

**Policy Governance
Feedback from Community Engagement with Student Think Tank
November 20, 2006 Work Session
Partnership and Volunteer Center**

Do you go to school to get into a good college? To get a good job? To learn how to live a good life? To learn what it means to be a good citizen? What does “good [college, job, life, citizen]” mean to you?

- Education is power—to learn and to get into a good college
- Learn and social aspect
- Social aspect, i.e., meeting and getting to know new people—connections through clubs and sports
- Helps me find what makes me tick
- Develop as a person (who you are and knowledge)
- Who you are with other people (social aspect)
- Knowledge of the real world (how it works and how you work in it)
- Ticket to other opportunities (knowledge for future applications)
- To learn (for my own benefit) future job oriented skills
 - Pilot
 - Emergency Management
 - Supervisor
 - General background knowledge
 - Leadership
 - Tech Skills
- Self-respect/self-expectations
 - To get skills, e.g., pilot training, computer programming
 - Career enablement

- To adapt skills
- Self-learning skills (independent study)
- To get skills to apply to real world
 - Taking on leadership roles, etc.
- For myself (with encouragement from parents)
 - Learn to organize self/tasks
 - Get ready for college/career
 - Sports facilitative
 - Student council skills
- To get career options/but loves art
 - Expand knowledge base/citizenship/learning critical thinking
 - Get diverse perspectives re: race, philosophy
- I love my school—service learning for personal development and citizenship
“academic drill” a turn-off
 - Social interaction is most important (tech skills are only facilitative)—create active rather than passive learning
 - Learn how to research a problem
 - Pioneer Charter School helps in personal connections with others and with knowledge base
 - Concerned about negative perception of kids in community
- Because of French and law classes
 - Perceived academic classes as not practical
 - Perceived French as facilitating present problem solving/relationships
 - As entry passport to college

- To find out who I am, what I want/should be doing, should be pragmatic/utilitarian
- To help me be happy/success is finding my direction
 - To identify the range of life choices
 - Social skills (development)
 - Learn to excel
- Because I have to and I want to become an engineer
 - Identified three engineering schools—taking Introduction to Engineering at Fossil Ridge—will take other engineering classes as electives
 - Likes history, but sees no use of history as an adult
 - Careers and college prep classes (thinking about possibilities)
- For academic and people skills
 - Establish myself in a career—good money
 - Experiences to find out strengths and preferences—multi-faceted person as adult
 - Develop social skills
- A way to get ahead—money
 - Find out what I want to do for career, e.g., art, business, marketing
 - High, self-motivation/achievement orientation

What does good mean for the outcomes/reasons?

- Effective communication of ideas
- Good college—what works for you
- Good college—allows you to grow, learn who you are, and how to function in the world
- College is not the right outcome for everyone

- Good life—ability to adapt without losing who you are
- Good life—doing what you want and can do to support yourself
- School is not necessarily real life
- School is building blocks for life—sequence of stepping stones
- Some classes should not be required—achievement instead of duration
- Refocus classes to relevancy

Last year, author Richard Florida talked to Fort Collins community leaders about the consequences for the future that he points to in his book The Rise of the Creative Class. Florida believes the future belongs to the creative. They will be the leaders, earners and learners of the new age.

If Florida is correct, do you think your educational experience is preparing you for this type of work world?

- Subject (math) may not be relevant to desired outcome, but it does teach thinking
- Subject (math) may not be relevant now, but possibly in the future
- School does not have anything to do with creativity (school tends to put you inside a box)
- Some things being studied are not remembered (too much to take in)
- Start on interesting path but cannot pursue it due to constraints, e.g., time
- Required classes limit ability to study what you want
- Creativity—master what you study to create something new
- How you learn as an individual vs. what you learn is important
- Subject competency is not necessarily requisite for creativity
 - Learn analytical/critical skills
- School destroys creativity by forcing logic

- Encouraged to think for yourself
 - Inspiration from peers and faculty
- School is so structured that it generally does not foster creativity—even the 2-hour art class follows assignments
 - System is not set up for creativity
- School is only part of your environment
 - Students should look for bits of school that could help student develop self
 - Respond more to individual needs
- Pioneer Charter School students are given problems with hints to solve (in every class)
- Schools need to structure experiences to foster creativity
- Don't require classes that we do not think will be useful in life (after high school)
- Absurd to drop core classes because students do not know what they need for career/life
 - Total focus on engineering gives no flexibility when job market changes
- The problem is that we are not taught how to get the right answer
 - Some applications in classes
- The question is the most important to future society
 - Pioneer's expeditionary program is the most relevant, because we learn how to learn and fosters abstract thought
 - It is a method of thinking
- If I created a school
 - Have options—assistance in choice
 - Have support system of specialists
 - Create time for career skill development

What limits building creativity?

- College pressure (requirements)
- Pressure to achieve on tests
- Pressure to make grade in the class (guides what you study)
- Lack of challenging teachers (nothing outside the required curriculum)
- Pressure to stay with curriculum

What fosters creativity?

- Ability to pursue interests to the extent you desire
- Need structure for successful society, but also need creativity for balance
- Good teachers
- Multiple choice testing limits creativity
- Look at individual styles to create creativity in students
- Real life aspects of classes
- New technology in the classes
- Interaction with others and extracurricular activities
- Source for creativity is in the individual students and teachers (teachers must see the real life application from what is being taught)
- Customize education—create options

What is the most pointless aspect of high school?

- Not being challenged (more homework is not challenging)
- Quantity vs. quality
- Homework—grades should be based on knowledge vs. assignments
- Homework for sake of work

- Homework needs to be relevant—how to make homework relevant
- Homework needs to be part of the focus for the class
- Find way to tailor homework to learning style
- Need balance between homework and outside life for students (especially those that want to be in extracurricular activities)
- Homework tends to be redundant to what student did during the day
- Assign homework that is relevant
- Likes teacher that gives homework that increases knowledge, but is optional
- Critical skills class
- Advocacy in mentoring (AIM) class at Poudre High School (no knowledge gained), but does work at Centennial High School
- Freshman and sophomore AIM, but likes junior class AIM because of community service (specific stuff vs. touchy/feely)
- Some value to critical skills, but spend too much time on some things—maybe the way it is taught—also needs to address real life
- Restructure critical skills class content and way it is taught (teach what you need to know for how old you are)
- College offers more opportunity for person

What causes achievement drop from 6th to 7th grade and 9th to 10th grade?

- Cultural shock in the transition
- The change of environment (small to large)
- New school—involvement in small school to new school where you do not feel valued
- With the change, things start to matter
 - Parent pressure

- Rules change
- You have to get through it on your own and some students get lost
- Elementary school to junior high—small size to large size
- Elementary school had sole teachers vs. many teachers in junior high
- Changing cultures from elementary school to junior high school to high school creates stress
- Influence of drugs and alcohol at high schools and junior high schools – culture change junior high to high school
- Individual kids getting lost from not being successful (not being tracked and provided tools for success)

Other Comments

- Administration at high school does not listen to student ideas
- High school is to provide an opportunity for you to succeed
- High school has tension—kid/adult—given hope and then shut down when you have passion
- Leadership class is great—teaches how to communicate
- Schools need to increase communication and administration needs to listen to students

If you were responsible for hiring teachers, who would you hire?

- Those that think of school and large community vs. one class that they teach
- Those that understand individual learning styles
- Hire teachers that will learn with students
- Those that can teach to different styles
- Those that are passionate about teaching
- Those that are accepting of different views