

From the Superintendent's Desk
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During the recent Winter Recess, I read three books for my own personal enjoyment. I started reading a fourth book- The Formative Five: Fostering Grit, Empathy, and Other Success Skills Every Student Needs by Thomas R. Hoerr. I'm reading this book for my own professional development and the basis of some articles I wish to share with you.

What has intrigued me thus far about this book is the message the author shares about what's needed to achieve success in the world—not just in school. He quoted a couple of people whom he researched. P. Tough stated, "People who have the knowledge and skills to negotiate constant changes and re-invent themselves for new situations will succeed." K. Jensen put it this way, "Eighty-five percent of your financial success is due to skills in 'human-engineering'—your personality, ability to communicate, negotiate, and lead." Hoerr's philosophy of success is this—"who you are is more important than what you know." He goes on to say that "students who will be kind and caring people, become responsible and productive workers/citizens, and make a positive difference in the world" will be the successful ones.

The five formative (success) skills Hoerr elaborates on in his book are: **empathy, self-control, integrity, embracing diversity, and grit**. **Empathy** and **embracing diversity** are relationship-oriented. They define how individuals orient themselves and behave toward others. **Self-control, integrity, and grit** focus on how one frames and controls his/her thoughts and actions. These three skills are more self-oriented skills.

Before he began talking specifically about these five formative (success) skills, he comments what educators must be mindful of if they hope to help ready students for successful futures. He says we must anticipate what the future will hold in order to prepare students for tomorrow. Hoerr sees six trends that will inform how we prepare students to achieve success in tomorrow's world. Three are contextual. They are world-wide threats that will have a strong effect on education. The other three are education specific. They will reflect ways in which schools will change. Each of these trends will result in the formative five success skills playing a major role in future school curriculums.

The first trend he mentioned is: the earth will become more fragile. Hoerr says climate change will have a dramatic effect on how we will live and work. Conserving energy and protecting the environment will become immediate priorities. **Empathy** and **embracing diversity** will be very important because many of the steps necessary to protect the environment will require people to make personal sacrifices in order to help others. **Self-control** will be needed to stave off immediate gratification in exchange for a better future for all. **Grit** will be needed to demonstrate progress.

The second trend is that: technology will touch everything. If you can believe it, technology will become even more pervasive in people's lives than it already is. **Self-control** will be needed to make wise choices. **Integrity** and **embracing diversity** will be needed because there will be more opportunities to interact with others we do not know.

The third trend is: diversity will be in our faces. International migration will surpass natural increases (i.e., births minus deaths) as the principal driver of America's growth. **Empathy** and **embracing diversity** will be needed because interacting with others who are different from us will become more commonplace. Interacting with others will require us to act with integrity and foster trust with others.

As it relates to the future of education, these three trends are predicted. The first has to do with: educators broadening their understanding of student growth which will expand their responsibilities. Appreciating the "whole" child will become the norm. In addition to helping children have their basic needs of safety, love, belonging, and esteem met, educators will have to teach students how to solve complex challenges by better managing themselves through integrity, **self-control**, and **grit** and in their relationships through employing **empathy** and **embracing diversity**.

A second trend has to do with: school choice in various forms will become standard and have major implication on how schools are organized. What this trend indicates is that a marketplace will arise that will enable families to select where and how their children will be educated. Schools will be customized. Different schools will have different focuses. Public education will be drastically altered.

The third trend is: technology will change how and what is taught and will make diversity increasingly more valuable. There will be an increased reliance on screens in classrooms and human interactions will be more important tomorrow than they are today.

Empathy, self-control, and embracing diversity will be key success skills for students and adults as we learn and work with others. And, to solve the problems we will be confronted with, we'll need lots of **grit**.

Next time, I will talk specifically about the first of the five formative (success) skills- "empathy."