



CLIMBING A DIFFERENT MOUNTAIN

by Peter Schmidt

Text of the keynote speech on the occasion of the first annual
Celebrate Academics on Charter Day event

Wednesday, February 13, 2013
University of Montana
Missoula, Montana

with a foreword by

Arlene Walker-Andrews
Associate Provost for Global Education
University of Montana

CLIMBING A DIFFERENT MOUNTAIN

by Peter Schmidt

Text of the keynote speech on the occasion of the first annual
Celebrate Academics on Charter Day event

Wednesday, February 13, 2013

University of Montana

Missoula, Montana

with a foreword by

Arlene Walker-Andrews

Associate Provost for Global Century Education

University of Montana

FOREWORD

Provost Perry Brown invited Mr. Schmidt to speak at the University of Montana (UM) in February 2013 because of the striking synergies he observed between UM's Global Leadership Initiative and the ideas Mr. Schmidt outlined in his winning proposal for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* "Build Your Own College" competition. You will learn more about that proposal from the text of his speech. The correspondence between Mr. Schmidt's ambitious plan and the achievement of the Global Century Education component of UM's Strategic Plan turned out to be most fortuitous, and a confirmation that other educators share our vision for the future of higher education.

Mr. Schmidt began teaching history and social science at Gill St. Bernard in 1976. In time, he became Director of the Upper School and now holds the position of Director of Studies, where he collaborates with teachers from all grades in the school. He is also the Community Service Coordinator and was active in coordinating service activities following Hurricane Sandy. I quote Mr. Schmidt about the importance of outreach, given the significant record of community service by faculty and students from UM: "When service to others is woven into the fabric of a school as it is here..., everyone benefits from the understanding that it is a regular part of life to work on behalf of others with no

expectations of recognition or return.”

Mr. Schmidt has received numerous fellowships, grants, and other awards from organizations such as the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and the Council for Basic Education and he has facilitated workshops on education for the National Association of Independent Schools, the NJ Association of Independent Schools and the National Association for Secondary School Principals. He also has ample international experience, having accompanied student groups to China, Sweden, and other countries.

We are delighted that Peter Schmidt was able to visit UM to help us Celebrate Academics, and we hope you will find his perspective on Education for the Global Century as enlightening as we do.

Arlene Walker-Andrews

Associate Provost for Global Century Education

University of Montana

CLIMBING A DIFFERENT MOUNTAIN

I am very pleased and honored that you have invited me to be here today at the University of Montana for an event which celebrates academics and recognizes the founding of your world-class university. Flying over the spectacular snow-covered mountains from Denver yesterday morning for my first visit to Big Sky Country, I was reminded of Wallace Stegner's 1960 reference to the spacious wilderness of the western United States as representative of what he referred to as "the geography of hope." In his "Wilderness Letter" of December 3, 1960 to the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission at the University of California at Berkeley, Stegner wrote: "I want to speak for the wilderness idea as something that has helped form our character and that has certainly shaped our history as people." It was Stegner's contention that the Western mountains, rivers, and forests were at that time a last vestige of hope to preserve the untamed lands of America in contrast to the rapid development of much of the country. He argued eloquently from his own experience of how the natural world is far more than an escape or vacation destination but an essential part of the fabric of our humanity. "We need wilderness preserved—as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds—because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed," he wrote. "The reminder and the reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health even if we

never once in ten years set foot in it” (Stegner 145-146). A decade before the term ecology was popularized and the first Earth Day was celebrated, Stegner articulated a singular American ideal. Our heritage, indeed our democracy, is rooted in the majestic mountains and wild rivers and forests of this great land. Surrounded by five mountain ranges and resting on the bed of an ancient glacial lake, Missoula seems a perfect place to speak today about the exploration of virgin territories of a different kind, our American educational landscape.

Over the next several minutes I will address three questions which I use as an organizational framework for my remarks: the first of these, “What is education for?” is often overlooked in conversations about schooling. Yet it may be more important than any other question we could be asking, for how can we navigate any terrain, without first understanding the purpose of the journey? My second question, grounded in my belief that education must serve the common good, is: “What can we do to develop and nurture a stronger passion among young people to become civic-minded and to participate more fully in the sticky business of our democracy and the challenges that face humanity in the 21st century?” And finally, “How do we apply the lessons learned from the variety of answers to the first two questions in the creation of programs at schools and universities that prepare students who are informed, engaged, resilient and able to converse meaningfully across the disciplines?”

As a lifelong educator, with a majority of my years as teacher and administrator at a single school in central New Jersey, I feel privileged to be here in Montana to share my thinking with you about education. In reading your mission statement, I was thrilled to see the emphasis you place on international education, especially the ideal that “The University ... educates competent and humane professionals and informed, ethical,

and engaged citizens of local and global communities.” This understanding of what matters most in education, not only for the present but into the future, must then be built on the certainty that our students master the skills, habits of mind, and ethical outlook to embrace the world and as you indicate in your mission statement – “to benefit the local community, region, state, nation and the world.” Lofty goals, aren’t they? Yet, I would argue, that nothing we do, regardless of the age of the students with whom we work, is more important than inviting them to believe they can contribute something to making the world a better place. I have seen first-hand, and I know that you have as well, how a sense of purpose beyond one’s own self has lifted students from a feeling of personal isolation into a more authentic, meaningful life experience. How then do we demonstrate that the goals expressed in your mission statement, or the mission statement of any forward-looking school or university, when put into actual practice, will enable students to be those whom we envision will contribute to a better life for greater numbers of people in the 21st century?

In the spirit of venturing into unknown or little-known places I wish to share with you a story about a former student, a young man whose dyslexia never stopped him from believing in himself and whose indomitable spirit made him a joy to teach. His name was Tom Kelly and my wife Randi and I had the pleasure to travel to China with Tom and 15 of his classmates in 1987. At the time, very few groups of American high school students had traveled to China and the sense that we were lighting out on some great adventure was palpable as we boarded our plane at Newark Airport. I mentioned that Tom was dyslexic, which was a foreboding mountain for him to climb, and he had struggled monumentally with this learning difference, especially when it came to acquiring a second language. He labored with both French and

Spanish and made very little progress, so little in fact, that our school waived his language requirement for his final two years of high school. He was a senior when he traveled to China and was preparing to enter George Washington University in the fall. During our travels in China, spending a few days in Shanghai, Tom had an epiphany. China was first making the study of English a mandatory subject for most of its high school students at that time and wherever we went young people were eager to greet us and speak English at any opportunity. One evening the students had asked if they could go to a teenage dance club in our hotel and we gave them permission so long as they were in their rooms for a midnight bed check. When we arrived at Tom's room, we were told by his roommate that he had turned in early but knowing him as we did, something just didn't ring true. Sure enough he wasn't asleep and his roommate wasn't even sure where he was, though he did tell us that Tom had left the disco club with a young Chinese woman. Let me make a long story a bit shorter by saying that Tom returned at 3 o'clock that morning and tried to explain to us that he had left with a Chinese high school student who wanted to introduce him to her family who lived right around the corner from the hotel. Once there, he didn't know how to leave gracefully without offending his hosts who were preparing food for him and showing him albums of photographs of the family on various trips to other parts of China. We sent Tom to bed and told him that we would deal with the matter in the morning, which was now just a few hours away. At breakfast, after apologizing again to us and to the group, Tom boldly announced that he had discovered his passion in China. He was going to major in Mandarin at George Washington and return following his graduation to China to spend the rest of his life.

Now, I have heard many claims over the years by high school students who are unrealistic in one way or another and on the heels of the

previous night's violation, Tom might have been on the verge of greater trouble, by telling some whopper of a tale about how China had transformed his life. But something in the way Tom spoke that morning was genuine and sincere. Later in the fall, we learned that he was studying Mandarin at GW, where he then went on to receive his bachelor's and master's degree in Chinese Studies before being hired by Schering Plough to work in one of their pharmaceutical divisions in China in 1994. He went on to become the head of operations in China for another pharmaceutical company, Sanofi Aventis, married a Chinese woman, and settled in Shanghai. Sadly, Tom passed away last year of a heart attack just before making a speech in Beijing. At a reception following his funeral in New Jersey last November, two of his colleagues from Sanofi Aventis introduced themselves to us, thanking us for introducing Tom to China 25 years ago. "You don't know how many millions of lives you touched through Tom," one of them told us before going on to tell us about the many public service projects guided by Tom, including introducing infant and childhood vaccines to remote regions of that vast country as well as bringing cancer treatments to places that had never known them before. Our travel to China had been 25 years earlier, but its impact was still being realized these many years later. For Tom Kelly was a global citizen who embodied four critical components that I see in your forward-looking Global Leadership Initiative (GLI), and which address the first question that I raise this morning, "What is education for?"

Obviously there is some risk in using the term global citizen. Any time a term becomes popularized, as 'global' has become in recent years with phrases like global citizen, global marketplace, global village, and global warming, heard nearly every day, there is a tendency to think that global citizenship only involves physical movement beyond one's own place, as

was the case with Tom when he moved to China. For my purposes today, I use the term to refer more to a way of thinking which connects oneself with the lives and concerns of others, in both distant and nearby places, without necessarily implying that one has to be a world traveler to be a global citizen. I would argue that there are those people who never leave Missoula who might be thought of as global citizens more than those world travelers who have collected souvenirs from countries on six continents. To be a global citizen requires imagination. I speak here of the kind of imagination that permits us to see more clearly who we are, who we are becoming, and to see those with whom we share the gifts of living on Planet Earth as neighbors. Tom Kelly was such a person and your Global Leadership Initiative is such a program.

I mentioned that I see four critical components in Tom's experience and the goals of the GLI program you have established here at the University of Montana. First, both are reflective of the ideal that students participate in an active process of creating knowledge for themselves. Through inquiry, research, and extending learning beyond the boundaries of a single classroom, students are raising big questions and seeking answers that transcend the confines of any single discipline. In this way they begin to understand that knowledge is not some inert substance they are about to receive, but a living, breathing, and transforming experience which never remains static. Second, the GLI is grounded in a firm foundation that the relationship between student and teacher is central to academic and social progress. Tom never would have found that passion for China if he had not traveled there with us in 1987. Third, Tom did not go to China to become a wealthy pharmaceutical executive and that became most clear at his funeral when the two Sanofi Aventis colleagues told us about his many gifts to the Chinese people. I mentioned his promotion of the vaccinations and

cancer treatments in rural China. We were also told how he spearheaded the medical relief efforts when the devastating earthquake took hundreds of thousands of lives in 2008 in Western China, near Chengdu, which ironically, was one of the cities we had visited during our visit in 1987. Here in Missoula, this moral and ethical component of your Global Leadership Program is evidenced, at least in part, by the types of courses that you offer to your participants. In reading through the descriptions of your GLI seminars, course offerings such as “Global Challenges of the 21st Century” and “Robots, Genetic Engineering and Ethics” challenge students to be both intellectually and morally connected. How do we as adults encourage and instruct our students to think about moral and ethical questions, giving some shape to their quests to study for more than high grades? I am also impressed that your GLI permits any student who has enrolled at the University of Montana to apply to the program. I realize this choice is not without some consequences, but I am too often depressed by the opportunities denied to capable and creative students who simply haven’t received high enough grades to be considered for worthy programs. Finally, I see the fourth connection between the capstone project that you require of students who complete the Global Leadership Initiative and the trip to China for Tom in 1987, which is part of a program at our school in which students immerse themselves in a single subject for several weeks at the conclusion of the school year. These opportunities for students to engage in deep learning with the careful oversight of a mentor are a communal effort, where the roles of student and teacher become blurred as they converse and explore new ideas together. Learning in this way helps to fulfill one of the most important purposes of higher education by enabling students to demonstrate what they have learned in their

classrooms by generating new ideas and through the creation of new knowledge.

If we believe that education must serve a higher purpose than merely serving the individual goals and aspirations of our students, we must provide them with practical opportunities to see that they can make a real difference in the world. This leads to my second question: “What can we do to develop and nurture a stronger passion among our students to take on the challenges of living in a democratic society and understand that this privilege enables us to make a difference in the world?” When I was preparing to become a teacher in the late 1960s and early 1970s several books influenced my thinking about schooling and the responsibilities I was undertaking by becoming a teacher. What they share in common is that each enlarged my imagination of myself as a teacher, each illuminating ideas that enabled me to forge strong relationships with students, built upon mutual respect, in which we knew that we were engaged in important work together. Some of these writers and thinkers are men and women whose main purpose is to provoke our thinking about the purposes of education—its theories and its practices. People like John Dewey, Howard Gardner, Diane Ravitch, Sylvia Ashton-Warner, and Jonathan Kozol—their ideas inform my teaching to this day. Others are social critics and public intellectuals who possess an elevated sense of the possibilities for humanity—men and women such as Robert Coles, Dorothy Day, and finally, Wendell Berry, whose life and writing has shaped much of what I have to say in the next portion of my remarks and who remains as influential as ever as I begin a fifth decade in teaching.

I first came into contact with the writings of Wendell Berry, a distinguished author and farmer who lives in rural Kentucky, surrounded

by mountainous terrain, often scarred by strip-mining, when I was a graduate student. Berry was one of a legion of highly-regarded writers who formerly had been students of Wallace Stegner, including not only Berry, but Ken Kesey, Larry McMurtry, Edward Abbey, and Robert Stone, among others. A friend had given me a copy of one of his earliest books of essays, *The Long-Legged House*, and I was astonished at how astutely Berry drew connections between the dissolution of rural farming communities in America and the loneliness and alienation that so many Americans were experiencing in those times. In *The Long-Legged House*, Berry shaped his perspective about the absence of moral imagination in our country, underscoring how it was connected in his mind to the absence of genuine idealism in so many parts of America. Here is Berry's view from *The Long-Legged House*, published in 1971:

I cannot avoid the speculation that one of the reasons for our loss of idealism is that we have been for a long time in such constant migration from country to city and from city to city and from neighborhood to neighborhood. It seems to me that much of idealism has its source in relation between a man and the place he thinks of as his home. The patriotism, say, that grows out of the concern for a particular place in which one expects to live one's life is a more exacting emotion than that which grows out of concern for a nation. The clarity that grows out of regard for neighbors with whom one expects to live one's life is both a discipline and a reward (51).

Fundamentally, his essays, then and now are rooted in questions about national, regional, local, and personal morality. In drawing connections between agriculture and culture, Berry asks us to examine the underlying values that promote consumption over conservation, collective amnesia

rather than common memory, and personal gratification rather than community values. He understands that the key to living well has little to do with the accumulation of wealth and goods. As his biographer, Paul Merchant, points out: “It is in this neighborliness, throughout his many commitments as practical farmer, conservationist, teacher, writer, member of a family and of a community, that Wendell Berry shows us how to approach the task of being a responsible citizen” (Paul Merchant 5).

I look back to one of my early experiences as a teacher in an ungraded parent cooperative school in Plainfield, New Jersey, for one of my first lessons on educating students for responsible citizenship. The school was a 1970s version of the stereotypical one-room schoolhouse and my students, who were 5 to 10 years old, represented both the racial and economic diversity of the city. We had been studying different types of communities, everything from ancient to modern, as well as both human and non-human communities. As a culminating project I had decided to have the students turn their attention to their own community of Plainfield, a city of about 45,000 in the foothills of the Watchung Mountains in central New Jersey, which just a few years earlier during the summer of 1967 had experienced divisive and unfortunately, deadly violence when a policeman was killed during a week of hot summer racial tensions which often erupted into hostile encounters, where properties were damaged and looted and people were physically harmed. Just six years after these conflicts, many residents of Plainfield were unwilling to discuss the obvious disparities in both income and living circumstances that had divided the city and left its white and black residents unable to have honest and open discussions with one another. As the talented actress and storyteller, Anna Deavere Smith, once said in reference to Crown Heights in Brooklyn: “We are a country of strangers,

and we are having a great deal of difficulty with our differences, because ultimately, we lack the ability to look at specific human beings”(Shipler 18).

In the spirit of guiding their research, stimulating their imaginations about their community, and to have a more open conversation about their city, the 40 students, two assistant teachers and I began a project based on the board game, Monopoly. Rather than the streets of Atlantic City which are used in Monopoly, we looked at more than 50 streets and neighborhoods in Plainfield, paired older with younger students, and using the facilities of the Plainfield Public Library which was conveniently located across the street from our school, began by researching the costs of sale and rental properties for each of these 50 streets and neighborhoods. We invited the students to make phone calls to real estate agents to verify the information they had uncovered in their research and then set out to construct a life size Monopoly board, with Plainfield properties in proper economic ratio to those of Atlantic City on the game board. Using rolls of brown butcher paper, the students worked for many days constructing the game board and then were eager to take their project to a local gymnasium, which was the only place large enough to lay out their 20 foot by 20 foot game. You can see how a project, initiated by a desire to enable young children to talk about their community evolved into a multidisciplinary activity requiring the development of different skills, and most importantly, a language with which the students could speak openly and truthfully about race and social class without the fears and assumptions that often prevented adults from having such conversations.

In education, the experiences which connect the acquisition of knowledge to real life circumstances provide the skeleton for any

student—and I use that term broadly here to refer to anyone who is learning something new—to build his or her own meaningful body of knowledge. An immersion in another culture, not necessarily overseas, but perhaps living in a community that is far different than one that we may already know, a stint volunteering as a tutor with someone who knows less about a subject or possess less skill in something than we do, struggling with a complex text that challenges us to think beyond what we presently believe we are able to understand—all of these experiences become the skeletal material upon which we are then able to hang newly acquired ideas and deepen the meaningful nature of those ideas. Otherwise, without such a skeleton of experiential learning a student passes from one classroom to the next, through public spaces ‘full of sound and fury, signifying nothing’, as language loses its power and the creative imagination is dulled and drowned by data. I believe this is one of John Dewey’s essential arguments from his 1916 book, *Democracy and Education*, in which he wrote the following about the relationship between thinking, experience and schooling:

The first approach to any subject in school, if thought is to be aroused and not words acquired should be as unscholastic as possible. To realize what an experience, or empirical situation, means, we have to call to mind the sort of situation that presents itself outside of school; the sort of occupations that interest and engage activity in ordinary life. And careful inspection of methods which are permanently successful in formal education will reveal that they depend for their efficiency upon the fact that they go back to the type of situation which causes reflection out of school in ordinary life. They give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking, or the

intentional noting of connections; learning naturally results (154).

The notion that students learn best when their learning connects with real world problems and events is central to Dewey's philosophy of education. A few short months ago, in the aftermath of the devastating superstorm, Hurricane Sandy, which indiscriminately tore through villages, towns, and cities as large as New York, reminding all of us of the impermanence of so much that we take for granted, our school in New Jersey was closed for nine days, as much of the area, including the campus of Gill St. Bernard's School, was without power. It was during that time that I sat down in our kitchen to write an essay for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which serendipitously became the reason I am here with you today. *The Chronicle* had invited readers to construct the framework of an idea, in 500 words or less, in which respondents imagined the type of college they would create if they started it from scratch. Though most of my experience in education is with pre-collegiate schools, I have been privileged to work at various times as an adjunct professor in the First Year Student Seminar Program at Rutgers University. I have also served for the past five years as a member of the Board of Trustees for a small community college in New Jersey. In constructing my hypothetical College of the Global Village, I drew on my experiences as teacher, school administrator, and trustee, in articulating a vision of college as a community of learners who seek out multiple meanings of truth; who employ their imaginations in pursuit of deep knowledge; who through a variety of disparate experiences gain a deeper sense of self-knowledge and civic engagement, grounded in the ideals of experiential learning; and who as teachers and students dream together, create with one another, and realize together that even the simplest of our certainties can be filled with mystery and surprise. More

than a century ago, E. M. Forster in his novel *Howards End* articulated a challenge for all of us who take pride in being teachers. His words give shape to the College of the Global Village:

It is the vice of the vulgar mind to be thrilled by bigness, to think that a thousand square miles are a thousand times more wonderful than one square mile...That is not imagination. No, it kills it...Your universities? Oh yes, you have learned men who collect...facts, and facts, and empires of facts. But which of them will rekindle the light within? (30)

That we live now in a society that is driven by facts and disembodied information is no secret. We have to find ways to engage our students in finding the heart of a subject and dig deeply into it. Certainly at the secondary school level this often means limiting the amount of material that we teach in any given subject and that often requires a change in our pedagogical approach to the students. Using a text by retired NYU Professor of Religion, James Carse, titled *Breakfast at the Victory*, I teach a philosophy elective which each semester reminds me of how eager students are to engage in conversations about meaningful subject matter. By posing interesting questions, by challenging students to see old ideas in new ways and to formulate new questions that lead them more deeply into subject matter is my understanding of how Socrates developed his most original teaching style. I will say, that based on my own beliefs and experiences, this method of teaching is an essential component of where I hope to see education head in the future and is at the core of my essay, *The College of the Global Village*, which came to the attention of your Provost and brings me to Missoula today. Let me share with you the College of the Global Village.

COLLEGE OF THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

With an emphasis on experiential learning through a multidisciplinary investigation of the various meanings and practices of the good life; an immersion into the experience of learning new languages, including the disparate languages of literature and the visual and performing arts; and the acquisition of an additional spoken and written language through living and learning in a culture where that language is primary: it is the objective through disciplined work that the College of the Global Village strives to refocus learning on depth of experience rather than breadth of knowledge.

Through a first year program in which students participate in four blocks of study, each eight weeks long, the College of the Global Village requires all of its students to first participate in an introductory eight-week immersion program in research and writing in which all participants will be expected to construct meaning and to create new knowledge rather than being mere receptacles of previously digested information. Through topics of their own choosing from both the arts and humanities as well as STEM disciplines, students will be matched with experts in these fields, including both professors and non-teaching professionals with whom students collaborate on a research and writing project that enables them to both explore the process of research and the complexities of the written work they produce. A second eight-week block will be a required course in the History of Science and Ecology in which students learn the principles of ecology through a field examination of the relationship between the allocations and usages of resources in both their college community and through their involvement in a local economy. A third learning block will be devoted to engagement with a great books curriculum in which students engage writers and their characters about the choices which face them, both large and small, and the implications of these choices on their own lives and those of others. The year concludes with a learning and language immersion experience in a part of the world that is unfamiliar to the student, engaging their awareness of self and others through navigation beyond the

familiar boundaries of their experience.

During the second and third years of their experience at the College of the Global Village all students will be required to fulfill eight additional learning blocks through choices of course work from multidisciplinary courses such as “A Guided Inquiry into the Role of Museums and Concert Halls in Civil Society” and “The Transformation of the World From Nation-States to Networks.” The emphasis of these and other similar offerings will be to enable the students to develop practical applications of their learning experiences into a greater context than any single classroom affords.

The fourth year at the College of the Global Village will be spent by serving a guided internship, overseen by a Professor or community leader, in which the student shares the fruits of his or her three years of college work in a setting which benefits others.

When I submitted my ideas to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, I had no way of knowing how the proposal would be received by the editors who were selecting five finalists by sifting through the responses they received from their charge to readers to create a college from scratch, in 500 words or less. I was even more surprised when *The Chronicle's* readers selected College of the Global Village as the winner of the contest. And I was completely blown away when I received a phone call from your Provost's Office, extending the invitation to be your keynote speaker today for this occasion. Yet, as soon as I began to do some research about the University of Montana and your Global Leadership Initiative, I could see the parallels between it and my theoretical construct of the College of the Global Village; I knew that this could be an opportunity for us to engage in a very important conversation with one another.

As you have heard, the ideas for the College of the Global Village arose from my own experience working with high school students. Yet, they are particularly directed by a shift in attitudes that I have witnessed

during the past several years as high school juniors, and even younger students, begin to think seriously about their options for college. Many college bound students, their parents, the secondary schools which they attend, and the colleges to which they aspire, are now involved in a profound failure of imagination as students begin the bewildering process of planning the next stage of their lives. Howard Gardner, the Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education whose theory of multiple intelligences has informed classroom teachers for the past thirty years, speaks of our “intoxication with numbers and rankings” and the detrimental impact it has had on students and schools. In a recent interview, Gardner presented the following critique of the current state of American schooling at the pre-collegiate level: “The United States seems to be leading the way, indeed galloping toward a focus on test results, more and more test scores, ubiquitous accountability, swift ‘races to the top’, sanctions for those who fail to race speedily enough, an obsession with international rankings. We’re in an educational arms race and peaceful resistance may be our best salvation” (Gardner, Introduction to 20th Anniversary Edition).

It’s appropriate for me to now ask my third and final question: “What kinds of programs will best prepare students who will be informed, engaged, and resilient enough to make sense of the world and have the imagination and determination to get beyond self-interest and self-gratification and live lives of larger purpose?” Let me take a minute or two here to elaborate on two of the learning units I describe in my proposal which I haven’t spoken of at any length to this point. The first, the idea to begin one’s college education with an immersion project in research and writing is born of years of experience living with a research librarian whose work on teaching high school students how to do scholarly research is detailed in her two books on the subject. I included

it at the beginning of my proposal for a second reason, which is grounded in the experience of hearing scores of our Gill St. Bernard's graduates who inform us each year that they are well ahead of their college peers in their ability to conduct independent research and to write with confidence and depth about their research findings whether in STEM courses or in the humanities. Today's world of information is less daunting to students who are inexperienced as researchers and this is not necessarily a good thing! Even before the ubiquity of internet research, I watched many students whose first instinct was to fumble their way through irrelevant sources, materials which bore little connection to the subject of their study. Technology is only making some of the challenges students have always faced more apparent. By making research a collaborative process, involving the student, a teacher or professor, and a librarian, we help our students to acquire the essential skills of critical reading and thinking, analytical reasoning, and coherent writing. The sooner we address these skills in any college experience, the better prepared our students will be for all future endeavors which involve research, writing, and other forms of communication.

I'd also like to elaborate for a minute on the idea behind the course, "The Transformation of the World from Nation-States to Networks." Several months ago I had the opportunity to attend a talk at Lafayette College by Anne-Marie Slaughter, the former head of the Woodrow Wilson School of International Relations at Princeton University and the Director of Policy Planning for the U.S. State Department from 2009-2011. She began her talk by making the point that on the basis of its combined military, economic, and social power, the United States remains the world's only superpower. Yet, she argues persuasively, "It is certainly not the only major power that can make things happen on the world stage." In her view, since the end of the Cold War and particularly

since 9/11, the world is being reshaped as much from the bottom up as it presently is by governments. Her point is clear: though nation-states continue to exist and will for years to come, a new world has emerged alongside it. In today's world, to make sense of global politics and international relations, one must not only be familiar with governments whose policies and practices are typically top-down as models of organizational behavior, but also with the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both large and small, that help to shape and influence our world of the 21st century. Our students should be familiar with organizations like Kiva, a San Francisco-based micro lending organization in which you and I make contributions to help impoverished people start their own businesses with loans as little as a few hundred dollars. The great idea behind Kiva, and similar NGOs like the Acumen Fund and GlobalGiving, is that the loans are repaid allowing us, as lenders, to reinvest our small contributions in new projects.

Dr. Slaughter uses the metaphor of a Lego World to illustrate how different pieces will fit together in this changing paradigm, where governments must learn to work alongside non-governmental agencies and organizations that may have greater insight in a local problem than a government based thousands of miles away. Shouldn't our students be familiar with these ideas in order to be able to understand and participate in a world that is quite different from the one into which they were born? Let me use a recent personal experience to illustrate the importance of knowing how small, local organizations work effectively, maybe more effectively, than our government agencies. In the days just after Hurricane Sandy, I went with several other volunteers to New York City, to meet with people from Occupy Sandy, organized through an offshoot of the Occupy Wall Street organization. After a training

session, we were sent to Coney Island to determine the needs of residents in a set of high-rise housing projects, where many elderly people were stuck for days in the upper floors of buildings whose elevators no longer worked due to the power outages. I had noticed in parking areas belonging to the projects a number of FEMA trailers and Red Cross vehicles, but found no representatives of either organization during the several hours I had been there. The Occupy Sandy volunteers, on the other hand, using their iPhones and iPads, were orchestrating and facilitating an effort that had identified specific people and their needs, communicating this information to other volunteers who were staffing makeshift emergency food, clothing, and material warehouses, mainly in churches and synagogues in areas of Manhattan and Brooklyn that had been unaffected by the storm, then mobilizing another group to deliver the needed materials to the folks who had been identified just minutes earlier.

I'm not saying that FEMA and the Red Cross were unresponsive; I am saying that governments and their agencies respond in one way, typically in a top-down leadership model, while the non-governmental, less bureaucratic organizations get things done through more fluid partnerships. At times, one model may work better than the other. We must, according to Dr. Slaughter, understand both. I won't go into it here, but if we think of the Arab Spring and its social movements in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria, it seems impossible to comprehend, either then during the uprisings or now, during the Syrian civil war or the revolts in Egypt, if we only understand the old model. The ability to make connections—to identify, manage, and address complex problems—is an essential skill for global citizenship in the 21st century.

At the conclusion of Robert Coles' instructive book, *The Call of Stories*:

Teaching and the Moral Imagination, the author examines the views of his own mentor, the poet and physician from Paterson, New Jersey, Dr. William Carlos Williams, and the Russian author and physician, Anton Chekhov. Dr. Coles refers to a story of Chekhov's, *Gooseberries*, in which the character Ivan Ivanych utters these words:

I saw a happy man, one whose cherished dream had so obviously come true, who had attained his goal in life, who had got what he wanted, who was satisfied with his lot and with himself...Obviously the happy man is at ease only because the unhappy ones bear their burdens in silence, and if there were not this silence, happiness would be impossible. It is a general hypnosis. Behind the door of every contented, happy man there ought to be someone standing with a little hammer and continually reminding him with a knock that there are unhappy people (Coles 196).

Coles, through Chekhov, disturbs our complacency. How do we find that hammer for ourselves and our students? And how will schools and colleges in the 21st century reach beyond those who already benefit from access to higher education? Much of my experience tells me that students want greater opportunity to extend their lives beyond narrow self-interest. The task ahead of us is to understand that high schools and colleges have been complicit in accepting a status quo which rewards self-interest by focusing on meaningless testing and the high-stakes results which lead students and their parents to believe this is the ultimate purpose of their schooling. In the process, this preoccupation with testing and test preparation—which has been aptly referred to by its critics as a ‘race to nowhere’—diminishes civic and ethical responsibility as large numbers of our students use their high school years to prepare

for entrance to the “best” colleges—and by that I mean, those with the highest rankings—and their college years to launch themselves into the mainstream of economic competition. Chekhov reminds us that we must not only be thinking about ourselves, but the moral imperative facing our schools and colleges to be a partner to those ordinary people whose silence may have more to do with their absence in our educational institutions than anything else.

Writing in his journal in 1834, Ralph Waldo Emerson considered a similar problem in arousing students to desire to make something more of their lives, to find the passion in the depths of their souls to make a difference for others without thought of personal gain or material acquisition. Emerson turned to the critical role of the teacher: “The whole secret of the teacher’s force lies in the conviction that men are convertible. And they are. They want awakening. Get the soul out of bed, out of her deep habitual sleep” (16).

Do we believe in Emerson’s unambiguous statement? If so, how can we, as teachers, accomplish this with our own students? Can we rekindle their sense of wonder and a spirit of altruism as they embark on the uncertainties of life in the real world? From the perspective of my College of the Global Village and your Global Leadership Initiative, I would say that the first issue before us is to adopt a teaching and learning model that de-emphasizes the importance of imparting information to students and embraces an education that inspires them to make connections through their experiences in and out of the classroom. The possibility of doing so, I propose, is based upon three common threads which weave their way both through my College of the Global Village and your Global Leadership Initiative.

First, real knowledge comes to life through experience. Too often we

treat education as if it exists in a vacuum with that vacuum being the classroom. When we bring the world outside of the classroom into the learning experiences of our students, we move beyond what Alfred North Whitehead referred to as “second-hand learning” and “inert ideas” in his classic work, *Aims of Education* (Whitehead 3-7). Second-hand learning does very little to inspire students to go beyond the minimum that is asked of them. If I am merely asked to remember the “facts” of the Emancipation Proclamation, an example I choose due to the popularity of the recent film, “Lincoln,” I will be able to memorize some dates and definitions, but have little feeling for the epic human story from this period of history. I will know little or nothing about the lives of slaves, the breakup of their families, the physical and emotional scars from beatings and whippings, and the degradation and humiliation of being treated as property. I am unlikely to feel the struggles of President Lincoln, who wished to end slavery and hold the Union together through the devastation of the Civil War. And I am likely to know nothing of the role played by the women’s movement whose leaders made it clear to President Lincoln that they would put aside their own cause temporarily to insure that millions of slaves attained their freedom.

A second linkage between the College of the Global Village and the GLI is the vision of seeing education as a whole rather than merely the sum of its parts. Edna St. Vincent Millay expresses this fragmentation so succinctly in the 14 lines of one of her sonnets, “Upon this age, that never speaks its mind,” written in the 1930s:

Upon this age, that never speaks its mind,
 This furtive age, this age endowed with power
 To wake the moon with footsteps, fit an oar

Into the rowlocks of the wind, and find
What swims before his prow, what swirls behind—
Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour,
Rains from the sky a meteoric shower
Of facts...they lie unquestioned, uncombined.
Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill
Is daily spun; but there exists no loom
To weave it into fabric; undefiled
Proceeds pure Science, and has her say; but still
Upon this world from the collective womb
Is spewed all day the red triumphant child.

Students and teachers benefit from integrative efforts—through speakers, seminars, guided research projects—which aim to enable students to make connections across the disciplines, to see that no single subject falls totally within the enterprise of a solitary discipline. Yet so much of our traditional education fails to provide the integrative experience of the Global Leadership Initiative or the interdisciplinary approach taken by The College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine, whose founding president, Ed Kaelber, noted the following in a recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: “The idea was, if it’s a really important problem, no single one of you is going to solve it. You have to figure out how to talk to other people to solve it. It was radical at the time” (November 2, 2012).

An inability for high school students to make connections and draw defensible conclusions across the disciplines was one of the findings of a major study funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2007 and conducted by David Conley of the Education Policy Improvement Center in Eugene, Oregon. Focusing his study on the skills and

knowledge that matter most for success during college, Conley compared the type of education which most high school students were receiving and the required testing which was measuring the effectiveness of their learning with actual assignments that first-year students were given in college. His findings are reported in Tony Wagner's revelatory 2008 book, *The Global Achievement Gap*.

The success of a well-prepared college student is built upon a foundation of key habits of mind that enable students to learn content from a range of disciplines. Unfortunately, the development of key habits of mind in high school is often overshadowed by an instructional focus on decontextualized content and facts necessary to pass exit examinations or simply to keep students busy and classrooms quiet. For the most part, state high-stakes standardized tests require students to recall or recognize fragmented and isolated bits of information. Those that do contain performance tasks are severely limited in the time the tasks can take and their breadth or depth. The tests rarely require students to apply their learning and almost never require students to exhibit proficiency in higher forms of cognition (Wagner 104).

Finally, in addition to the vision which brings new educational programs to life, we must erect the scaffolding which insures their longevity. We must seek partnerships with established organizations that widen the world beyond the classroom. Rather than test-score accountability, we must measure our success by the habits of mind our students develop. Do they understand what is important and where to find it? Do they know how to apply what they have learned in one situation to something that is new and entirely different? Are they innovative, creative, and

compassionate?

I have said very little to this point on the subject of technology and do want to share some thoughts on the subject with you before closing this afternoon. Thomas Friedman, *The New York Times* columnist and author of the 2005 bestseller, *The World is Flat*, one of the earliest analyses of globalization, wrote a column just a few weeks ago which drew plenty of attention from academics all over the country. *Revolution Hits the Universities* was the title of the piece and its thesis was that “nothing has more potential to enable us to reimagine higher education than the massive open online course, or MOOC, platforms that are being developed by the likes of Stanford and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and companies like Coursera and Udacity” (*The New York Times*, Sunday, January 27, 2013).

As reported a day later in the Business section of *The New York Times*, Coursera at Stanford, while only a few months old, has already offered more than 200 courses to 2.4 million students in 196 different countries (*The New York Times*, January 28, 2013). Despite this popularity and the great potential of online learning for the future I remain somewhat skeptical of drawing conclusions about its potential too quickly. Unquestionably, MOOCs and other online offerings will reshape the traditional educational landscape in various ways and it would be foolhardy to pay them little attention. And certainly a big question that we face as educators and learners in the digital age is how we integrate the opportunity for online learning with the best qualities of classroom learning? Perhaps you read just a few weeks ago in the *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that a group of educators, mostly associated with online education, drafted “A Bill of Rights and Principles for Learning in the Digital Age.”

In a section of their document, titled “The right to be teachers,” they propose the following: “In an online environment, teachers no longer need to be sole authority figures but instead should share responsibility with learners at almost every turn. Students can participate and shape one another’s learning through peer interaction, new content, and enhancement of learning materials, and by forming virtual and real-world networks” (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 1, 2013).

I find it somewhat ironic that the idea of collaboration between teacher and learner is something these digital gurus envision as a breakthrough for online education. I hope that I’ve made the point today that the best teachers have always encouraged attitudes of inquiry among their students and clearly understand that the development of knowledge and the fostering of intellectual curiosity, whether for an individual student or a classroom, grow out of a cooperative endeavor. When we have such relationships with our students, in any educational setting, a natural outgrowth is the opportunity to enable students to see their education in a larger context: what they are doing has implications beyond their own personal achievement. They begin to see possibilities for their actions to be consistent with their values. This idea is certainly nothing new; in fact, it can be traced as far back as John Dewey who believed that the best teachers, at any level of education, were scholars and not technicians, themselves full of the spirit of inquiry.

Interestingly, there was a hopeful synthesis of these new technologies and the best practices of student-professor collaborations that our schools and colleges already provide, in a recent online article of *The Chronicle Review*, by Dr. Edward Ayers, President of the University of Richmond. Titled “A More Radical Online Revolution,” Dr. Ayers, a former History Professor at the University of Virginia, believes the

humanities may be best equipped to build linkages between the digital world and the classrooms of our colleges and universities. Here is a brief excerpt from his essay on the subject:

“A deeper engagement with the methods and purposes of the humanities is essential for any online enterprise that claims to offer a university education,” Ayers argues. “Though humanities courses appear on some of the listings from the new consortia, and though some courses have proved extremely popular, much of the attention devoted to MOOCs focuses on the procedural, cumulative methods of teaching computer science, statistics, and the basic sciences. The humanities, by contrast, flourish with different ways of thinking and teaching, more ambiguous, open-ended and interpretive... Indeed, the digital humanities can serve as a model for other disciplines, and for the larger online enterprise” (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 4, 2013).

When embarking into unexplored terrain in education, we are undertaking a climb up a newly discovered mountain. When students take responsibility for their collective learning experiences and together with the teacher or professor battle through some of the big questions that face us as a society, they learn in ways that profoundly affect not only what they are learning and how they are learning it, but participate together in the creation of a sense of community that motivates them to learn something not only for a grade in the course, but because they share a desire to be part of an experience where people value one another and want to understand the subject deeply.

We must change the way we are going about educating our young people, both in secondary school and in college. And it is my belief that

we will be most successful when those of us who teach in high schools are able to converse and collaborate with our friends in the college community to respond creatively and energetically to the challenges we face. Just as Wallace Stegner referred to a geography of hope in his Wilderness Letter, we look with hope to a new frontier where through vision and discipline, practice and persistence, we redefine the boundaries of 21st century education.

In closing, let me share a final story told by Jim Carse in *Breakfast at the Victory*, which illustrates a valuable point about the sometimes mystical nature of teaching and learning.

One morning the teacher announced to his students that they would walk to the top of the mountain. The students were surprised because even those who had been with him for years thought the teacher was oblivious to the mountain whose crest looked serenely down on their town. By midday it became apparent that the teacher had lost direction. Moreover, no provision had been made for food. There was increasing grumbling but he continued walking, sometimes through underbrush and sometimes across faces of crumbling rock. When they reached the summit in the late afternoon, they found other wanderers already there who had strolled up a well-worn path. The disciples complained to the teacher. He said only, “These others have climbed a different mountain” (33).

Thank you for this opportunity to be with you here in beautiful, mountainous Missoula.

Peter Schmidt

February 13, 2013

WORKS CITED

- Berry, Wendell, and Paul Merchant. *Wendell Berry*. Lewiston, ID: Confluence, 1991. Print.
- Berry, Wendell. *The Long-legged House*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969. Print.
- Carse, James P. *Breakfast at the Victory: The Mysticism of Ordinary Experience*. [San Francisco, Calif.]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994. Print.
- "The Chronicle Review." *A More-Radical Online Revolution*. N.p., n.d. Web. 8 Feb. 2013.
- Coles, Robert. *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. Print.
- "College, Reinvented." *One Tiny College's Lessons for Higher Education*. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Nov. 2012.
- Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: Free, 1966. Print.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, and Lawrence Alan Rosenwald. *Selected Journals, 1820-1842*. New York, NY: Library of America, 2010. Print.

- Forster, E. M. *Howards End*. New York: Knopf, 1991. Print.
- Gardner, Howard. *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach*. New York: Basic, 2011. Print.
- Millay, Edna, St Vincent. *Collected Sonnets: Edna St. Vincent Millay*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. Print.
- "Revolution Hits the Universities." *The New York Times*. N.p., 26 Jan. 2013. Web. 19 Feb. 2013.
- Shipler, David K. *A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America*. New York: Knopf, 1997. Print.
- Slaughter, Ann M. Ann Marie Slaughter. Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania. 24 Oct. 2012. Speech.
- Stegner, Wallace. *The Sound of Mountain Water*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969. Print.
- "Technology." *'Bill of Rights' Seeks to Protect Students' Interests as Online Learning Expands*. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Feb. 2013.
- Wagner, Tony. *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need--and What We Can Do about It*. New York: Basic, 2008. Print.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *The Aims of Education: And Other Essays*. New York: New American Library, 1949. Print.

ABOUT PETER SCHMIDT

Peter Schmidt is a faculty member and administrator at Gill St. Bernard's School, a PK-12 independent school in Gladstone, New Jersey. A 1969 graduate of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where he received his B.A. degree in Religion, and a 1973 Master's of Divinity graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, Mr. Schmidt began his teaching career in 1973 in a one-room school for children from 5-10 years old in Plainfield, New Jersey. He moved to Gill St. Bernard's School as a History and Social Science teacher in 1976 and became the Director of the Upper School at Gill St. Bernard's in 1985, holding that position through 2008 when he became the Director of Studies, working with teachers in all grade levels at the school.

Mr. Schmidt has received fellowships from the Council for Basic Education for his curriculum study of "The Impact of Nonviolent Passive Resistance on American History" and from Teachers College, Columbia University, where he also served on the faculty for two summers, working with teachers who were in their first years of teaching. He received grants from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation from 1987-1998 and was the Co-Director of "A Celebration of Teaching," a public-private collaboration which promoted teaching as a career for bright and capable high school students throughout the United States. He has facilitated workshops on education for the National Association of Independent Schools, the National Association for Secondary School Principals, and the New Jersey Association of Independent Schools.

Mr. Schmidt has been married for 39 years to Randell Schmidt who is a Research Librarian and author of two books on teaching research to secondary school students. Their two sons, Joe and Geoffrey, are both public school teachers in New York City.



M



UNIVERSITY HALL

