Chapter 3
Expanding the Curriculum With Creativity

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ABSTRACT

Standardized education and narrow curriculum testing reduces students’ abilities to critically think and creatively solve real-world problems. Although public policy emphasizes these important and practical skills, they have not adequately manifested in United States classrooms. They are instead filled with shallow prescribed curriculum that fails to inspire and guide students to think creatively. Science education provides a unique opportunity to engage students by solving real problems through flexible co-constructed supportive environment.
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INTRODUCTION

Despite public policy and campaigns that have established creativity and the skills associated with creative thinking as main priorities (NACCCE, 1999; & P21, 2015), the continued use of standardized testing in the United States has diminished students’ capabilities for critical and creative problem solving (Dixon, 2018; Frawley, 2014; Ketsman, 2013; Kim, 2011; Kim, 2016; Martz, Hughes & Braun, 2017; Morgan, 2016; Olivant, 2015; Weinstein et al., 2014). It is fair to say that these policies and priorities have not found their way into our children’s classrooms (Ashadi & Rice, 2017; Erskine, 2014; Frawley, 2014; Martin, 2016; Polesel et al., 2014). Classrooms are filled with standardized test practices and prescribed curriculum that limits students’ ability to generate new and unique ideas (Dixon, 2018; Frawley, 2014; Kim, 2011; Kim, 2016; Ketsman, 2013; Martz et al., 2017; Morgan, 2016; Olivant, 2015; Weinstein et al., 2014) that have the capacity to solve twenty-first century problems, including creating that flying car that we dreamed about when we were children. Curriculum narrowing is a dangerous threat to the ideals of American educational and its historical achievements. Pressures placed on classroom teachers to teach solely to standardized content reduces a student’s ability to explore and take risks, which are keys to critical and creative problem solving (Frawley, 2014; Martin, 2016). Students’ education suffers in these classrooms, as they acquire a diminished core of knowledge and skills which have little real-world application (Martin, 2016; Olivant, 2015;). Content standards and narrow curriculum result in standardized teaching practices and simultaneously remove new teachers’ ability to teach creatively and teach for creativity (Erskine, 2014).

CONTENT STANDARDS AND TESTING

Noddings (2013) argued for systemic changes in standardized education. She suggested that educational policymakers must embrace and inspire creativity in curriculum design and diverge from a standardized system (Noddings, 2013). Despite the educational equity goals of content standards, one of the consequences of standardized education is to regiment the process, to siphon all students through college for economic prosperity purposes (Noddings, 2013). She argues that politicians involved in developing curriculum often ignores diversity, including students’ interests and their personal goals; forcing students into college preparation courses reduces their opportunities to follow their heart and allows educational institutions to easily
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