

# Creative Mavericks: Beacons of Authentic Learning

## Preface

We all know that what will transform education is not another theory or another book but a transformed way of being in the world. In the midst of the familiar trappings of education--competition, intellectual combat, obsession with a narrow range of facts, credits, credentials--we seek a life illumined by spirit and infused with soul.

Parker Palmer

Over the past thirty years of teaching, I have had the privilege of working with a unique population of learners who, in their struggle with and often resistance to standardized education, have revealed a quality of learning that stems from a deeply sourced creative vitality. I term this population of learners "creatively gifted." These maverick learners explore the frontiers of possibilities "outside of the box." In their resistance to paying tribute to superficial and often bogus learning agendas, they have become for me beacons of authentic learning - a level of learning which has the potential to enliven, empower, and to even transform us. As I bring forth their struggles, their triumphs, and their wisdom in this book, I hope to add their inspirational voices and visions to our current dialogue about educational transformation

The qualities of authentic teaching and learning that I share in this book through my teaching experiences, through the personal stories of creatively gifted learners, and through the reflections of teachers who engender authentic learning, cannot be translated into a scope and sequence curriculum. These qualities transcend the culturally conditioned, functional self. They are sourced from the "bejeweled self" of our innermost being and flower on their own timetable of unique expression.

I believe that the purpose of education is to awaken and support this bejeweled treasure within us and to infuse its creative vitality and wisdom into our functional personality. E.T. Clark (1991) in his chapter, "The Search for a New Educational Paradigm: The Implications About New Assumptions About Thinking and Learning," discusses this larger perspective of educational goals:

Acknowledging both the intuitive and the cognitive aspects of learning, these new assumptions recognize the fullness and richness of learning that can only be expressed through words like understand, appreciate, enjoy, know, and believe. Indeed it is because of the multidimensionality of these experiences that behaviorists refute them as unmeasurable. But in rejecting what these words represent, we are in danger of rejecting both the multidimensionality and potentiality of human learning. (p.22)

This new paradigm of teaching and learning will focus on inward awareness and growth. External goals will be regarded as serving this awareness and growth, not as end points in themselves. The role of the teacher within this new paradigm changes radically:

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Once we acknowledge a new set of assumptions regarding the innate capacities of students, we find a new role for the teacher emerging. From being a dispenser of information and knowledge, the teacher becomes a gardener whose responsibility is to nurture growing children so that the innate potential of each organism is allowed to blossom and bear fruit. (Clark, 1991, pp. 26-27)

In writing Creative Mavericks: Beacons of Authentic Learning, I join with other new paradigm educators in bringing forth a visionary conceptualization of human potential and tenets of teaching and learning that support its fruition. Creative Mavericks consists of three sections:

- Section One includes "Who is the Creatively Gifted Learner," which explores the attributes of highly creative learners, and "Seeing Through a Different Lens: Facilitating the Creatively Gifted Learner" which describes my teaching.
- Section Two, "Heartsongs: The Struggles and Triumphs of Creatively Gifted Learners," includes the stories of twelve individuals who share reflections on their schooling and the fruition of their creative empowerment.
- Section Three, "Implications of Education for Creatively Gifted Learners: Awakening Passion and Authenticity in All Learners," further explores the conditions which foster learning empowerment through the reflections of nine innovative classroom teachers. These teachers reveal that the passion and creative expression so evident in highly creative learners are seeded within all learners and can be awakened by teaching which honors the core uniqueness of each individual.

### References:

- Clark, E.T. 1991. "The Search for a New Educational Paradigm: The Implications About New Assumptions About Thinking and Learning," in *New Directions in Education. Selections from Holistic Education Review*, edited by Ron Miller. Brandon, VT: Holistic Ed Press.
- Palmer, P.J. 1998. The Courage to Teach, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.