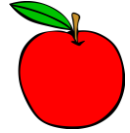# EAST HAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
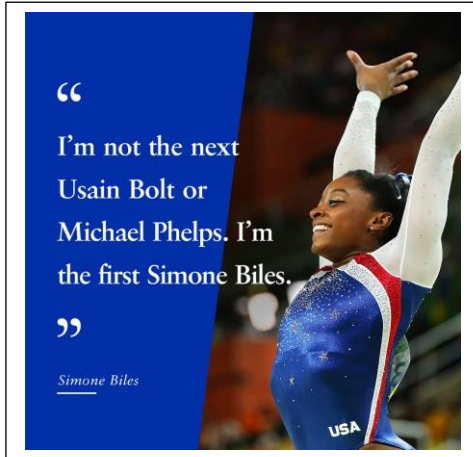
Superintendent's Update
Back-to-School: Week of August 22

The vision of the East Hampton Public Schools - preparing and inspiring our students to be innovative, responsible, contributing members of an ever-changing global society.

I'm not the next Usain Bolt or Michael Phelps. I'm the first Simone Biles.

~ Simone Biles

The games of the Olympics always provide great inspiration for our students – both male and female. Kudos to Simone Biles for being a great role model for our young female students who need to know that the achievements of women of any age are of significance on their own without a comparison to the males who have come before them.

20 AMERICA'S TOP HIGH SCHOOLS 16

Congratulations East Hampton High School on the national recognition!

Calendar

- **Monday, August 22 – Board of Education Meeting at East Hampton High School, 7:00 PM.** Depending on the progress of the high school construction project, this meeting may be moved to the Middle School Library.

- **Friday, August 26 – "Back to School" Coffee with the Superintendent of Schools at the Central Office – 94 Main Street, 7:30 – 9:30 AM. It's coffee time again! Please join us at 94 Main Street!** Start the year off with Coffee and a quick conversation with the Superintendent.

- **Friday, August 26 – The movie "SCREENAGERS" presented by the East Hampton Congregational Church at 7:00 PM ($10.00).** Parents and teachers are urged to attend the movie about growing up in the digital age. Details are included below.

- **Monday, August 29 – New Teacher/Staff Orientation in the High School Cafeteria, 9:00 AM – Noon.**

- **Monday, August 29 – Grade 4 Welcoming Event at Center School, 4:00-6:00 PM.** All incoming 4th graders are invited to visit Center School, tour the campus, meet their teacher, and visit their classroom before the school year officially begins.

- **Wednesday, August 31 – East Hampton Public Schools Convocation: Breakfast in the High School Cafeteria 8:00-9:00 AM followed by Convocation in the High School Auditorium 9:00-10:30 AM.** This is the first official day back for teachers; however, all staff members are welcome and urged to attend the breakfast and Convocation!
    - Presentations will include the Good Apple Awards and Recognition of the Rookie Teacher of the Year, the Paraeducator of the Year, and the Teacher of the Year.
    - Professional Development Activities will follow in the afternoon.
    - Paraeducators and other non-certified staff are invited to participate in the activities.
- **Wednesday, August 31 – Freshman Orientation at East Hampton High School, 6:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, September 1 – Professional Development.** Programs will begin at 8:00 AM in each building.
- **Thursday, September 1 – Kindergarten Class of 2029 Meet and Greet Bus Ride at Memorial School, 9:00-9:45 AM.**
- **Thursday, September 1 – Classroom "Sneak Peek" at Memorial School, 3:30-5:30 PM.** Students in Grades PK – 3 and their family members can come to Memorial for a quick greeting and peek into next year's classroom.
- **Friday, September 2 – Professional Development.** Programs will begin at 8:00 AM in each building.
- **Monday, September 5 – Labor Day.**
- **Tuesday, September 6 – First Day of School 2016-17.**
- **Tuesday, September 6 – Board of Education Policy Subcommittee Meeting in the High School T-Bell, 5:00 PM.**
- **Tuesday, September 6 – Board of Education Meeting in the High School T-Bell, 7:00 PM.** The Board of Education will meet on the first and third Mondays of the month beginning in September. When the Monday falls on a holiday, the meeting will be moved to Tuesday.
- **Thursday, September 8 – International Literacy Day.** The aim of this day is to promote the importance of literacy to individuals, communities, and societies. It's a great day to set aside some time to read or read to our children.
- **Saturday, September 10 – "Wine, Cheese, and Chocolate Please!" – An evening to benefit EHHS Project Graduation at the Arrigoni Winery in Portland, 6:30-9:00 PM.** *This is a 21 and over event.* Tickets are $30/$50 per couple. The event features music, wine tasting, snacks, and chocolate treats along with a free glass and raffle ticket. Information is available by contacting Karen Terry at karentbiscuit@gmail.com or 800-462-6760.
- **Tuesday, September 13 – Elementary PTO (Memorial and Center School) Meeting at the Memorial School Library, 6:30 PM.**
- **Wednesday, September 14 – Middle School Open House, 6:30 PM.**
- **Thursday, September 15 – Center School Open House, 6:30 PM.**

Thursday, September 15 – Superintendent's Advisory Council at the Central Office, 9:00-10:15 AM. On the **third Thursday of each month**, the Superintendent holds a more formal "coffee and chat" meeting for parents and community members. In an earlier Update, the date was listed as the third Wednesday. Please note that the meetings for 2016-17 will be held on the third Thursday. This month's agenda will include the 2016-17 District Goals, a discussion on safety initiatives for 2016-17, and update on the town's Charter Revision. Mark the third Thursday of each month in your calendar and come to as many meetings as you can.

- **Friday, September 16 – United Sates Constitution Day.** (Constitution Day is actually September 17, but we will honor it with the nearest school day to September 17). There are great resources for teachers and families at http://www.constitutionday.com/.

- **Monday, September 19 – Board of Education Reception for new staff members of the East Hampton Public Schools and the district's Teacher of the Year, Paraeducator of the Year, and Rookie Staff Member of the Year in the High School Library, 6:00 PM.** Principals will introduce new staff and honorees to members of the Board of Education and a light reception will follow. All are welcome.

- **Monday, September 19 – Board of Education Meeting in the High School T-Bell, 7:00 PM.**

- **Tuesday, September 20 – Memorial School Open House for Pre K, Kindergarten, and Grade 1, 6:30-8:00 PM.**

- **Wednesday, September 21 – High School Open House, 7:00 PM.**

- **Thursday, September 22 – First Day of Autumn.**

- **Thursday, September 22 – Character Day-*Let it Ripple*!** Character Day is a global initiative that focuses on developing strengths (empathy, grit, courage, and more) based on scientific research. There are films and materials that are very helpful at http://www.letitripple.org/.

- **Thursday, September 22 – Memorial School Open House for Grade 2 and Grade 3, 6:30-8:00 PM.**

- **Friday, September 23 – <u>Coffee with the Superintendent of Schools</u> at the Central Office – 94 Main Street, 7:30 – 9:30 AM.** Come in for a cup, say "Hi," and head off – or stay for the "Coffee and Chat."

- **Friday, September 23 – Jog-a-thon at the Memorial School.**

- **Wednesday, September 28 – East Hampton High School Music Department at the Big E.**

Get your event on this Calendar; it's sent to all East Hampton Public Schools teachers, staff, parents, and families!
If you would like a school/community event listed please forward dates and information to Paul Smith: psmith@easthamptonct.org.

Notes

Coffee with the Superintendent

This fall there are two options for Coffee with the Superintendent of Schools. You can come in for an informal "Coffee and Chat" or come for the more formal Superintendent's Advisory Council. At the "Coffee and Chat" you can stop in for a coffee and stay as long or as short as you like. Come in and stay a while or just take a "to go" cup, say "hi" and be on your way with coffee in hand. Another option is the Superintendent's Advisory Council – open to all parents and community members, this meeting features an agenda, but also allows for parent questions and concerns. Come and get accurate information – and learn about your school's programs throughout the year.

Make these dates for the Fall and early Winter:

Superintendent's Advisory Council Dates

Thursday	September 15	9:00 AM
Thursday	October 20	9:00 AM
Thursday	November 17	9:00 AM
Thursday	December 15	9:00 AM

Coffee and Chat Dates

Friday	September 23	7:30-9:00 AM
Friday	October 7	7:30-9:00 AM
Friday	October 21	7:30-9:00 AM
Friday	November 4	7:30-9:00 AM
Wednesday	November 23	7:30-9:00 AM
Friday	December 2	7:30-9:00 AM
Friday	December 16	7:30-9:00 AM

Both events are held at 94 Main Street.
(Note: No taxpayer dollars are used for the coffee, cups, lids, stirrers, cream, or sugar.)

If these dates do not work for your schedule, you are cordially invited to join the Superintendent for coffee and a conversation at a time of your choosing. Call 860-365-4000 or email psmith@easthamptonct.org to schedule a time that works for you!

■ *Resources for teachers…and parents!*

A Mindset Kit – This free set of online lessons from Stanford University's PERTS research center introduces students to the power of the "growth" mindset and describes what teachers and parents can do to help students embrace it. The kit has separate courses for teachers, parents, and teaching teams or leaders who want to bring growth-mindset thinking to their schools. It also has a 75-minute course for math classrooms. **https://www.mindsetkit.org**

By the way, this is a GREAT website for parents and teachers!

From "Rules for Engagement: Mindset Kit Aims to Put Research on Growth Mindset, Engagement to Work" by Evie Blad in *Education Week.*

Question stems at different Bloom's levels – Teach Thought has created this site www.teachthought.com/learning/25-question-stems-framed-around-blooms-taxonomy to provide teachers ideas on effective questions in different subject areas.

■ *Learn more about the Zika virus.*

The State of Connecticut Department of Public Health has a dedicated page on their website concerning the Zika virus. (**Click here**.) According to that website, there is no concern over the Zika virus in Connecticut; and state officials are prepared to alert schools and communities as to any potential issues. Connecticut has seen travel-related cases of Zika; however, as of this Update there have been no locally acquired cases in Connecticut or in any New England state.

It's still a good idea to avoid mosquito contact for other health concerns! Visit the Department of Health website for more information.

■ *SCREENAGERS…coming to EAST HAMPTON! A great movie for parents and teachers!*

Coming to the East Hampton Congregational Church on **Friday, August 26** at 7:00 PM ($10.00) is a documentary that produced by a California physician and mother and has won numerous awards and gained national media attention.

From the website:

SCREENAGERS probes into the vulnerable corners of family life, including the director's own, and depicts messy struggles, over social media, video games, academics and internet addiction. Through surprising insights from authors and brain scientists solutions emerge on how we can empower kids to best navigate the digital world.

Are you watching kids scroll through life, with their rapid-fire thumbs and a six-second attention span? Physician and filmmaker Delaney Ruston saw that happening with her own kids and began a quest to uncover how it might impact their development. As with her other two award-winning documentaries on mental health, Ruston takes a deeply personal approach as she probes into the vulnerable corners of family life, including her own, to explore struggles over social media, video games, academics and internet addiction. Through poignant, and unexpectedly funny stories, along with surprising insights from authors, psychologists, and brain scientists, SCREENAGERS reveals how tech time impacts kids' development and also offers solutions on how adults can empower their kids to best navigate the digital world to find balance.

Click here for the Movie Trailer.

Click here for the presentation on Good Morning America.

Click here for the website www.screenagersmovie.com.

Creativity, Curiosity, and Problem Solving matter more than we think!

I was recently reading an article entitle, "What if High School Were More Like Kindergarten" in *The Atlantic* and I was struck by some of the statistics that were shared based a recent survey in which 22,000 high school students indicated that they felt stressed 80% of the time mainly due to the pressures of taking advanced courses including honors level courses and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The article stressed that several companies in the world including Google, no longer equate Grade Point Average (GPA) and test scores with employees who thrive and succeed in the world of work – and therefore are no longer looking for those academic credentials when hiring new employees.

The article goes on to say, "Goldman Sachs has made an effort to hire beyond Ivy League schools, finding that a 'top quality' education didn't really provide top quality job candidates. Some companies such as Deloitte no longer require college degrees at all—even for professional positions. And if that weren't enough proof that traditional paths to career success can be misleading, seldom do current measures of high-school success guarantee success in college. In fact, according to a Gallup poll of high-school students, the No. 1 measure of college success is a sense of hope for the future."

Clearly we want our students to be prepared for successful careers after college and high school. The challenge is for us to rethink some of the non-academic skills we develop in our students – and what we ask our students to do in school to show that they are mastering those skills. The **new competencies** for our students include those already in our Vision – *East Hampton 2025:* creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving. There were times when people called creativity and curiosity "soft skills."   Now, Tony Wagner, in his world-renowned book, *The Global Achievement Gap* calls them "**survival skills**!"

If these are important skills, then we must make sure we give our students opportunities to master them throughout the PK-12 experience. Jeff Marshall includes a discussion of these skills as part of the "7 Classroom-Tested Practices That Foster Student Success" in one chapter (included below) of his book, *The Highly Effective Teacher.*
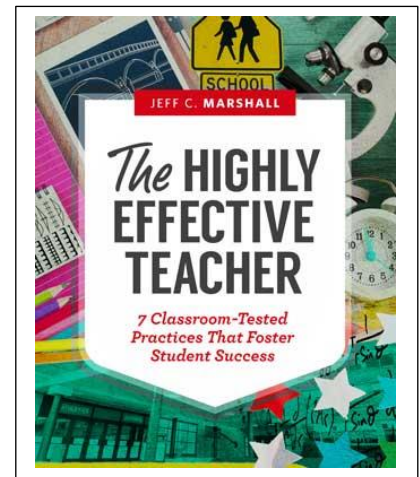
From *The Highly Effective Teacher* **by Jeff C. Marshal**

TIP 6: Creative, Problem-Solving Culture

Curiosity is the insatiable desire to explore, and it begins at a very early age. Unfortunately, for many students, something tends to quell that desire as they progress through school. Perhaps it's because our schools often reward students for knowing facts instead of applauding them for posing questions and seeking solutions. With the assistance of high-stakes tests, schools have moved from being places of challenge and curiosity to places that promote simplistic thinking and recall of unconnected facts. Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, and Philo Farnsworth all provide extraordinary representations of extremely curious thinkers. Their thinking and questioning occurred by integrating science, engineering, and, in some cases, art. (By the way, aren't you at least a little curious to know who Philo Farnsworth was?)

Creative thinking spans every domain of learning and every career path from architecture and fine arts to economics and entrepreneurialism. So what is our role as teacher or mentor in guiding and encouraging curiosity and creativity among all our students? We can do many things, but a critical starting point is to approach teaching and learning like a puzzle or a mystery to be solved rather than facts to be memorized and restated on a quiz or a test. Beyond the TIP 4 discussion about challenge and high expectations is the need to seek a balance in creating an environment that encourages curiosity and creativity while also ensuring that students learn essential facts, core content, and key ideas.

Generally speaking, curiosity is a response to an information gap. Curiosity increases when there's a gap between what we know and what we would like to know. When the gap is too small, curiosity languishes because the solution appears trivial; when it is too large, curiosity dissipates because the solution seems beyond our current ability. In this sense, curiosity aligns with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978), where maximal creativity occurs because the information gap and our confidence are at a moderate, not an extreme, level—a "just right" zone. The teacher's goal thus becomes finding the appropriate zone for each student.

We know that schools primarily test cognitive or intellectual abilities, but these abilities only partially account for future success. For instance, the personality traits of conscientiousness and curiosity account for just as much as intelligence or general cognitive abilities when it comes to future success (Leslie, 2014). Ultimately, it seems that one of a teacher's greatest roles is to model and guide students' curiosity in ways that increase motivation as they explore what-ifs. Of course, factual knowledge remains important, but classroom environments that promote curiosity and creativity make factual knowledge a means to an end and not an end in itself.

TIP 6 focuses primarily on two questions: (1) How do you foster and encourage a creative and inquisitive learning environment (*Creative Culture*), and (2) How do you provide learning experiences that encourage creativity and problem solving (*Problem-Solving Environment*)?

Creative Culture

To be creative, imaginative, and innovative, we have to be willing to take risks. However, taking risks often requires that we confront fears—fears of failure and anxiety about the unknown.

I have always been struck by how each class takes on a different personality. For example, a high school chemistry class I taught in 1990 was a unique class that frustrated me greatly, but it was not until many years later that I realized the cause of my frustration—which was not what you might expect. The students were well behaved, were not mean or cruel, and did their work when asked. But none of them were willing to take risks—at all. As a result, the class flowed without incident, but also without a pulse. These students played everything safe, generating no energy or curiosity whatsoever. They came to class, did their assignments, but creativity, questioning, or innovation were completely absent. They demonstrated no desire to know anything about the world around them. For them, education seemed to boil down to nothing more than completing assignments, getting a good grade, and going to a good college.

TIP 6. Creative, Problem-Solving Culture

Score	1 (Needs Improvement)	3 (Proficient)	5 (Exemplary)
Creative Culture (6a)	Fosters creative, inquisitive learning environment.		
	Students are expected to give knowledge back in same form it was presented.	Creativity in expressing thoughts and ideas is encouraged. Teacher models creative approaches.	Students are expected to find novel ways to communicate, share, present, and/or discuss ideas and are praised for doing so.
	Student curiosity and questioning are stifled by teacher actions.	Culture perpetuates and encourages student curiosity and questioning.	Curiosity and questioning are prevalent during multiple aspects of the lesson.

Problem-Solving Environment (6b)	Provides learning experiences that encourage creativity and problem solving.		
	No open-ended problems are studied. Students only learn to mimic teacher.	Teacher creates environment where students seek solutions to open-ended problems.	Additionally, students are fairly self-directed in their quest for solutions, and open-ended problems are complex and/or multi-stepped.
	Lesson focuses on single perspective/solution with no student creativity allowed or encouraged.	Teacher presents lessons that provide opportunities for considering multiple perspectives and alternate solutions/explanations.	Students actively consider multiple perspectives and offer alternative solutions/explanations without teacher prompting.
	Everything is defined/told before students explore/question/observe (algorithm, definitions, or explanation all precede experience); or there is no exploration at all.	Teacher facilitates student exploration of major concepts/ideas before formal explanation occurs.	Additionally, students take active role in designing how the exploration will occur.

As I reflect on this group, I wonder what most of them are doing in life and whether they're still playing it safe. To me, life becomes exciting when we venture into the unknown and the unexpected and try things that we have never done before. Whether people choose to become a choreographer, a venture capitalist, a stay-at-home dad, a lawyer, or a research scientist, those who excel will be those who are willing to question, to ask "what if," or to think about how things can be different or better—all of which demand creativity, persistence, and willingness to confront fears and anxieties.

I always tell my students that the classroom is a safe place to fail. Further, I tell them that as they learn and grow, I want them to try things that they have not tried before. When the test rolls around, I want them to succeed, not fail; but sometimes they will stumble early on in their effort to grow. If every day is potentially punitive, with everything graded either correct or incorrect, then students will never want to take risks—unless they don't care about grades in the first place. Perhaps we have been doing things backward for a long time. Instead of seeking ways to avoid errors during the process of learning, maybe we should be celebrating them, because sometimes learning involves growing from our errors, provided we are willing to recognize them and work to improve. What is the best error that you have recently made?

How do you encourage creative thinking in your students?

Promoting curiosity and encouraging questioning are among the expectations related to the newer standards. For instance, the Common Core State Standards for English language arts require students to integrate, infer, and make connections. In mathematics, students are required to interpret, extend, and compare. In science, students must be able to model, create, and design. If these standards are to be achieved, then students must become creative and curious. In the process, creative thinking skills can enhance student content mastery (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2010). Likewise, the College Board, which develops advanced placement courses and exams, has begun to revise all 36 courses. Key changes focus on covering fewer topics and emphasizing creative, deeper thinking over rote memorization.

None of these changes in standards or expectations is about getting rid of content knowledge. Instead, they represent a shift from focusing primarily or solely on the *what*. Now, the *what* needs to be integrated into the *how* and the *why*.

What does a culture of curiosity and questioning look like in your classroom? What steps need to be taken to improve it?

Problem-Solving Environment

How do the questions and problems provided in a typical math class differ from those in a TIP-proficient math class? In the typical class, the teacher provides students with the algorithm, models several similar problems, and then gives

students time to practice what they have been told and shown. In a TIP-proficient classroom, students are provided problems such as the following, which deals with the concept of area:

Which is the better deal—1 large 14-inch pizza for $10 or 2 medium 10-inch pizzas for $10? Extend: If you never eat your crust (the outer 1 inch of a pizza), would your answer remain the same? Explain.

After reaching the solution, students would still need practice in solving additional problems involving area, but the point is that the problem shown here requires students to go beyond just calculating area; they must interpret solutions and compare which option is a better value. In another example, a TIP-proficient teacher might provide students with a floor plan of different-sized rooms and ask them to figure out not only how much carpet would be needed if it comes in rolls that are 8 feet wide, but also how carpet seams and the overall cost to minimize.

We often think of problem solving as relegated only to mathematics, but all fields involve problem solving. Think of writers, historians, and scientists, among others. The writer might have to determine how to present a convincing argument within a 250-word limit. The historian might analyze how great figures in history achieved their power and gained a following. The scientist, knowing that the EPA has determined that a hazardous chemical is safe to drink if it is diluted to 1 part per million, might need to calculate how many gallons of water are necessary to render the chemical relatively harmless if 55 gallons of it were spilled into a lake.

How do your upcoming lessons provide opportunities for students to tackle complex, open-ended problems?

Real-world problems usually involve numerous perspectives and have various possible solutions. When a student or parent tells me about a certain situation, I have learned to gather as much information as possible from everyone involved. What inevitably happens is that all the accounts contain some truth, but each individual's perspective has a certain amount of subjectivity. For instance, if a student turns and walks away from someone, many inferences can be made: (1) the student was upset and wanted to snub the other person, so she turned and left; (2) the student heard her name, so she turned to see who was calling her; or (3) the student just remembered that she left her homework assignment in her last class, so she went to get it. Although better communication from the student would have been preferred, many reactions or perceptions may be warranted from the same observation. The other person could (1) be offended, (2) see that the student was distracted by someone else, or (3) understand the situation after realizing that the student needed to get something quickly. Often we don't get all the information, which makes it difficult to accurately assess the situation.

Learning is similar. History, for example, often presents things from a male perspective, an immigrant's perspective, a leader's perspective, or the teacher's perspective instead of considering multiple perspectives—those of a business person, a local citizen, a slave, a woman—and loses the power of multiple perspectives. Studying a historic event from a single perspective can diminish the richness of the event and make it more likely that the information is inaccurate or potentially misleading. Therefore it is important for students to learn from multiple perspectives. In science, they can test hypotheses multiple times to ensure that the results are reliable and accurate, and then expand the conditions to see if the results are generalizable to other situations. In literature, they can explore various interpretations of a literary work. In expository writing, students can write a paragraph from various points of view. In each case, learning becomes a puzzle with many pieces, each contributing to the larger whole.

When will your students have opportunities during this week to consider multiple perspectives or alternate solutions?

Teachers have many available tools and strategies, ranging from those that are very teacher centered to those that are very student centered. If the desire is to improve students' motivation and engagement, then student-centered learning approaches should be the preferred option. At the crux of most student-centered learning is the idea that students need to be able to explore and engage with the material before the teacher provides formal explanations or algorithms. This is true whether the instructional focus is inquiry based, project based, or problem based.

Be forewarned that switching from teacher as teller to teacher as facilitator requires a shift of culture in the classroom—not just a change in instructional approach. Instantly moving from telling students everything to asking them what *they* think will be met with frustration, resistance, and perhaps even anger. And why not? You have changed the rules without sharing the new rulebook with your students. Numerous resources are available to help teachers (and students) transition toward a more engaging, inquiry-based classroom (e.g., Marshall, 2013).

Successful guided inquiry-based instruction has two critical components. The first consists of changing the paradigm for how most lessons and activities are presented: instead of the teacher telling and then confirming, the students engage in doing and exploring before the summary, meaning making, or formal explanation of concepts. The second major component involves rethinking classroom management so that student talking, questioning, and exploring are encouraged, not subdued. Although inquiry-based instruction and other student-centered approaches are not the easiest option, their value, when done proficiently, can be substantial. To support this claim, Paulo Blikstein from Stanford University reports a controlled study that found a 25 percent increase in performance when exploration came before the text or video rather than after it (Dreifus, 2013). Further, effective inquiry-based instruction has been shown to promote higher proficiency among all groups tested (based on gender, race, ability level) when compared to typical instructional practice (Marshall & Alston, 2014).

> *How do you reverse the typical instructional sequence so that students explore concepts before you provide a formal explanation?*

Actions for TIP 6

To guide your discussions, self-reflection, and next steps, consider the following actions that address the central chapter foci for TIP 6: *Creative Culture* and *Problem-Solving Environment.*

Action: Promote Creative Thought with an "Hourglass" Approach to Learning

Whether the subject is Newton's Laws of Motion, World War II, expository writing, or the Pythagorean Theorem, teachers typically deliver the information and then allow students time to practice with the already known idea. What child—or adult, for that matter—is curious and excited about coming into class knowing that today she will be learning about mitosis (cell division), memorizing the stages of mitosis, and then looking at a few slides that show cells in various stages of mitosis? The likelihood of that happening is slim. Instead, most of us are curious, in school and in life, when there is information, a story, a contradiction, or other element that makes us want to know more. Learning about how a single zygote (sperm and egg) becomes a complex human being should be extremely fascinating and generate all sorts of questions; it should not be a series of terms to learn and memorize in a vacuum, with no context to engage the learner.

Before radio broadcaster Paul Harvey's death in 2009, I recall being captivated by his program *The Rest of the Story*. He would begin by telling the background story of a famous person, event, or thing, and although it was often possible to figure out the "mystery" along the way, Harvey never shared the actual or recognized name of the person, event, or thing until the very end. His storytelling manner acted much like a funnel, starting broadly with many details and bits of background information, and then working its way down the channeled sides until reaching the final narrow opening.

This is how a good mystery works; this is how science works; this is how effective and highly engaging learning works. However, if creativity and innovation are your goals, don't stop with the discovery of the law, the full understanding of the plot, or the understanding of the historical event. Rather, continue to go further, asking the "so what," the "now what," or the "what can we do now" questions. Learning then becomes like an hourglass, as you focus and channel students' thinking to a clear conclusion, a focused idea, or a realization, but then extend their understanding by asking them to apply it, generalize it, or improve it in some way.

> *What story can you tell that will engage students in questioning events or the world around them? How can you begin to flip the way the content is studied so that its real purpose and value are clear from the beginning, not presented as an afterthought or as time allows?*

Action: Plan "FedEx Days" to Encourage Curiosity and Creativity

One way to encourage students to think and behave in creative ways is to plan a "FedEx Day," when you give them time to think about, read about, or experiment with something that they are curious about and then share what they discovered over the course of their investigation. This idea comes from Mike Cannon-Brookes, cofounder of an Australian software company, and is featured in Daniel Pink's *Drive* (2009). Employees at Cannon-Brookes' firm are periodically given 24 hours to work on any project that they desire, and the results are "delivered" the next day. In a classroom context, students may initially struggle with the freedom to openly explore their ideas, but it is an opportunity to motivate and engage students through the pursuit of creative endeavors. You can begin by helping

students brainstorm possible questions to explore during the first five minutes of class, and then turn them loose. The goal is to create opportunities for students to pursue, test, explore, and discover in nonprescriptive ways. You might begin by scheduling a FedEx Day once a quarter and then increase frequency as the year progresses.

Psychologist Ellis Paul Torrance (1987) developed tests of creative thinking that scored creativity in five domains, including originality and elaboration (the others are fluency, abstractness of titles, and resistance to premature closure). As you attempt to help students become nimble, flexible thinkers, it is likely that originality will be a particular challenge until they begin to develop a larger vocabulary, more content knowledge, and expanded skill sets. Peter Thiel, cofounder of PayPal, would agree that true originality is challenging to achieve. In his book *From Zero to One* (2014), he contends that true innovation is about creating a new singular event, "0 to 1." However, much of what is considered innovative today is simply a modification or scaling up of a previously existing idea, "1 to n." Getting students to increase their competence relative to the domain of elaboration is helpful in improving writing skills, making conclusions, working with data, or sorting through historical facts. Which domain of creativity you focus upon is not nearly as important as simply encouraging students to think outside the realm of expected responses— particularly when those responses are usually in the form of a single word or a single correct solution.

When and where do students have the opportunity to be creative in your class? If you had a FedEx Day, what would you model for students as your attempt at creativity? Remember that if you ask students to take risks, their trust will be much greater if they see you taking a risk as well.

Action: Recognize and Reward Risk by Encouraging Open-Ended Learning

What? Recognizing and rewarding *risk*? We don't want our students indiscriminately engaging in taking risks. However, the point is to encourage students to transition from simply mimicking the teacher to instead thinking, acting, and responding to challenging questions, complex scenarios, or general curiosities.

Earlier I discussed bringing real-world issues into the classroom, and the point is relevant here. To engage students in seeking solutions to open-ended problems, consider tackling a significant global or community issue that you can link to your discipline. Examples include access to clean water, sustainable development in the face of population increases, education for all, and the gap between rich and poor. The Millennium Project provides many great scenarios that can be used to begin conversations with your students, and they are applicable in a variety of classes. In English language arts, students can develop persuasive essays supporting their research; in social studies, they can explore how past and present societies have addressed these issues—and how future societies might do so; and in math class, they can look at trends, exponential growth (or decline), and financial expenses associated with solving complex problems.

If tackling a global challenge seems like too much for starters, consider this possibility instead. Tell students: "Your assignment for tomorrow is to bring to class a question or curiosity that you have that is related to the unit we're studying." This approach ties learning to student interests and makes the experience more relevant. Although students may find the assignment challenging at first, it will get easier as they see examples from others.

How can you get students to bring real-world questions into your class that relate to your content? How can you better tie the real world to your students' experiences? What resources can you consult when you have difficulty relating your content to the real world?

Action: Offer Multiple Perspectives

When we provide scenarios, case studies, and problem-based or project-based learning experiences, we provide opportunities for multiple perspectives or solutions. If learning is about stating facts (2 x 2 = 4; there are 50 states in the United States; *with* is a preposition), then multiple perspectives or solutions are either unnecessary or impossible. However, many of the meaningful questions or experiences in school and life are less absolute and cannot be addressed simply by conducting a Google search. A study in a forensics science class, for example, could lead to multiple solutions that need to be defended.

Good group projects that involve case studies or rich problems need balance—that is, they should be enough to require the efforts of many while not totally overwhelming any one student in the process. In good collaborative projects, students should realize that *our* ideas always exceed *my* ideas alone!

? *How can you reword today's lesson to include complex problems that have multiple solution paths? How do you ensure that the content learned is still rigorous when students engage in project-based, problem-based learning, or inquiry-based learning?*

Action: Promote Explore Before Explain—and Save the Punch Line for Last

If you are like most teachers, it is quite possible that your instructional approach—one that has been the norm for decades—has been backward. That is, you tell first and then you ask students to restate the new knowledge or practice using it. You tell students about photosynthesis, the Spanish-American War, prepositional phrases, or proportional reasoning, and then you ask them to use the knowledge in a sentence or in a set of problems.

Although this approach may have worked in the past and was appropriate for the goals at the time, it won't work in addressing the new demands for today's learners. (Further, it is just plain boring.) Now that standards require students to analyze ideas, model complex phenomena, and create evidence-based arguments, they need to explore ideas before you provide the formal explanation.

This shift requires a rethinking of how you teach and your purpose for teaching. Current instruction is predicated on telling the punch line before the joke. This doesn't work for standup comedy, and it doesn't work for solid instruction that requires deep thinking. Allowing students to wrestle with new problems before showing them a solution promotes greater learning. Specifically, asking students to explore before you explain creates a need for them to learn, to be creative, and to think deeply.

? *What were three recent opportunities that you provided for students to explore before you explained the major concept? How can you make this approach more the norm instead of the exception? If you do this regularly, how can you deepen students' explorations? How can the paradigm be flipped so that exploration precedes explanation?*

We are looking forward to welcoming our students and staff back soon!
Paul Smith

The Superintendent of Schools sends out text message using **Remind.** If you would like reminders about East Hampton Public Schools events or immediate updates on school cancelations in the winter directly from the Superintendent of Schools click here of the Remind icon and simply enter your mobile phone number.

Please click on the calendar for the 2016-17 school calendar. Next year's school calendar is now available to parents. The 2016-17 school year will begin after Labor Day in order to accommodate the high school construction project. Please review the calendar and plan your vacation time accordingly.

Are you following the East Hampton Public Schools on Facebook? You should click to the left and follow us to get simple reminders and updates on all the great things going on in our schools. Click on the Facebook icon and "like" us!

Come and have coffee with the Superintendent of Schools some morning or evening. It's a great chance to learn what's going on – especially if you want accurate information right from the source. The Update has a list of coffee dates – and you can always find them on the school's website. Click on the coffee cup and then come in for coffee!

The East Hampton Board of Education policies are online hosted by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. The Board has a subcommittee that monthly reviews, updates, and revises policies. All policies are included on the website which available by clicking the icon.

CONGRATULATIONS to the faculty and staff of East Hampton High School - and all the teachers in our four schools for helping to provide a nationally recognized education! Each year Newsweek identifies the Top 500 High Schools in the United States and East Hampton High School is on the list! #13 in CT (only 16 high schools from CT made the Top 500 list) and #384 in the United States!