

# Prof. Rex Li's Writings

**Category:** Education

**Sub-category:** Educational Ideas

**Code:** Edu 03 – 001

**Title:** What I Pick from *Education Leadership*

**Year Written:** June 2020

**Summary/ Abstract:** I read the March 2020 issue and found many interesting papers.

© Rex Li 2021

All rights reserved. To quote or cite, please acknowledge the author (Prof. Rex Li) and source of retrieval from this website ([www.profrexli.com](http://www.profrexli.com)).

For quotes or citation of over 100 words, please write to the author for written permission.

### What I Pick From *Education Leadership* (EL)

---

It is the March 2020 Issue featuring *The Empowered Student*. *Education Leadership* is the most respectable American Journal / Magazine on education published by ASCD. It is for teachers / school administrators:

**(1) Editor's message – Anthony Rebori (p.6).**

It outlines this issue, seeing that to empower students mean 'active learning', 'ownership to the content', 'enduring understanding of big ideas', 'interdisciplinary', 'independence', 'self-reflection skill', 'well-designed project-based learning', 'purposeful initiative', 'student agency', 'helping young people to take charge of their learning'.

Prof. Li: I have no objection.

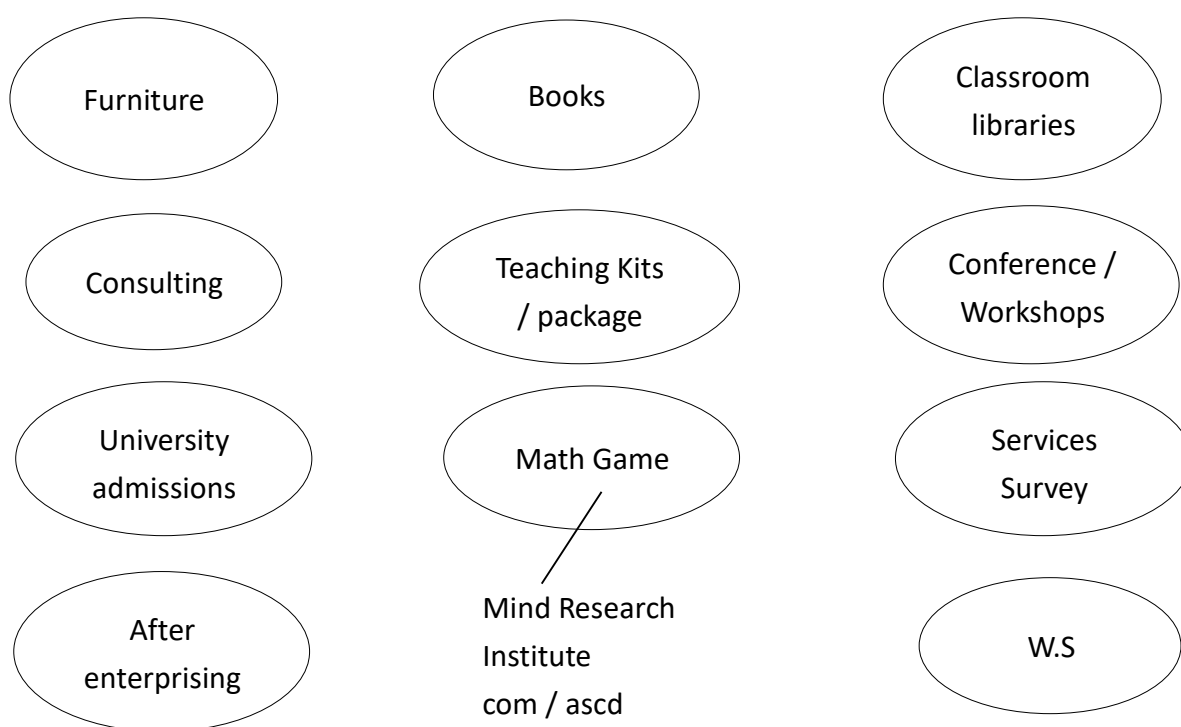
**(2) ASCD policy priorities – David Griffith (p.90-1)**

ASCD has been advocating "whole child education..... the focus on promoting social-emotional learning (for a decade)..... to ensure that all students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged."

To go further "in a whole child context, educators' well-being must also be addressed." It is a matter of school culture: "SEL must be a part of school culture that suffuses the whole community: students, educators, administrators, parents, and all stakeholders." These were expanded into 10 questions.

Prof. Li: Whole child & SEL is somewhat Deweyan. The writings unveil present-day concern in USA = safe, stakeholders, culture, whole-child, 'equity'.

### (3) Advertisement – Index (p.91)



### (4) *Project-based Learning that Makes the Difference* – Bob Lenz (p.67-70)

A consulting firm (PBL Works / Buck Institute of Education) promotes their work by showcasing 3 empowering projects:

- 1) Taking care of our environment  
Kindergarteners arrange brooms and trash picker-uppers
- 2) Reducing Car Pollution after school.  
After-school pick-up area, collect data, raise awareness of emission, pledges, FB, etc. Turn off your engine while waiting.
- 3) Border-lands: learning about immigration, dialogue, debate, artwork, volunteering work.

The author further proposes 4 tips.

Prof. Li: Good cliché!

## **(5) High Schooler's Guide to Happiness Project Sally Venture (p.78-81)**

Sally is a senior high language arts teacher and she developed a learning unit (maybe 5 – 10 weeks) to work on happiness. Ideas include:

- a) Self-reflect to construe meaning from experience.
- b) Study and discussion of literature fictional characters.
- c) Portfolio – guided journal
- d) Lots of readings (see titles p.79-80)
- e) Goal statements, self-advocacy statements, narratives, gratitude (letters)
- f) One sentence-happiness diary for several weeks
- g) Oxford Happiness questionnaire (p.80)
- h) Close reading (deep reading) to decipher assumptions and bias
- i) Videos (school closed-circuit, TV announcement = Campus TV)

Prof. Li: Excellent: empowering in meaning!

## **(6) The curse of Helicopter teaching (Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher) (p.5-19)**

An illuminating article to review the problem of helicopter teaching, Kittle and Gallagher pointed to the prevalent problem of pedagogy in teaching to write:

### **1) Student's Mindset (Quotes below)**

"Heavily aided by SparkNotes, they wrote to please their teachers, but in doing so, they didn't think very hard."

### **2) Writing for teacher**

"Students spend much of their time trying to figure out what the teacher wants them to say, and how the teacher wants them to say it. They might have concluded that students can't write well without detailed teacher's instructions."

### **3) A 'step-by-step' pedagogy**

"Completing teacher-generated step-by-step work is not learning; it masquerades as learning."

### **4) The real writing process is a struggle**

"with incomplete pieces of feeling, impulse, meaning, and intention – and gradually building them into completed texts; letting the process of writing itself lead them to ideas and structures they hadn't planned at the starts (2000, p.363)"

5) Exploratory writing of ideas

"We lead students to try this exploratory process by having them do daily, ungraded, low-stakes writing in notebooks. We use poetry, photographs, or infographics to inspire prompts student thinking. We don't give them prompts. In these notebook entries, students choose a word, line, or passage that inspires 10 minutes or writing prose or poetry, then reread what they've written and work to improve it."

6) Building fluency and agency

"Such free, expressive writing leads students to confidence, fluency, and agency."

7) Flipgrid and peer response

"We use Flipgrid to create this digital connection..... We've found that the distance created by this technology actually brings our writers closer together..... This is not a peer-editing exercise; it's about generating meaningful peer response."

8) Problem of Safetyism and helicopter teaching

"Many students who reach college today have suffered from growing up in a culture of "safetyism." They are unprepared for the rigors of college because their parents adopted a misguided mindset that children are fragile and have gone out of their way to make sure their children don't encounter too much discomfort..... We believe "helicopter teaching" is also counterproductive to building independent, confident, and creative students."

An interesting and critical article that starts me thinking:

- (1) How far should we teach / push students into writing, as few will be poets, novelists, thinkers, and journalist? What level is appropriate for all?
- (2) Helicopter teaching (step-by-step pedagogy) is just scaffolding, to be removed once the ability is built up.
- (3) Probably there is a golden mean – between helicopter teaching and freed writing.
- (4) Where do good ideas and writing come from? Nutrients (good reading) and readiness – habits of thinking and writing. It is the tacit curriculum.

## **(7) Dispositions by Design – Arthur Costa (p.54-59)**

### **a) What is Habits of Mind (Costa & Kallick)? (p.54)**

Costa and Kallick (2008) have identified 16 such dispositions, known as Habits of Mind, that can build the capacity for efficacious thinking and self directed learning. These dispositions range from managing impulsivity and striving for accuracy to taking responsible risks and thinking interdependently (full descriptions can be found at [www.ascd.org/el10320costa](http://www.ascd.org/el10320costa)).

### **b) What is Understanding by Design (Wiggins HcTighe)?**

A contemporary education should develop students' understanding of conceptually big, transferable ideas and processes so that they will be equipped to apply their learning to the new (and unpredictable) challenges and opportunities they will face. That is the central proposition of the well known Understanding by Design framework developed by Wiggins and McTighe (2011)

### **c) Working out (a) & (b)**

Educators also develop a set of associated essential questions to engage learners in “making meaning” about the habits. The Habits of Mind should be developed over time through deliberate practice. Ultimately, we want students to be asking these questions of themselves, without prompting. The long-term goal is for students to develop an internal compass to help them recognize the need for, and appropriately invoke, the appropriate habits(s).

### **d) Samples of 16 habits & essential questions (p.56-57)**

### **e) How to start**

To start this process by asking deliberate questions such as: Which Habits of Mind might be appropriate in this situation? Or which Habits of Mind do I need most often? Once students begin to exercise their thinking muscles, they can become more discriminate (What cues in this situation alert me to the need for drawing upon particular thinking habits?) and reflect on the impact of various habits (in what ways did employing this habit benefit my learning process? How might using the Habits of Mind be beneficial in other situations?) Once students recognize the value of using the habits, they can strive to increase their awareness, clarity, and commitment so that they become embodied in their ways of being.

## **In Summary**

This magazine can help us keep track of the American Scene.