

The making of young people who will change the world by tony wagner book review e...

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Book Review: Creating Innovators

Tony Wagner’s book, “ Creating Innovators” is a fascinating book that outlines how parents and schools can educate children to be “ innovators”.

An innovator is described by Wagner through interviews with several professionals in many fields of business, government and education. The common characteristics are: curious; collaborative; integrative thinker; action oriented (Wagner 16). How these qualities are nurtured in our children happens both in the home and at school. All of the young adults that Mr. Wagner interviewed for his book possessed that traits and skills.

The curiosity begins at home and needs to be encouraged at home. Children should be allowed to play, explore and ask questions. Wagner notes how children are curious, asking a million questions. As the mature they stop asking questions because it is frowned upon by adults. Children come to think that the right answer to a question posed to them in school is a better alternative to asking a question. In the classroom, this needs to be eliminated. As educators we need to foster a security in our classroom that

questions are positive, the search for answers is productive and positive to answer these questions. Time needs to be allotted for experimentation and question asking for students. Innovative thinkers like Kirk are not afraid to ask questions (42). He developing the iPhone, he and his team wanted specific glass for the face and steel for the frame. He was not afraid to ask suppliers to deliver these types of difficult materials.

Collaboration is an interpersonal skill that is in high demand these days. In order for a product to be delivered, or something to get done or a new plan developed, collaboration is essential. All of the young adults referenced in Wagner's book know how to work as part of a team. Collaboration encompasses many interpersonal skills: communication; empathy; patience

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fairness. Students must learn to work in groups and navigate interactions with others in order to achieve a goal. Students who are exposed to varying social situations and other cultures have a better chance for success. Being able to communicate with team members effectively is critical, not only in a technical sense but in a social/emotional sense. These skills are taught in the home and early in the school years. Montessori (27) programs encourage play and collaborative learning. In school, teacher's need to encourage long term projects where students work together as a teams. The element of investigation and experimentation coupled with working with others encourage collaboration. These strategies mature over the years to become truly innovative and interpersonal interaction that leads to the creation of new ideas and the implementation of them.

An integrative thinker is someone who takes in information, who discusses, who looks for solutions and is open to unorthodox solutions. An integrative thinker is optimistic and willing to try. Experimentation, trial and error, brainstorming ideas and looking for answers to them without fear of hesitation is characteristic of an innovative thinker. At home, parents who encourage reading, free play and creativity are fostering an atmosphere for these types of thinkers.

Lastly, a student must be action oriented. All the wonderful ideas in the world are meaningless if they are not acted upon. Innovators are intrinsically motivated, they want to solve problems, and they want to discover solutions through experimentation and trial and error. In the classroom this can be encouraged by classes where student are active. They are not sitting at a desk answering questions out of a book. They are given a problem to solve and the tools to do it.

Raising, developing and teaching tomorrow's innovators requires parent and teachers who are knowledgeable of the characteristics of innovators. In a joint effort to raise children who are insightful, creative and motivated, communication is essential between home and the teacher.

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Children need freedom to ask questions and explore, to work with others whether in class or on a softball team, have opportunities to learn empathy. These activities and experiences breed the innovator of the next generation.

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References

Wagner, Tony (2012). *Creating Innovators: the making of young people who will change the world*. New York: Scribner