

# BIG PICTURE LEARNING

# NETWORK NEWS

January 23, 2011

Katrina Mahoney, student at E.O. Smith at the Depot (Storrs, CT) was invited to enter a cake decoration competition through her internship. This was her first ever competition and she received an honorable mention!



## Winter is upon us!

For many of you, the start of the new year has been anything but smooth. Weather seems to be impacting everyone, and hopefully it will be over soon!

Rhode Island is in the middle of a battle over the proposed high school regulation changes. Check out the video and article. The video was created by College Unbound student Mike McCarthy <http://www.golocalprov.com/news/college-students-video-shakes-up-education/>

The Storrs, CT students pictured above and to the right - spent a recent non-school snow day actively involved in their internship activities! Even school cancellation couldn't keep them away from their passions! Thanks Brad for sending this along!

Google recently announced that they are hosting a science fair with the grand prize being a trip to the Galapagos! You can learn more here: <http://www.google.com/events/sciencefair/> It would be great if a Big Picture student was one of the winners!

Have information to share? Pictures? Student work? Send it along and we will share with the network!

Have a great week!

## Mark your calendar!

There are lots of opportunities to connect - be sure to pass this information to the people in your building who may be interested!

The LTIC and Post-Secondary Transition calls are on hiatus until February. The call coordinators will be reaching out individually to each school in the network to do a quick data collection, and some research about what schools need in terms of support. More info soon!

Galen Riordan, a student at E.O. Smith at the Depot (Storrs, CT) interns at Charter Communications. He was part of the crew that was filming the cake and other culinary competitions. He was either behind the camera or in the production booth for 12 hours that day!



# Co-Corner: D to the E

## From Doc

Writing from NY.

Another snow day for the Met – three all ready. In the middle of it all, the fight around high stakes testing continues. The staff, students, and principals have really stepped up. We probably have the biggest contingent at each hearing and when we speak it has been incredible. The problem is I'm not sure anyone is listening. One of our college students went to a hearing, spoke and then did this video – which is great.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOCJ2Jnu4KY>

We are Facebooking it and sending it and sending it to politicians, parents, kids, newspapers, etc. Just trying to use the social media to win a battle.

Elliot and I had our first phone call around the 6 million dollar grant. The 31st is the big visit. We are ready. We've been practicing for fifteen years. The foundation said that 20 non-profits (from the 225 applications) are the winners...but now they are selecting a portfolio of non-profits...so it is really, how do we fit in with the other organizations?

### College

Two of our students planned and carried out MLK day, for the Institute of Non-violence. They organize kid activities, food, a panel, and dignitaries stopping by. What was cool was that they were "in charge." It was as real as you get. No one was helping them. When the governor was close to arriving, his people called our student.

We are sending one of our students to India in a week to work in a school of a friend of mine. I'm excited for the student. We used my frequent flyer miles to send her there.

### Death

This weekend there will be a memorial for Dylan Wolk, a former Met student, son of Kelly Wolk who worked with Big Picture, and the grandson of Ron Wolk, our Board Chair. Dylan was 20 years old. So sad.

### Next week

Moses Brown Visit

MB is a private Quaker school in Providence. It is big that their headmaster is visiting us. He's interested in advisory and real-world projects. In the spring, I'm speaking to 25 New England Quaker headmasters. Fun that the rich private schools are looking at us.

### The Fight

The last hearing (only 3) on the no-diploma regulations is Tuesday night.

### Principal Retreat

Always a fun time for The Network.

Enjoy the snow!!

## From Elliot

This week ***The Hot Spotters***, an article written as a part of the solution to the healthcare system by Atul Gawande, is really worth a try in education as well. Using both high tech and high touch, Dr. Gawande tells the story of how Dr. Jeff Brenner, a physician in Camden, New Jersey, first used data systems in New Jersey to find the citizens of Camden who were costing the most money and locate the neighborhoods they lived in. Then they provided a new style of community healthcare. It turns out that these people lived near one another, so Dr. Brenner identified hotspots where he built local clinics staffed with doctors, nurses, social workers, and health workers whom the clinic trained and who knew the patients because they were from the same neighborhood. The preliminary results from evaluations were 25 percent cost savings with better care. What if we did the same in Camden in education? What if we identified the students most costly and most at risk, opened up drop-in centers like these clinics or like Apple Stores in identified hotspots, and used people in the community as providers of just-in-time learning and human services? Sounds like a good idea that could scale. Atul Gwande and Jeff Brenner's premise should work the same way it works for hospitals. Collect the data and work with the toughest population, in the most highly personalized way, and keep track of the data that is meaningful. My bet is our work in Camden probably overlaps with this group of patients both at our school and in our new work with The Corps Network.



Yesterday, at my visit to Shenandoah in Placerville, I had many pleasant surprises. Mario picked me up at the airport where we drove to a TV studio at the County Office of Education. Vicki Barber, the superintendent of the county did a TV show with me, a student named Derrick, and Tara, an advisor, at the school. They were great. They were articulate and confident. I could have been at any one of our schools

and hopefully hear the same school practice and language used. What is surprising is that I really can't tell you how all of this happened. This school was the first school we started-up with Gates money. Bob Ferguson, the superintendent at the time, called us up and we started planning. We've been through four principals and three superintendents, and after nine years with a staff of advisors who have never been to Big Bang or a principals meeting, the school was definitely a Big Picture school in practice, culture, and community. Not only that but the school is thriving on its own with little support from us. Not only that but for the night activity which was recruitment night: the former principal showed up; a former advisor showed up; student alums from the school showed up; Allen, Andrew, and two students from Sac City showed up. No one was paid. I don't know how anyone even knew to come but they were there. The room was full of parents, new potential students, students presently at the school, and all of the school's staff. It reminded me of the first year excitement at the Met yet this school was nine years old. I wish everyone could have been there. We have survived despite the odds. We have outlived superintendents, budget cuts, naysayers, and all the rest. Families had nothing but praise and thanks for the work we do there. I guess my wife is right with her Irish expressions, "What don't kill ya', will make you stronger." Having said all of this, special thanks go out to Mario, Kari, and others because they used the right amounts of coaching to keep this school going in a community that is eternally grateful it is there.

Today, I went to a well orchestrated meeting at Big Picture Highline produced by Jeff and Loran. This meeting was among the most honest meetings I've ever been at around high school transcripts for college admissions. Being an outsider to Washington was a plus and a minus. Slowly, I understood how much opportunity there is in Washington to really have colleges review our transcript not as an exception but as standard procedure. Jeff, the staff, and the students presented their case and moved the admissions directors and associate directors. Most were truly concerned and ready to legitimize the Highline process.

I was glad I made it up to Highline and El Dorado to have an opportunity to watch both of these schools lead the way in their communities.

Lost in the Meritocracy: The under education of an over achiever by Walter Kirn is a story about the author who is a great test-taker from a small town. He gets admitted and goes off to Princeton and

then realizes what he doesn't know and why he doesn't really understand anything. A few months later I saw the author on TV. He is pretty candid about exposing the culture of Princeton with all of its hypocrisy and foibles. Here are a few quotes from the book.

"I've been fleeing upward since age five, learning just enough at every level to make it barely, to the next one. I'm the system's purest product."

"I gave no thought to any goal higher or broader than my next report card. Learning was secondary; promotion was primary. No one had ever told me what the point was, except to keep on accumulating points, and this struck me as sufficient. What else was there?"

"That's why we're all here: we all showed aptitude. Aptitude for showing aptitude, mainly. That's what they wanted, so that's what we delivered. A talent for nothing but a knack for everything."

The immense openness of how this author tackles his own weaknesses around everyone's view of his strengths deconstructs in story form the realities of many students from valedictorians and great test-takers to students just getting by with average grades. This quote from Emerson serves as another testimonial to the author's history.

*"We are students of words; we are shut up in schools and colleges and recitation rooms from ten to fifteen years, and come out at last with a bag of wind, a memory of words, and do not know a thing. We cannot use our hands, or our legs, or our eyes or our arms..."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Whether everyone at Princeton agrees with him or not, the story puts the angst and reconciliation of someone's most inner thoughts out there in a heartfelt way for all to debate the merits of the meritocracy and your own moral compass.

I'm looking forward to the Principal's gathering next week and to our site visit with the Edna McConnell Clark people the week after. Hold on and put it in 4-wheel drive. It's going to be a wintry ride.

Enjoy the weekend!