

We Choose Hope

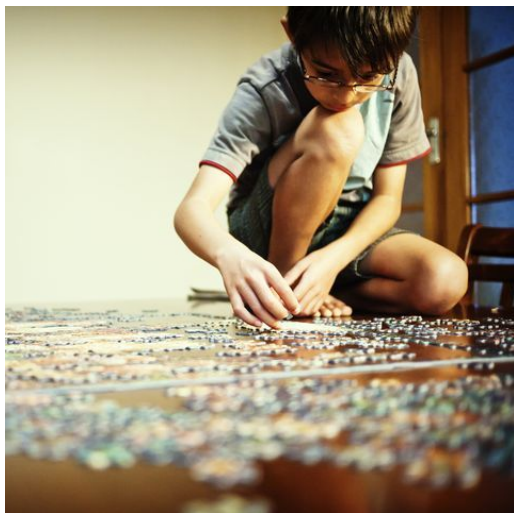
By Jennifer McCoy

IB Coordinator Riffenburgh Elementary

October 9, 2020

As a kid I loved puzzles. I loved the idea of piecing something together from what seemed a mess of parts. I would spend hours organizing, looking at pieces from different angles and eventually making connections. After the puzzle was complete, I would celebrate for a short time feeling like I had tangible measured success.

That was of course when my brother, 5 years my junior, would come to “help” and mess-up my perfect systems and strategies. More often than not, he would wreck my progress completely with one tantrum fueled foot movement. I would throw up my hands and yell, “ANDY!” at the top of my lungs.



When thinking of this time in our school year, I flashback to this experience in my personal history. As educators we have spent years piecing pedagogy together, learning and looking from different angles, making connections to hone our professional practices to create something beautiful for our students. And then comes a pandemic, “ANDY!” wildfires, “ANDY!”, political division, “ANDY!”. *(Sorry to my brother, he is a great human being).*

In unprecedented dynamic environments, what can we use to focus our purpose or intention?

Charles Darwin said, “In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learn to collaborate and improvise prevail.”

In the past several months improvisation, creativity, flexibility, and agency have dominated our actions both professionally and personally. Amidst a jumble of puzzle pieces; personal relationships, remote learning, hybrid learning, technology platforms, technology connectivity, teaching best practices, just to name a few, we have focused on these truths.

- Our actions are motivated by our love for kids
- We see learners and learning as hope
- We persevere
- We improvise



Alma Deutscher, is a composer, violinist and pianist. She was featured on 60 minutes creating an improvised musical piece from 4 random notes pulled from a hat. She used the limitations of five notes to channel her improvisational skills and create something magnificent. Did I mention she was 11 years old?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvECZ_ZXGqs

That's what our students, educators, and families are doing, creating something magnificent. Around our school, I hear teachers and students connecting. At the forefront of our practice is our shared humanity. "How are you feeling?" "What can I do for you?" "So glad to see you." These inquiries and statements are heard at every interaction, in person or on-line.

I see learning engagements designed to ask, "what if?" Around our school and on-line students verbalize and demonstrate that learning from trying, not succeeding and trying again, is normal. Teachers and students are applying knowledge through play. First graders are playing card games that require students to use number value concepts, strategies of counting on, and estimation, engaging and connecting these learners both at school and at home.



We have created and continue to create beauty from restriction. We continue to focus on what we have to work with, our love for learners and learning. We choose to hold on to hope and create something magnificent, together.

