

I attended the Deeper Learning Conference at High Tech High in San Diego, California from March 28 to March 30, 2018.

Deeper Learning is a set of Six Skills that students need to succeed in and out of the classroom:

- Master Core Academic Content—Students develop and draw from a baseline understanding of knowledge in an academic discipline and are able to transfer knowledge to other situations.
- Think Critically and Solve Complex Problems—Students apply tools and techniques gleaned from core subjects to formulate and solve problems. These tools include data analysis, statistical reasoning, and scientific inquiry as well as creativity, non-linear thinking, and persistence.
- Work Collaboratively—Students cooperate to identify and create solutions to academic, social, vocational, and personal challenges.
- Communicate Effectively—Students clearly organize their data, findings, and thoughts.
- Learn how to Learn—Students monitor and direct their own learning.
- Develop Academic Mindsets—Students develop positive attitudes and beliefs about themselves as learners that increase their academic perseverance and prompt them to engage in productive academic behaviors. Students are committed to seeing work through to completion, meeting their goals, and doing quality work, and thus search for solutions to overcome obstacles.

While the fifth skill, Learn how to Learn, directly relates to EdElements Personalized Learning Core Four I was particularly struck by this conference's focus on Equity. This tone was set early by Carlos Moreno, Executive Director of Big Picture Learning. Highlights included, "Live Congruously. Knowing our students is the first step to Deeper Learning." The quote that I've adopted into my own lexicon, however, is "Demography does NOT equal DESTINY!"

This was reinforced by the Deeper Learning Equity Fellowship. "It is possible to have possible intent, but still have negative impact." We must, "create space to be able to speak truth to power...[and to] provide feedback without loving less." To do this, begin with the "Asset Approach. I'm not interested with what you can't do. I want to know what you're good at; what you're passionate about. Let's start with that."

This focus was most profoundly reinforced by Jeff Duncan-Andrade who pointed out that, "the children who are the hardest to reach are the ones who need to be found the most." He challenged us to, "find yourself in them!" He also reminded us to, "Change the data you're looking at...if you're not failing, then you're not learning!"

I had not considered Equity in this way. I was glad to recognize this theme throughout the entire conference as it helped me articulate an aspect of Seward High's program with which I'd struggled before. Specifically, I have often said to this staff, "The hardest to love are the ones who are most in need of it." I hadn't realized that I was struggling with equity. I've also adopted, "demography does not equal destiny." This drives my interactions with our most at-risk students.

I also had occasion to spend an hour with the High Tech High International School Principal and was struck by how down-to-earth the High Tech High program remains. Their project-based assessments and mentorship programs are enviable, but can also be replicated. They also still embrace many tenants of traditional high school programs. I'm excited to see how their program continues to grow and expand with additional advancements in technology integration,

