

Learning to Be: Promoting Engagement, Identity, and Wellbeing

Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley



Learning Forward Preconference Workshop
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About the Presenters

Andy Hargreaves is Research Professor in the Lynch School of Education and Human Development at Boston College and Visiting Professor at the University of Ottawa. He is Past President of the International Congress of School Effectiveness and Improvement, Adviser in Education to the First Minister of Scotland and, from 2014-18, to the Premier of Ontario. He is founder & President of ARC Education, a group of 8 nations, states & provinces and their governments and professional leaders committed to broad excellence, equity, inclusion, democracy and human rights in professionally run systems.

Andy has consulted with the OECD, the World Bank, governments, universities and teacher unions worldwide. His more than 30 books have attracted multiple Outstanding Writing Awards – including the prestigious 2015 Grawemeyer Award in Education for *Professional Capital* (with Michael Fullan). He has been honored with the 2016 Horace Mann Award for services to public education. Andy has been ranked by Education Week in the top 10 scholars with most influence on US education policy debate. In 2015, Boston College gave him its Excellence in Teaching with Technology Award. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. His most recent book, with Michael O'Connor, is *Collaborative Professionalism: When Teaching Together Means Learning for All* (Corwin, 2018). His upcoming memoir - *Moving: A Memoir of Education and Social Mobility* - will be published by Solution Tree (March 2020)

Dennis Shirley is Professor at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College and Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Educational Change*, an indispensable resource for leaders. Dennis has conducted research and led professional development workshops for school leaders in 27 nations in 6 continents and his work has been translated into many languages. His most recent book is entitled *The New Imperatives of Educational Change: Achievement with Integrity*. With Boston Public School teacher leader Elizabeth MacDonald, he has published a second edition of *The Mindful Teacher*, a best-selling resource for staff developers. In addition to his work at Boston College, in 2019 and 2020 he holds a Richard von Weizsäcker Fellowship with the Bosch Foundation in Berlin. He is the recipient of a doctoral degree in Teaching, Curricula, and Learning Environments, from Harvard University.



Workshop Objectives

In this *Learning Forward Preconference Workshop*, you will:

- learn about the transition from the Age of Achievement and Effort to the Age of Engagement, Identity, and Wellbeing;
- analyze ways to advance the Engagement, Identities, and Wellbeing of your students and staff;
- review 5 dimensions of Engagement, 15 facets of Identity, and 6 forms of Wellbeing;
- understand how Engagement, Identity, and Wellbeing can all build upon and support one another to advance student learning;
- reflect on how you can adopt the essential principles of *Learning to Be* into your own practice; and
- engage in activities that promote your own Identity formation and Wellbeing that provide their own intrinsic rewards and long-range benefits.

Exploring Engagement, Identity, and Wellbeing

Directions:

In pairs, describe a time when a particular kind of engagement, identity, or wellbeing at work was a negative experience for you – 4 minutes.

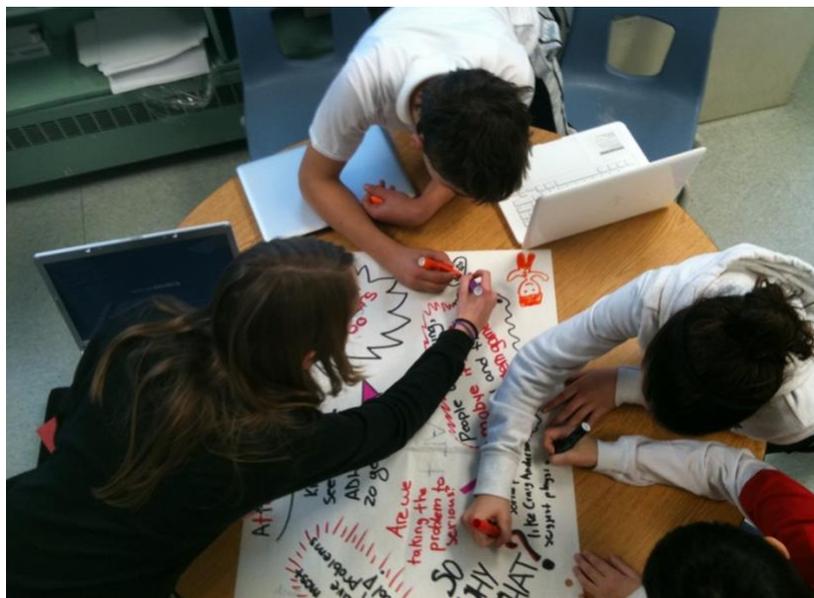
Identify each other as a number 1 or 2.

Stick the relevant number of fingers in the air.

Find 5 other people with the same number who you do not know well.

Among all six, without sharing your stories, brainstorm on flip chart paper what the main arguments against some understandings of engagement, identity, and wellbeing are.

Present to the whole group if asked.



From One Age of Educational Change to Another

Our research addresses and contributes to North American and global debates about the nature, direction and meaning of educational change over time within complex systems, as experienced by teachers, principals, districts and state or provincial system leaders. This perspective points to a profound shift that is occurring from one age to another: the *Age of Achievement and Effort* to the *Age of Engagement, Identity, and Wellbeing*.

The Age of Achievement and Effort

From the 1990s through to about 5 years ago, one of the most prominent policy priorities in many places was improving educational achievement and simultaneously making it more equitable in terms of measured attainment. Under both No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, US education reform became hyper-focused on raising tested achievement levels and narrowing achievement gaps in literacy and math. The Canadian province of Ontario, a high performer on global metrics of student achievement, proclaimed that it would “reach every student” through “three core priorities” of “going deeper on literacy and numeracy,” “reducing the gap in achievement for those groups of students who, for whatever reason, need extra help,” and increasing “public confidence in publicly funded education.”

In this *Age of Achievement and Effort*, educators combined cyclical reviews of performance data at the state or provincial, district, and school level with more intensive interaction and problem-solving among teachers, to monitor and accelerate the measured progress of every child, class and school.

Internationally, large-scale educational reform in this age was driven by four questions.

1. *How are we doing?*
2. *How do we know?*
3. *How can we improve?*
4. *How can this benefit everyone?*

These questions led educators to think harder about performance, measurement, and equity.

The *Age of Achievement and Effort* was sometimes successful at raising expectations, especially for some vulnerable groups whose challenges were not well captured by aggregated data for students as a whole. In Ontario, this was done without punitive consequences for teachers and schools when results went badly, labor peace was established after years of blame and shame had been heaped on the teaching profession, and struggling schools and their leaders were helped rather than penalized by funding student success coaches to support struggling students, for example.

But the focus on *Achievement and Effort* also incurred problems. Even in high performing Ontario, its data-driven approach led educators to concentrate more on students' deficits than their assets. Teachers complained of a narrowed curriculum, particularly for students in the tested grades, and felt that the pressure to reach large-scale, high-stakes (or mid-stakes) test scores led some administrators to press teachers to give undue attention to students just below the threshold of proficiency in order to raise scores quickly.

The driving questions of the *Age of Achievement and Effort* must stay with us, even if the ways to address them need to change. It is important that every child has opportunity, that the possibility of social mobility is there for everyone, and that schools are relentlessly committed to all students' success. But even if excellence and equity could be accomplished perfectly on system-wide assessments, this would no longer be enough. The world is in turmoil. Our schools and school systems have to respond.

The Age of Engagement, Identity, and Wellbeing

The defining questions for our societies and our schools now are even more serious than ones of achievement, opportunity and competitiveness. They cut to the very core of who we are. There are three of them.

1. *Who are we?*
2. *What will become of us?*
3. *Who will decide?*

These questions emerge from several international trends. First, there is a global epidemic of mental health problems among young people. In Ontario, one in seven students has reported “a serious level of psychological distress” and over one-quarter indicated that during the past

year there was a “time they wanted to talk to someone about a mental health problem, but did not know where to turn.”ⁱ One in eight students expresses “worry about being harmed or threatened at school.”

Second, we are in the midst of the greatest international refugee crisis for 50 years. When refugee children arrive in schools of the countries to which they flee, they do not only have to learn a new language or make up for many years of lost schooling. Many refugee children have been exposed to multiple incidents of post-traumatic stress involving family deaths, violence and dislocation. They have often had interruptions in their schooling for not just months but years. How Canadians integrate refugee children into schools and societies is being followed around the world.

Third, when we went into Ontario schools less than ten years ago and asked teachers about technology, apart from worries about misuse of smartphones, they would point to benefits such as increased and independent access to information, capacity to network with experts and other schools, and support for students with learning disabilities. Now, the first issues that educators and mental health specialists mention are the anxieties that occur among adolescents because of cyber-bullying, especially among girls. They worry about short attention spans, digital distraction, and lack of depth or focus resulting from excess screen time. Teachers are also increasingly concerned about the digital dis-inhibition that emerges in online interaction as insults exceed anything that might ever be said face-to-face.

Fourth, an accumulating body of research has documented harmful effects of large-scale standardized testing on learning, equity and well-being. In the face of challenges from parents’ and public advocacy organizations, policy-makers in national systems and global organizations have called for reviews of and revisions to the assessments and in some cases abolished such testing altogether. The US Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2015, for example, acknowledged that there had been excessive uses of standardized testing to the detriment of children’s learning. The OECD’s 2017 report on global metrics concerning child wellbeing and quality of life noted that many nations that had high achievement scores coupled with low scores of wellbeing or happiness were the same ones most often criticized for extensive uses of standardized testing. The 2017 Global Education Monitoring report on accountability, led by the United Nations, also concluded that “There is extensive evidence showing that high-stakes tests

based on narrow performance measures can encourage efforts to ‘game the system,’ negatively impacting on learning and disproportionately punishing the marginalized."

Last, who are the “we” who compose the population who make up the public that will send their children to public schools? All over the world, cities and nations are experiencing incidents of hatred, exclusion and violence. Brexit, walls, and fences define a world where people are clearer about what they want to get away from, rather than how we can and should learn to live together.

For years, a majority culture held uncontested sway over many societies, but now, many groups are seeking equality of recognition and inclusion. These include racial and ethnic minorities, immigrant newcomers, and other groups who are harassed and bullied because of



their actual or imputed sexual orientations and identities or other attributes that define them as somehow different. Indigenous peoples around the world are also asserting their aspirations to develop their own education systems. And in all this, white working-class identities are also easily overlooked or stigmatized in ways that incur feelings of resentment from being left out and left behind. In this new *Age of Learning, Well-being and Identity*, how, in education and elsewhere, do we recognize, engage with, include and bring together different identities in an uplifting, common quest and struggle for greater humanity and prosperity? This is the challenge and opportunity of the bold new age which we all are now entering.

Engagement and Disengagement

Think of a time in school when you were profoundly engaged or disengaged from your learning (as directed). One half of the room will take engaged examples; the other half disengaged ones.

Add a string of emotions you associate with this experience. What did you actually feel at the time? How would you describe it?

Who or what was it that made you feel this way?

Share your experience and perceptions with a partner. Listen carefully to their experiences, too - 4 minutes.

Break from your partner. Connect with 5 other people as directed. Without reviewing your examples, collate and synthesize what you are learning about what makes learning engaging and disengaging.

Whole group discussion follows as to what we have learned and how that makes us think about how to make learning more engaging for others.

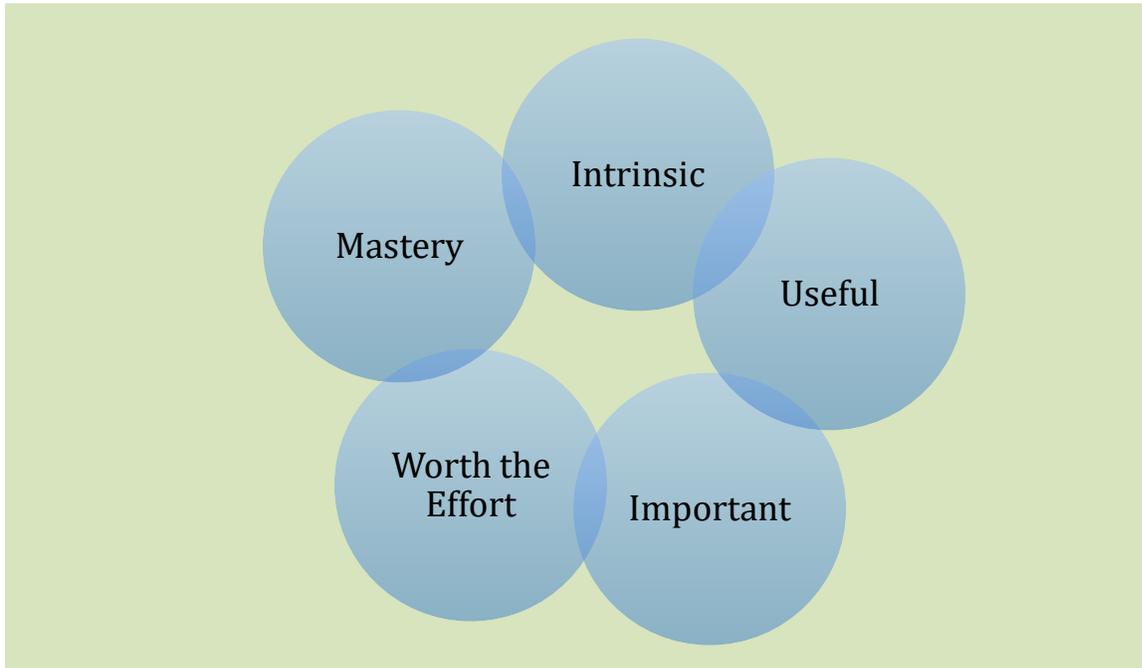
Engagement → Learning → Assessment

NOT

Testing → Achievement → Learning

Hargreaves & Fink, 2006

Five Forms of Engagement



You will be assigned to a corner or the center of the room corresponding with one of the five forms of engagement.

In that part of the room, in assigned smaller groups (same number in each corner/center), discuss your assigned form of engagement in relation to the following questions.

What resonates and is familiar and seems important about this form?

What is unfamiliar, new, and interesting?

What is difficult, challenging and seems wrong or unrealistic?

How well are we employing this form of our engagement in our school or system?

How can we improve how we address this?

Applying the Five Forms of Engagement

The workshop leader will now create mixed groups of people who represent the five forms and their experiences of them.

Now sketch out a lesson with reference to the different forms of engaging experiences in ways that will enhance learning, engagement and achievement, focusing on one of the following examples.

How to measure an isosceles triangle
Teaching the plot and character of Moby Dick to African-American students
The concept of hyperbole
Place value in mathematics
Perspective in drawing

Outline lessons should be presented back to the whole group

Debating Engagement

Pick a card from the pack assigned to you
Your group will be divided in two

One group will prepare an argument with examples and evidence supporting how this concept supports or even constitutes engagement and learning

The other group will prepare an argument to the contrary

Sample groups will be chosen to debate their positions in public according to debate rules that will be assigned.

Sample concepts include

Fun
Relevance
Technology
Choice
Depth
Purpose
Conflict
Collaboration

Emotions and Identity

Individually, spend a few minutes writing your responses to the following questions.

What is your identity?

How does it affect how you experience and express your emotions?

How does this affect your professional interactions with others?

Identity....

1. Is an integral part of adolescence and growing up.
2. Is part of human & educational development.
3. Is a quest and a struggle.
4. Is something to be acknowledged, represented, celebrated.
5. Must sometimes be critiqued and challenged.
6. Is multiple, complicated, and intersecting.
7. Is presented differently to different groups and audiences.
8. Is increasingly online, virtual, variable & vulnerable.
9. Is inseparable from who has the power to define it.
10. Can be ignored, attacked, stigmatized.
11. Can become hidden, disguised and divided
12. Can be inverted, made proud, protective and emboldened.
13. Can become angry, frustrated and vengeful.
14. Is something that should interact as well as intersect with other identities.
15. Should be a process of creating individual uniqueness & collective belonging.

Identity and Leadership

Directions:

Read the article on “Leadership Ethics, Inequality and Identity” that you can access on the front page of www.andyhargreaves.com. It’s very short. As directed, in small groups, discuss one of the following questions assigned to you.

- 1) What are your current leadership ethics, policies or practices related to student identity?

- 2) What questions does this article raise for you about leadership ethics in education in relation to identity and associated equity issues?

- 3) What can you learn from the article that is useful for your own practice?

After discussing these questions with your group, pair off with another colleague who read the other article and discuss. Make sure that you compare and contrast your experiences from your own work environment with one another in light of what you’ve read in your article.

Wellbeing Policies

Break into groups, as directed. All groups will look at examples of policies or frameworks for wellbeing or socio-emotional learning displayed below.

Examine the infographics carefully then discuss the question assigned to you with your colleagues from the three below and write your answers on flip chart paper.

- 1) *What commonalities are here across all these infographics?*
- 2) *What strikes you as being different, unusual or provocative about any one of them compared to the rest?*
- 3) *What is missing from all of them?*

After charting our results, the findings will be discussed in the whole group.



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Ontario Ministry of Education Graphic Depicting Well-being

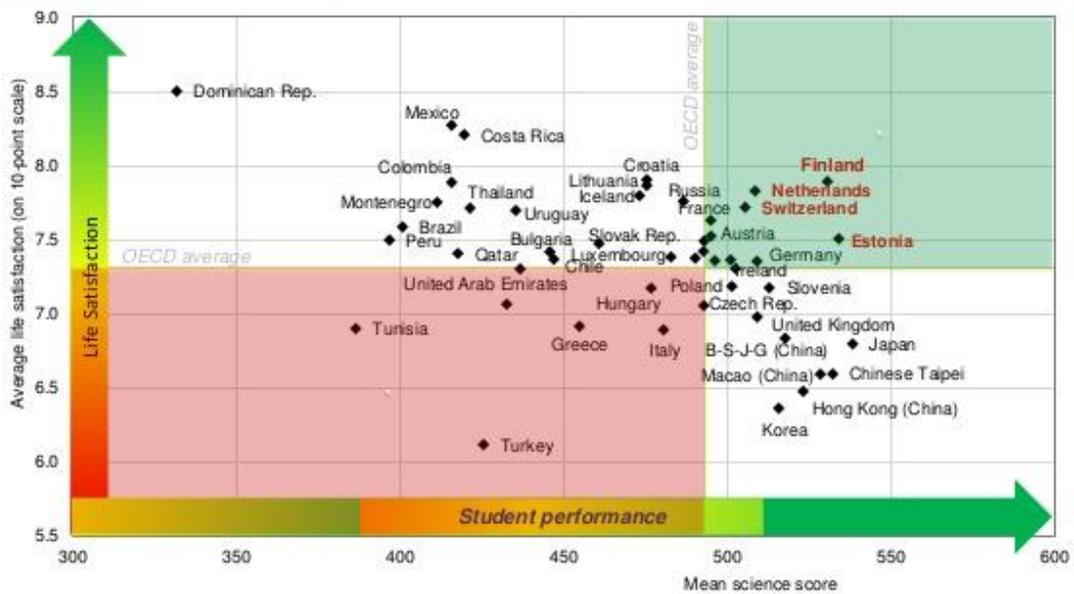
 <p>CONNECT</p>	 <p>SUCCEED</p>	 <p>THRIVE</p>
<p>Our students will be actively connected to their learning, have positive and respectful relationships and experience a sense of belonging to their school and community.</p>	<p>Our students will be respected, valued, encouraged, supported and empowered to succeed.</p>	<p>Our students will grow and flourish, do well and prosper.</p>

New South Wales, Australia



England

Life satisfaction and student performance can go together Figure III.3.3



Consulting Line

Consulting Line

The purpose of this activity is to condense and apply what you have learned about Learning to Be in one key idea or strategy of your own; to get feedback on this strategy from your peers; and to have access to ideas from other people that you can give feedback on, in turn. The activity should promote speedy yet specific interaction and learning, up close with your colleagues.

Identify one current or possible strategy in your own practice to promote Learning to Be. Try and choose something that may not be obvious to other people; something that is unusual, innovative, or often overlooked.

- Think about the ideas you have encountered that are linked to Learning to Be. Review notes from earlier sessions of this workshop to stimulate your thinking.
- Get ready to explain this strategy to colleagues in less than two minutes.
- With the help of the workshop leaders, arrange the chairs of the whole group so that they face each other in two lines – consultation lines.
- In each line, the chairs should be right next to each other, with no space in between.
- The two lines of chairs should be arranged so that people seated on them get very close to the person opposite to enhance listening and intensity of interaction. Do beware, though, of personal preferences or cultural issues about personal space, which will determine what “close” should actually mean. If in doubt, ask those around you. But if possible, the chairs should get people a bit closer than they might usually be in a professional setting.
- Everyone should take a seat. It doesn’t matter where – they will be moving soon anyway.
- If there are more than 40 chairs – 20 per line – then have multiple twin lines in the room.
- You will now need to practice the following steps with the group – it’s a bit like square dancing, or barn dancing, with chairs (but doesn’t actually involve any dancing!)
- Individuals in one line, line A, should lean across and explain their strategy to their opposite partner in line B in less than two minutes and try and leave time for feedback within that period from their partner.
- At the end of the 2 minutes, the presenter signals the moment for change.

- All the members of line A stand when the presenter says “Stand.” Following the presenter’s instruction, they then take one step to the right at the exact same moment. The person at the end of the line without a seat quickly goes to the other end of their line where there is now a vacant seat.
- Everyone sits down again. Everyone now has a new partner.
- Individuals in line B now take the lead. They should lean across and explain their strategy to their opposite partner in line A in less than two minutes and try and leave time for feedback within that period from their partner. It’s the same as in the previous two minutes but with the lines switched.
- The presenter then signals another change after 2 minutes. Now all the members of Line B stand and move to the right and then resume their seats. Everyone now has yet another partner.
- Repeat this several times for Line A, Line B, etc.

What to Stop, Continue, and Start

In your own practice, and based on the learning that has happened today...

1) What should you *stop* doing?

2) What should you *continue* doing?

3) What should you *start* doing?

Move around the room as directed by the workshop leaders and share what you have identified with colleagues.

Further Reading

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