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The focus of EdFest 2019 (first time event) was project-based learning, student voice and choice, experiential education, and the value of social emotional learning in the education of our students. These ideas/philosophies tie in well with personalized education and our mission at Nikolaevsk and KPBSD. The following is a brief summary of topics/speakers/workshops that I attended.


Dr. Chad Miller discussed a number of issues facing education and how to incorporate philosophy into the classroom to help students begin to lead more examined lives. “There is a huge difference between education and school. We currently school kids.” “We need to move schools from being institutions that give students extrinsic meanings to environments that provide students with circumstances and tools that allow each individual to personally construct meaning in their own lives.” “We must assess/measure students in different ways than we currently do.” “We must make teachers and students accountable for the development, progression, and methods they use to assess student growth. By doing this, we are better able to assess a student’s thinking.” Dr. Miller introduced/demonstrated a powerful method for introducing and maintaining community circles within the classroom.

Sue Goldman, “dancing MS principal” shared with us how to build culture within a school to be a fun and safe place for kids.

Ian Masterson discussed methods for using the strength of culture and language to bring deep meaning of a variety of subjects. In many of his discussions, he focused on traditional Hawaiian culture using language development, knowledge of the sea and surf and how these things are intertwined. Many of his methods/philosophy is transferable to our local indigenous cultures in Alaska.

Andrew Wheelock is a percussionist professor at the University of WY. He put a on a writing workshop using music (played in the background) to effect the mood and tone of the class and guide the writers to a desired outcome. It was actually pretty dramatic how the writings changed as he changed the tone and cadence of the music.

Joe Mazzullo, teacher, writer, and inspirational speaker conducted a writing workshop to help students find and express their own voice. In his 40s Joe suffered a major stroke and needed to relearn everything over again; walking, surfing, writing, speaking and teaching. He has taught in low income neighborhoods in NJ and affluent neighborhood schools in Honolulu. The student writings he shared with us were amazing. One could not tell the “well to do” kids from the economically disadvantaged kids in terms of the issues they chose to write about and the fears they face growing up. It really brings home Maslow’s hierarchy of needs; We need to be careful about what we assume and our kids social emotional readiness for learning. Joe’s writing exercises address writing standards while also addressing the SEL needs of the young human being.

  
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