



We are after what is not easily measured or defined—a great education

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We see a marked trend in the world of education—especially in urban education. In a well-intentioned attempt to leave no child behind and to raise the levels of poor-performing schools in cities across America, we have misguidedly narrowed our responsibility in educating young people, choosing to define successful schools primarily by what can be easily measured and tested. Under the banner of “achievement” or “excellence” as defined by tests, we push aside essential ideas of education—creativity, inventiveness, real-world problem solving, theory of mind, emotional intelligence, collaboration, personal reflection, and so much more.

Despite this overarching trend, there are schools and educators who are taking a stand for the richest education possible. In any of these classrooms—whether it’s kindergarten or twelfth grade—you may see students experimenting, exploring, reasoning, researching, collaborating, making mistakes, creating, performing, presenting to peers, questioning authority, and critically expressing opposing viewpoints. The work is authentic. The learning happens within a context and a group. The considerations, debates, and problems are real. In short, the learning is true, messy, deep, and long lasting.

Right here in Baltimore, we have schools—traditional public, charter, and private—that are pursuing this ideal of great urban education. On Saturday, we, along with the Northeast Schools Alliance, held the First Annual Baltimore Progressive Education Summit. On that Saturday, hundreds of local educators and supporters gathered to share best practices and to take a stand for the ideals of progressive education in our educational dialogue.

It will take great effort and an intentional commitment to establish this holistic view of education in the popular urban definition of great schools. **Until we deeply and wholeheartedly pursue the “un-definable” and the “not-easily-measurable,” we cannot claim success as a school, a district, or a society.** Saturday was a collective start right here in Baltimore.

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