Looking at Learning

I've been searching and gathering thoughts and examples that explore what learning could and should look like. In **Tapping Student Effort,** and in many of my presentations, I present William Glasser's model of motivation from survival, belonging, power, freedom and fun.

Connecting that with Daniel Pink's work in **Drive** (autonomy, mastery and purposefulness), I have the start of a picture of learning.

Brad Wilson's blog, **Can I Get a Do-Over**, illustrates examples of learning that he labeled as "authentically fun". Wilson visited the Heritage Elementary School in Stockbridge, Michigan where students are immersed in project based learning. See the school and hear Wilson's debrief.

Wilson's blog introduced me to Caine's Arcade, a video of a 9 year old boy who built an arcade, full of his ingenuity, from old cardboard boxes. Heritage school made a creative cardboard box project part of their program.

I found a great blog with video titled **Here's What Learning Looks Like** from Joe Bower. Here are the items in his picture of learning.

Safe

Constructed and Connected

Fun

Pleasantly Frustrating and Fearful

Thrill of Discovery

Encouragement and Guidance

Self-efficacy

Celebration and Reflection

Formative Feedback

Bower illustrates each item above in the following video of a youngster's first ski jump. (See his blog.)

Elizabeth English posted a blog titled, **"Why So Many Schools Remain Penitentiaries of Boredom?"** Note how her words align with the picture from above:

"Authentic learning at its core is about doing, creating, constructing. Ask yourself, "What do I remember as the most rewarding and inspiring experience in school?" and the answer invariably involves something you created – poetry you wrote, a computer program you designed, an art portfolio you assembled, biology research you conducted. We learn by doing. Unfortunately, it is a lot easier for a teacher to deliver information than it is to design a lesson that deeply engages the learner and asks the student to transfer and apply the skills and concepts of the course rather than simply memorizing them."

In **How Teachers Can Sell the Love of Learning**, Daniel Pink writes that relevance is important.

"There's something to be said for connecting particular lessons to something in the real world."

Dan Meyer's blog provides two secondary math examples designed to immerse learners in doing. In the first one, pre-algebra students work with linear regression conducting Barbie Bungee jumps. In a second one, high school students calculate the best detention buyout options being offered by administrators. See the video here and the students' assignment here.

I think that school leaders wanting to change the learning opportunities for students in their schools need to have teachers continuously examine their pictures of what learning can and should be. Then, have teachers examine what the current picture of learning is. A disequilibrium caused by the two pictures creates the stimulus for change. I find the items here helpful in starting the conversations. I'd love to hear what you use.