

# Deepening Our Understanding of Teaching and Learning in Public Education

Peter Dubinsky MSc  
Director of Instruction, Burnaby School District

[peter.dubinsky@sd41.bc.ca](mailto:peter.dubinsky@sd41.bc.ca)

@pdubinsky

## ***Tough Questions.....***

- What is the ***commitment*** that you hold that brought you into this room?
- What are the ***crossroads*** you are at in regards to your teaching and learning?
- What are the ***gifts*** that you possess that you are willing to state and share?
- What is your ***“Story”***?.....

# My Story

- Roots in Education
- U.S.A. education experience
- Burnaby-based for 20 years
- Teacher, Instructional Leader, School-based and District Leader, Life-Long Learner
- Passions: Community Building, SEL, Leadership Development

# Portfolio

- Social-Emotional Learning/Social Responsibility
- 8 Community Schools/Community Education
- Vulnerable Students – Data Tracking/MDI Implementation
- English Language Learners
- Social Studies K-12
- Visual and Performing Arts K - 12
- Elem. Head Teachers – Leadership Development
- Teacher Leadership Program
- District Professional Development
- Elementary PE
- 10 Elementary 2 Secondary Schools

# Where I started vs Where I Am

- Beliefs, Values and Goals have not changed
- But my Approach, Mindset, Practice.....  
    Oh Ya Baby!!
- Wonderful mentors and colleagues over time
- Became open to the possibility of a different reality in my classroom
- Genuine Pro D became a passion
- NEVER treated my job like it was a job.....

# How Learning Has Changed..... and Hasn't

- I was an average student for most of my schooling
- Loved learning..... depending on the topic and who was teaching it
- It was teachers / coaches that got me to and through school
- Fast forward (a few years) .....



# Where You Are and Where Are You Going???

- State of Public Education
- Fixed vs Growth Mindset
- Safety vs Freedom
- Employment vs Opportunity
- Alignment, Alignment, Alignment.....
  
- Where do you start??????
  - Need Goals, Foundations, Principles



# Lofty or Hard Goals

- Students leave school with more ***curiosity*** than when they began school
- Every student graduates with ***dignity***, ***purpose*** and ***options*** for the future
- Every student graduates with an ***understanding*** of and ***respect*** for Aboriginal perspectives
  - Halbert and Kaser

# Approach Goals with Solid Foundations

- Foundations
  - *Social and Emotional Learning*
  - *Inquiry Mindset*
  - *Community at the Heart*



# Benefits of an SEL Foundation

## SEL Approaches

- Explicit SEL Skills Instruction
- Integration with Academic Curriculum Areas
- Teacher Instructional Practices



SEL Skill Acquisition:  
Five Competence Areas

Improved Attitudes  
about Self, Others, and  
Schools



Positive Social Behavior

Fewer Conduct Problems

Less Emotional Distress

Academic Success



# Spiral of Inquiry

What's going on for our learners/school/community?

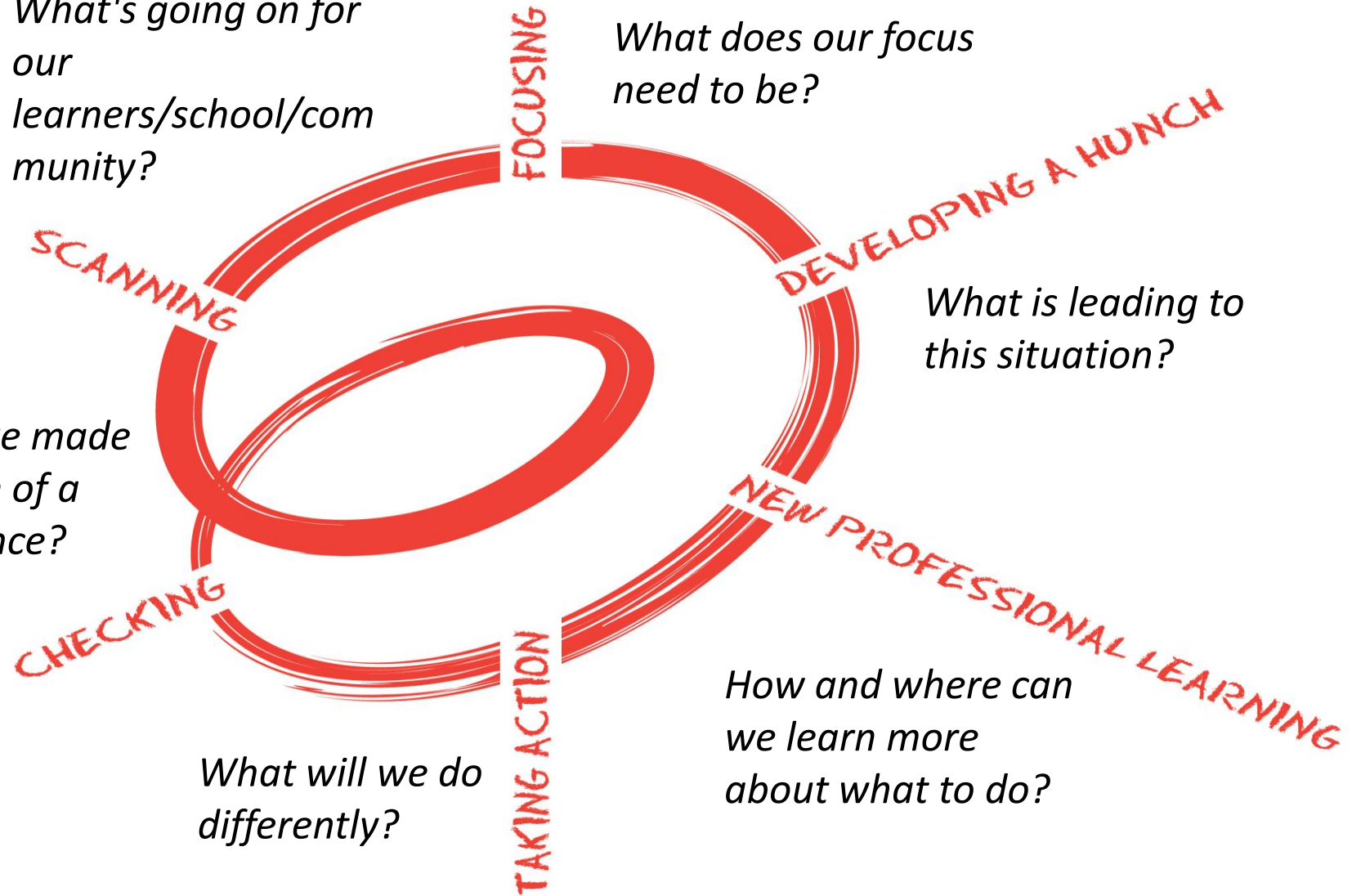
What does our focus need to be?

What is leading to this situation?

Have we made enough of a difference?

What will we do differently?

How and where can we learn more about what to do?



(Halbert & Kaser, 2013)

# Dignity and Purpose = Building Community

- Work of Peter Block
  - Invitation
  - Gifts
  - Commitment
  - Dissent
  - Ownership
  - Celebration

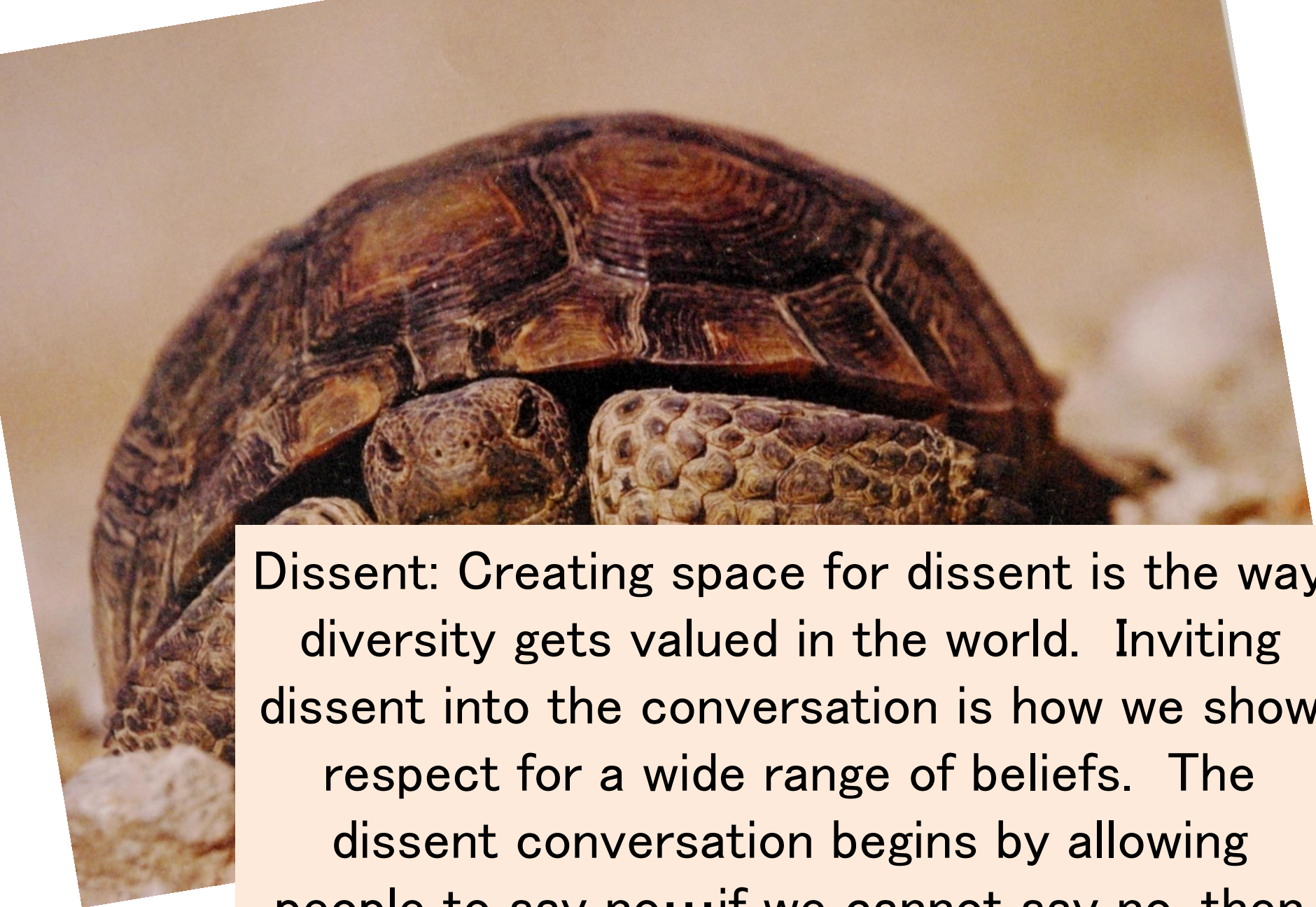


Community is about the experience of belonging...to belong to a community is to act as a creator and co-owner of that community. The work then is to see in our communities a wider and deeper sense of emotional ownership. —Block





- Gifts: In community building, the focus on gifts confronts people with their essential core. Instead of problematizing people and work, the conversations that search for the mystery of our gifts brings the greatest change and results.



Dissent: Creating space for dissent is the way diversity gets valued in the world. Inviting dissent into the conversation is how we show respect for a wide range of beliefs. The dissent conversation begins by allowing people to say no...if we cannot say no, then our yes has no meaning.

# Principles Build On Foundation

## Pedagogical Principles:

- Student Engagement
- Sustained Inquiry
- Self-Regulated Learning/SEL
- Digitally Enhanced Learning
- Meaningful Assessment

-Creating Thinking Classrooms, Roland Case 2015


# Where Do You Begin????

- It all starts with your mindset
  - Growth or Fixed?
  - Teach the way you were taught?
  - Teach the way you learn best?
  - Facilitator of Learning or reporter of grades?
- Importance of your FA and SA
- Your ***Community of Practice*** at UBC
- Your first job interview starts now!!!!


# Dubinsky's Top 10: Stolen Words of Wisdom....

- Pay attention. Become an observer of children. Notice what teachers do to invite learning. Ask great questions. Listen carefully to what is said and what is unsaid. Find ways to connect with each child. Let them connect with you. **KNOW THEM!!!!**

-Kathryn Yamamoto, Principal Maywood Community School

- 
- "You don't teach music, science, or grade 6 .... you teach kids."

Reg LePlante, VPA Consultant

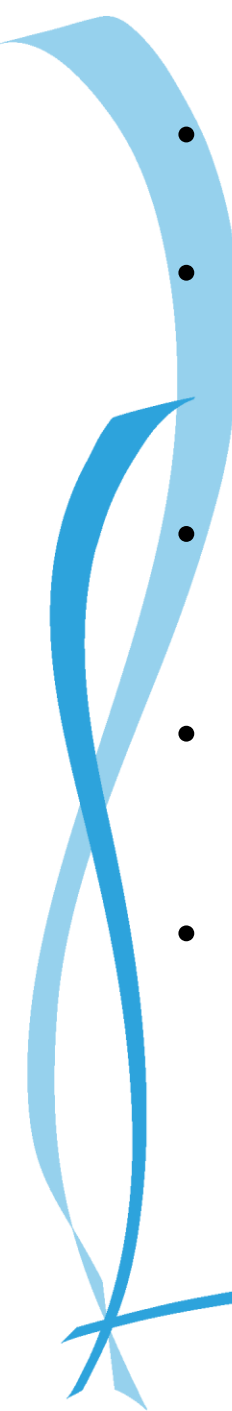
- 
- Find another teacher to work with/partner with... find a mentor, a buddy, a friend. The job of a teacher can be isolating if you don't actively work to connect with others. Please don't think you have to do it all on your own! The power of collaboration!!! ...for powerful teaching, personal growth and peace of mind.

- Elizabeth Gardner, District VP LSS

- We need to move from our overreliance on technique toward a learning environment that both honours and truly develops the deepest human capacities in children and teachers. It's about time we remember that it's the person within the teacher that matters most in education

- Ellen Leroux, Advanced Learning Consultant




- 
- Create a genuine culture of care in your classroom – Know their “story”
  - Student voice and engagement – Find their ‘spark’! Think about what excites you as a learner. Be prepared to answer the question “Why do we need to learn this?” in an honest and genuine way.
  - Collaboration – The best ideas have come from a team-based approach. Open your door to others and create a classroom with “thin walls” that connects to the world
  - Flexibility – be willing to change what isn’t working and re-think. Adapt to who our kids are, not who we think they should be
  - Assessment – The way you assess and evaluate says more about what you value than anything else. Are you going to create a culture of learning or a culture of grading in your classroom?


-David Rawnsley, Principal Burnaby North

- “Maria is a student who **wants to be successful** and please the adults around her but often lacks the confidence, skills and self-regulation. If she feels she has let you down or upset you she will avoid and disengage. It is important to **approach her with warmth, encouragement and foster a positive connection** ... By the end of the semester, Maria was “[**asking**] **intelligent and thoughtful** questions while reading” and she had an “**improved attitude towards reading and writing.**”

– Teacher, Burnaby Central

- 
- Take risks. If it makes educational sense and supports students, it's worth taking a leap. You will make mistakes but that's okay...kids are forgiving.
  - Build time into your schedule to exercise. Treat it like an important meeting. Living a balanced life is challenging in this profession but nothing matters more than your health and your family.


– Lori Driussi, Principal University Highlands Elementary

- 
- You'll be inundated with tons of blingy options in units, ideas, techy toys and programs. While these can give some sense of knowledge, nothing matters more than your presence in the child's life in front of you. Listen to understand, not to answer a question. You'll find the relationships nurtured will put you in a good place to create a culture of belonging. A belonging environment where everyone who walks in feels they matter, including you.

Janet Chow, Technology Helping Teacher

## THE HR PERSPECTIVE.....

- Someone who is passionate about the profession
- Has had a successful practicum
- Networking skills
- Involvement outside of the classroom
- When you are close to completing your practicum or have completed, start preparing your application on Make a Future – that is our first go to when looking for applicants:
- Strong cover letter – sell yourself. Have a personal philosophy!
- Be prepared – have a successful lesson plan you can speak to
- Be engaged in the conversation – be prepared to share your successes or some experiences that were not so successful – and how you dealt with those.
- Are you passionate about teaching? How will you demonstrate that to the interviewers in a conversation

- 
- What first comes to mind is seeing each child in their context and getting to know their context. Each child as part of a family and each family as part of the community. I used to do a 25 questions for new teachers about the community and they had to go out and ask parents and people on the street for the answers. With beginning teachers I used to divide the community into quadrants and ask them to walk a quadrant a day during their first week in the job, often doing the first walk with them....
  - Curiosity rather than certainty!!!
    - Janey Talbot, Retired Coordinator of Community Services

# Where Are You Going Next??

- What commitment do you take with you from this room?
- How will you address the crossroads you are at?
- Will you share your gifts and look for and accept the gifts of others?