to translate the English to Italian and in 15 minutes found multiple proposed answers to the question, (this translation skill much more readily used by students now in 2022, but important are the Big Questions, more important than ever.)

Mitra shared that giving students the freedom to explore on important topics and questions will always end with their finding the most humane and all-embracing answers for good, for, left to their own discovering and mutual conscience checking, this is who the students are at their core.

With one very inspired addition to his program, Mitra found that the students worked even better when they could Skype with the “Granny Cloud,” i.e., speak with a retired teacher, of whom Mitra had hundreds of volunteers who devoted one hour of their week to Skyping with groups of students. All they were supposed to do was tell the kids how much she or he admired what they were doing/had done. The results were stupendous, and even more so than Mitra’s earlier findings, for the questions and Granny comments were helping to optimize those results.

The very fact that all these Grannies/Granpas were doing was praising the efforts of the students, shows that, much like bathing the brain in an inherent passion for letters on cards kicks-in the activities of the left brain, this feel good, wellbeing approach of just praising the kids, fed the natural productive energies of their hearts and brains. This is a very fundamental reinforcement of something we inwardly know but are always sidetracked away from by the world’s constant push for progress and outer, tested results. When it comes down to it, *our supported or non-supported choices* end up creating our inner and outer well-being, or not.

Let’s set those “pushed for progress and result clothes” in a pile by the side and leave them there. Our “dressing” and all needs will be met, without strain, by the amazing knowledge and talents we have, intelligences that are a part of our nature, we a part of nature. Natives never considered their endeavors “work,” but rather joyful activities, bringing forth what was needed through full-intelligence interaction with the resources and people around them. Addressing their activities in this connective and effective way, it is known they had hours of free pleasure time. The world is our village, and all peoples have the inspired intelligence and talents with which to respectfully use resources to care for all and the planet.

Part C. – Important to Do: Trusting the Unknown, This Being Outside Linear Thought

Something else that needs to be known is that as we access our inner knowings, insight, inspirations, “ah ha’s,” “Something tells me...,” interests, passions, talents, heart desires and directives, they will need to be *listened* to, not disregarded, as has been our habit. They will guide us in the direction that feels compelling, “You’re warm, or are getting warmer and warmer” type of listening, or to following our gut feelings, intuitions and inspirations. It has to be accepted that what and how it will happen also comes from the field, it *unknown to us as to how it will happen*. For if we *think* we are going to definitely and specifically know, then we are already using thought from the linear mind to direct us, which will limit what information

will come to us from our connected knowledge. We've done the "only-thinking-thing" for far too long, already.

We ALL have these knowings to draw upon and follow to what feels good and right. TRUST and CONFIDENCE in this approach are foundational necessities. What often happens when proceeding in this way is that doors open, synchronicities happen, larger circles of inclusive information occur, and long sought answers and even dreams land, while out walking, or in the middle of the night, first in the morning, in the shower, etc., or in the course of life as with Ray and his desire to fly, as his father had. While feeling a little uncertain-footedness about how this will all work, the joyous freedom of exploration will be there, the joy of inspiring students to trust their curiosities and intuitions. These all are indications one is on the right path.

As I shared, teachers in the 70's, 80's and 90's used to be more free to draw on all of this from within themselves, as a whole, in order to teach their students in an open way, and in a more open curriculum. Then No Child Left Behind came in 2002, leading to standards and benchmarks for every skill that was to be taught, and the results for every child to be measured by required nation-wide testing. Both teachers and students felt the strong constraints of this approach, almost all of the joy of learning was denied.

Now in 2022 after the interruption of normal teaching practices, *the lament is heard that children are so far behind in what they are supposed to be learning.* Given the chance to follow interests and passions, there is no falling behind on a standard and benchmarks outline of facts and skills to be acquired. Inner intelligences, guided by interests, will lead the students to the tree, roots, branches and fruits in a particular passion pursuit, it all to be retained because it is part of the whole tree, not forgotten as a singular, unconnected fact, memorized.

To "catch up" means to the pre-digested information to which we have held students accountable, as my grandchildren and those of friends, have just finished the crammed study for finals that now ends the first semester in high school before the holiday break. This is of information they have memorized, a significant portion of which will be forgotten, they now not having to study after the holiday for exams, but missing many a pre-holiday weekend joyous event, as so many things are also planned by society.

Part D. – How Can We Possibly Change Education?

In a conversation about this question with a wonderful, intelligent, and skillful debtor, a retired college professor, his question to me was, “Ok, what are going to be the titles of the classes offered in such a class in high or intermediate school, or as a focus in an elementary classroom?” (I loved this interaction for it forced me to dive within and find the answer, as teachers and students can also do.)

After reflecting, I explained that the titles of classes and of the focus of classrooms can remain the same, but with an inner shift having teachers ask the question of themselves and directly to their students: how does this material being looked at now and in the past, affect then and now, the state of the well-being of the world, for people and the planet.

The core question always, what do people need, and how can this information be useful now, or can it?, to better the state of the world, with brief looks back at why it did or did not, in the past.

This would be done within the subject matter, some about how has it has been used, by whom or how. And now going forward, is it with or lacking interaction with other subject matter?; having or lacking the immediate goals needed, based on the connective and interdependent reality of our world? *We need to realize what has been lacking in our overall and interactive vision and practice such that we find the world in the state it is now. And it must be asked in question **and practice**, how can this all be changed?*

Answers lie within all of us, for it is our nature to know how to dive into core questions and needs, if our attention is allowed to go there and attune to the betterment of ourselves and our neighboring homes, countries, and the earth.

It will not cost a lot to change education, for this is an inner shift.

For a more “in the school environment,” below is an example of a simple question that could be asked, which could lead to far reaching questions by students.

Ray and I drove to the very local site of the John Muir House in Martinez, CA yesterday, Muir definitely a passion-driven man, making a great contribution based on first-hand extended experiences in nature, followed by his eloquent and highly motivating writings of those experiences. It was in this way and in even more

direct writings that Muir strongly encouraged Congress to set aside and create our National Parks; he also the first president of the Sierra Club.

Ray and I had lunch after visiting the Muir site, and he asked, "How can we possibly make the changes we're talking about in education?" I drew from my own teaching experiences and from Mitra, whom I had earlier shown Ray his Hole in the Wall talks, and Robinson's talks. For instance, I said, pose to students "What would you like to see served as a food offering at your school?," they divided into groups of five, each group sitting around a computer, they knowing they can share with the other groups.

Why this question? I know it has been addressed in many communities. Maybe there is little money to offer much in schools, possibly varying, even opposing, opinions about what should be offered, how monies could be used, who would do it, etc. (I do not know the local story of food at our schools.) Regardless, this could be a driving question.

How would discovery happen? Mitra's examples have shown how these strong abilities to discover along with inner ethics arise. My example here is for as young as 3rd or 4th grade, up through high school, with modifications applied as needed. But, like Mitra learned, we best not underestimate the intelligence of a group of children.

Some expanding, evolving and revolving topics the students might be drawn to in their research about this topic on their group computers: various school lunch programs out there, the nutrition of different foods, the effects of protein, carbs, sugar on energy, the cost of transported food, the cost of more locally grown foods, the nutrition of local vs. transported foods, their resultant food ideas effects on family discussions, rippling now to the community as a whole (this also related to how their research affects each together), is this food approach beneficial, now?, and if not now, when, and how might this all be possible, what is the first step, who could be involved, retired, homeless....would this make the community and the world a better place in which to live?

And of course, as education is meant to do, this would affect the students' view of the world and community as they left classrooms each day, seeing what else might change around them, for as you pull one string, you start to unravel other situations that might be improved with changes also. A quote from John Muir's book: *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911) "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."

(Source: <https://quotepark.com/quotes/910153-john-muir-when-one-tugs-at-a-single-thing-in-nature-he-find/>.)

(A more pressing question in N. California, perhaps: is there a viable solution to the often-present situation of parents or kids driving to attend school, this creating long lines of cars before and after school in many towns, creating congestion but also the serious traffic dangers, injuries and even deaths, which *are* occurring.)

Part E. - Other Ways to Connect, and World Changes

How do we change our personal thinking, feeling, and experiencing habits?

- Look for patterns of connection: the interconnectedness of ecosystems near and far, larger and larger in the world. What ecosystem, physical and social, are you in? Is it harmonious? And so many other patterns that abound in the world.
- Check to see how much of your thinking is for shaping something beneficial and good. Or how much is it different than something from your past or the present world? Remember what values are deeply common to all involved, despite what opposition is being talked about, locally or on the world stage.
- Spend time in nature, with young children or elders, they both somewhat less caught up in the world's present busy times, or with other inspired people, maybe other parents, all potentially somewhat inspired by the children's drive to discovery and creating.
- Use tech and social media significantly less, instead reading actual books, gardening, enjoying your pets, painting, cooking... whatever your interest is. Hands on and touch stimulate life-supportive *serotonin* in our bodies, whereas modern materials, including screens do not and the content of which can create *cortisol*, the primary stress hormone.
- Focus on what the deep feelings of your heart are, even just sitting; see what your heart is attracted to in its yearnings, and its desire for peace, beauty, simple enjoyments, and wellbeing.
- Catch, before they are dismissed by habit, those quiet inner guidances: the something's telling me to, the quick insights, gut feelings, what you're drawn to, your deep interests and passions...

Those are just a few suggestions for shifting from very frequent thinking, to more the realm of intuiting, feeling, sensing, and joy, joy the highest of human states.

Also, as I was looking up the TedTalk run times for this paper, I came across all sorts of TedTalks with ideas on how to open up our education to inspiration and

relevancy. This that I am sharing is the opener, with some suggested practices, the main shift being listening and trusting within, each teacher opening to and trusting their own inner creative intelligences to draw upon open fields of inquiry and answers, they then guiding their students to do the same, ***for the Life knowledge that lives in the seed, sprout, stem and flower, lives in us also.*** There is knowledge that wants to come through, and we are already quite good with linear shaping skills, so we can shape the deep answers that want to arrive.

We can also note that many universities are no longer basing entrance acceptance largely, or at all, on the former linear testing scores of SAT and other tests. Covid preventing an easy continuation of this process of routine testing, has conveniently allowed schools to stumble upon or resort to the possibility, and now perhaps the knowledge, that the former measures were not of the whole person.

Adding to this, the measure of potential success need not be by testing, but rather, by life itself, while testing the waters with what you know or are willing to learn in a hands-on, life-present mode, as in an apprenticeship, or however else this can be imagined. These mere words should give rise to some excitement in one's gut about daring to live and learn in life opportunities one can discover. Often in this mode, as I have shared, synchronicities can happen and doors open.

Additionally, as seen with Google and many other institutions, certificates of accomplishment are now being offered, maybe after six months of training or less, for students following a wish they have had for that kind of job, they then paid very amply for the spot they fill. If not satisfactory to them, or maybe after using that job as a bridge, hopefully those new employees will look deeply within themselves to find what they would truly like to be doing to follow their passions.

In Closing

Referring back to our beginning here together, I wrote that we can quickly see how outward dual, rational thinking can easily, and has most often led to *separatist thinking*: have and have not, Democrat and Republican, humankind overusing nature's resources, non-eco-friendly surface solutions.

But, also said was that additionally we have an inner world of feelings, leading to separatist energies and actions, or the intelligent deep feelings and inspired knowings of the connective intelligence that joins people together in the inherent values and the ability to resolve problems for the good of all.

Change comes from where we put our best feelings, energies, and our literal inner visions for the future. A more glorious world will result as we appreciate the beauties around us, listen to the quiet voice of what we deeply want from and for the world, joining others there in wholeness. With this we will influence those not yet there, and world healing will begin as we turn from the separatist pressures and crises of primarily thought and fact-based focusing, to the balanced power of heart and full brain intelligence for true connective solutions.

Pursuit over, we now know from where to shape and create needed remedies, and hence our happiness.

I thank you for reading this, and I hope you can help lead the way forward, knowing that this would all need to start in the lower grades also. In essence, we would be trying to bring some of the vital approaches of Montessori and Waldorf, and beyond, into the public school system.

Please do watch the TedTalks I have recommended. They crystalize the imperative of our times and the answers close at hand.

Thank you,
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Post Script:

Of course as one finishes a writing, right away other evidences of the points made are noticed. Here are a couple:

-This morning as I was considering breakfast, I noticed myself saying, “I don’t feel like raisin bran, but yes, apples and almond butter.” In other words, I was checking in with my body for its response. So, how often do we inquire into our inner intelligence and gut “feel likes” in response to life situations and the world we yearn to create?

-It is being said that the war in Ukraine is the fight for democracy around the world. Changing education in the ways mentioned here, with other aligned efforts, is a stand for democracy: the right to a good *life, freedom* of choice and for sovereignty, and the understanding that the source of our *happiness are the balanced intelligences within us*.

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