

November 3, 2010



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Posted: October 27, 2010 01:02 AM

Why Expeditionary Learning or 'Learning by Doing' Could Save Education



EXPEDITIONARY
LEARNING

The Expeditionary Learning philosophy is the best thing you've never heard of but it could save our educational system. The "EL" approach succeeds in urban, rural or suburban schools and at every grade level.

The Expeditionary Learning philosophy is "Learning by Doing". Instead of teaching child to be quiet and watch while the teacher lectures, the "EL" approach encourages students to learn by doing, which engages and energizes the children -- especially those who are learning disabled or have attention issues.

Right now there are 165 Expeditionary Learning schools in 29 states and D.C. I am puzzled why there is not more attention about Expeditionary Learning. Bill and Melinda Gates and President Obama understand the value of the EL philosophy.

- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation granted an additional 11.1 million for the creation of nine more small high schools.
- In 2009, President Barack Obama visited Capital City Public Charter School, an Expeditionary Learning school in Washington, D.C., and cited it as an "example of how all our schools should be."

So why don't we hear more about Expeditionary Learning?

Visual, Auditory or Kinesthetic Learners

Most schools are set up for students who are **Visual and Auditory Learners**

Auditory Learners absorb information best through verbal lectures and discussions. Students who are visual learners learn by watching and then taking detailed notes to absorb the information. But students who learn best through a hands-on approach are called kinesthetic learners. These students learn by doing and actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and are distracted easily.

My oldest daughter attends a Expeditionary Learning school. The school transformed my daughter in so many ways, Kansas City Academy has been a miracle. My daughter is bright but she has some learning issues. I watched as my bright, curious child grew to hate school. After she began at KC Academy, I saw a change immediately. It's amazing how quickly her confidence has returned and how quickly her grades improved.

EL Schools Outperform Traditional Schools Test Scores

Expeditionary Learning engages and energizes students, teachers and district and school leaders. Since my daughter attends an EL school, other parents often ask me how a school with so much emphasis on student engagement can keep test scores up. But EL schools regularly outperform traditional schools in test scores:

- Schools implementing the EL model are consistently outperforming district averages on state and mandated tests. In many of the EL schools, students' test scores exceed district averages by substantial margins, with particular success among black and Latino students.
- The EL model fosters more than just academic engagement and achievement. Beyond developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills, students in EL schools show leadership through civic engagement and social and environmental service.

Time to Try EL Model

If you think the EL model is too good to be true, it isn't. Besides the emphasis on *learning by doing*, the EL model is focused on student personal responsibility. The schools don't tolerate disruptive behavior or disrespectful behavior -- the expectations are high.

I don't know why more school districts don't consider the EL model because it works! There are reports that almost 10 percent of American kids have ADHD. A recent study showed that one in six children are bullied at school, and I'm sure many of the bullied kids are students who learn differently.

With stats like these, why not at least consider the EL approach?

If you want to know more about Expeditionary Learning, visit the EL website.

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