



### *The Hero's Journey: Empowered Education*

By Brianna Wright, Lambrick Park Secondary, SD 61 Greater Victoria

Joseph Campbell, in his book "The Hero's Journey" once said, "If you follow someone else's way, you are not going to realize your own potential." The current school system, based on a seventeenth-century model, recognizes students by nine-digit PEN numbers, and not as individuals with bright ideas, and unfulfilled potential. Instead of preparing students to forge their own trails into a world of innovation, British Columbian students are left conformed and unrecognized in overcrowded classrooms. In the "real" world, graduates are left haunted with the question "Who am I?" and lack the practical experience to put any lingering dreams into action. However, with the educational tools, modern understandings, and education research available in the twenty-first century, a new school system could place British Columbian students at the front of revolutionary change. Learning for themselves with the aid of personalized course curriculum, students could take the path less taken, and maximize potential. The school system could facilitate this self-directed and personalized learning with different class divisions, revolutionary evaluation processes, and creative exploration time.

Classes could be formed from different divisions of students. Why should individuals of exceptional abilities be withheld, and unprepared students advanced or left to confront the stigma of retaking a course? What if classrooms transcended age, and instead focused on ability? Class divisions could also take into account learning styles as well as interest levels. Groups of kinesthetic learners could be engaged with interactive models of learning, while auditory learners might benefit from Audio-books, movies, presentations, and recordings of assignments posted on a school database. The potential of visual learners could be harnessed with a range of movies, organizational charts, as well as course content arranged in the Cornell Notes Format. As for interest levels, teachers could steer course content to match them. Imagine the power of a bright class of English students being able to publish their compositions. Imagine how passionate biology students might tour a local lab, and interview scientists face-to-face. With a room of true peers, teachers could easily help students to fulfill their potential, and know how to make subsequent evaluations.

Since each student has a different learning style and subjective capabilities, evaluation processes should be revolutionized to emphasize personalization over standardization. A course mark could be divided into three sections with equal weight: participation, comprehension, and application. Participation might include presenting opinions, asking questions, contributing to class discussions, and reading actively. Comprehension could include reflecting critically, and teaching course content to peers, with an emphasis for students to meet personal academic goals. Some standardized tests could be included in this section; however, these could be presented in oral, written, and even physical methods. Personalized academic goals would ensure that students would keep focused with content. The third section of the mark would be application. With the help of teachers, acting like enlightenment guides, individuals could work above and beyond the curriculum, creating projects that target personal interests; in the community and with a network of peers, students could learn about the world by directly experiencing it, building the stepping stones towards realizing dreams. What better way is there to learn about the real world than to be constantly engaged in it? With a new way

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of evaluating progress, imagine how all students could excel and creatively immerse themselves in course content.

With time for creative development, students could explore passions and develop applicable skills and experiences. The current school system still operates on a model which “kills” creativity; this is severely hampering the potential of students. Therefore, elementary and middle schools could allow ample time for self-expression and innovation, by extending recess and lunch, and setting aside blocks for supervised creative activities. Classrooms themselves could become playgrounds for inventive young minds, opening up new possibilities and nurturing individuality. The Finnish school system has created a model for learning that exceeds all other education systems – why could British Columbia not do the same? In secondary schools, the morning could host academic classes. Like in Finland, in the afternoon the school doors could open on a world of infinite opportunities. During this time, a variety of clubs (such as sports teams, math clubs, literary circles, environmental groups, student councils, etc.) would offer membership. As well, field trips, school events, community volunteering and other opportunities for engagement and enlightenment could be made accessible to students. In order to make this time count, hours spent learning directly in the community could be included in the application section of a course mark. Of course, this time would count in other, more meaningful ways, as it would inspire life-long learning. After gaining knowledge first-hand, students would be able to tune in to the pulse of community, world, and self.

Different class divisions, revolutionary evaluation processes, and creative exploration time would transform the system of education in British Columbia. Different divisions for classrooms would ensure that students fulfill potential. Individuals would work alongside peers in a style that fully supported personal learning needs and independent education goals. Furthermore, new evaluation methods would ensure that applicable skills and direct experience were assessed fairly and diversely to support each student’s learning. Most importantly, this system would empower individuals. Time for creative self-expression would allow students to be rewarded for forging their own paths. Although no teacher, no matter the skill, can *teach* a student his or her philosophy, the ability to *think* philosophically can be taught; similarly, no teacher or school system can teach a student to answer “Who am I” although a twenty-first century school system could aid individuals in heroic quests to find this Holy Grail of knowledge. Given the innumerable problems facing today’s generation, empowered and innovative individuals who are able to declare “I am” are exactly what the world needs for leaders.

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