

QUDWA 2017

## Teacher Talk in collaboration with OECD

### “A Profile of Tomorrow's Quality Teaching”

Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 12-12.45pm

- **Ariel Sacks**, Teacher and Author, ArielSacks.com, US
- **Emma Russo**, Physics Teacher and Science coordinator, Highgate School, UK
- **Mareike Hachemer**, Teacher, Berufliche Schulen Groß- Gerau, Germany

Moderated/Facilitated by: **Pablo Fraser, Analyst, Early Childhood and Schools, Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD**

Good teaching stimulates and guides students' development so that their achievements go beyond even their own expectations. How can we further improve teacher quality as we move into the future?

Although it is difficult to measure the quality of teachers, they are the most relevant school variable. As the OECD has tried to assess the common elements of teacher practice that has the biggest influence on student achievement, the importance of actively engaging students most often comes out ahead, said Fraser.

Yet when taking a student-centered approach to the classroom and having the confidence to implant innovative methods into their teaching, the teacher needs to know he or she is supported.

Sacks believes a teacher is a group leader, and as such needs to be an authority in the discipline at hand to the extent he or she knows what direction to go in, or at least be open to the possibility of that direction. “And then from there, to be able to innovate, involve the students in interesting and compelling experiences and activities that they can respond to and kind of be a support to them,” she said.

It is less about the controlling of learning or the delivery of content of days gone past and more about facilitating student experience. Sacks referred to her “whole novel” approach as a good example of how that shift can be made.

In the past novels were assigned in chapters, followed by discussion in which the teacher pointed out what was important. The “whole novel” approach assigns the novel in its entirety, encouraging students to pay attention to their responses as they read the text.

When the students finally gather to talk about the book, their discussion is driven by their impressions, which morph and evolve as they hear what their classmates took from it.

Another way to promote engagement is help students feel as if what they are learning has meaning in the real world. "I think that students have a very, very strong urge to do something that is relevant, absolutely, radically relevant," says Hachemer. "And if we do something with them that is not, they will just politely cooperate." That meaning could be as simple as pointing out that the topic at hand can lead to a healthier world, she added.

To properly engage their students, teachers need to have really good relationships with them and be happy and supported, secure in their subject knowledge, with access to professional development in their jobs. "You need to give teachers time to reflect and implement," said Russo. "There's no good to think you can't have time and knowledge to adapt a lesson."

Helping students feel that they belong in their classrooms and they are safe there is key to drawing them out and encouraging them to take risks and make mistakes.

"It's embedding the idea of resilience into classwork and getting students to reflect on where they have succeeded and not doing so well and going on that feedback loop," said Russo. "You find that will help when you come up against something more significant."

Teachers and their administrations also need to think beyond the classroom and out into the community, as Russo has in her program Crossing Physics. In an effort to draw out the few girls in her classes who showed an interest in and talent for the field - without making them feel singled out at school - they and their mothers are invited to a free dinner where a successful scientist speaks about why she chose the field.

"You see the students find other people who have their same interests as them and it is cool and it is fun and it is interesting," said Russo. "It has made a difference - the percentage of girls studying in our school has doubled."

Student engagement really soars when they can join teachers in out-of-classroom, conference style professional development. "The most exciting professional development experience I had last year was where the teachers and students had professional development together," said Hachemer. "Afterwards during the break you heard all these comments like 'our teachers were like normal people' and 'our teachers were really interesting to talk to'. That's what I like. It puts all of us in the same boat, we are automatically out of this fake situation where the teachers are the enemy of the students."

**Main Takeaway: Teachers need to think out-of-the-box and out-of-the-school if they want their students to delve into and grasp the subjects at hand.**