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Philosophy, Vision and Strategic Plan

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### Philosophical Position on Creativity

I thought I knew what creativity was until I started studying it at The International Center for Studies in Creativity. I quickly realized it is an expansive topic whose study is still in its infancy, just beginning to come of age. Stan Grysiewicz articulated the first definition I learned which was “Creativity = Novelty that’s useful” (as cited in Miller, Vehar, Firestien, Thurber, & Nielson, 2011, p.14). Simple and elegant - as a brand new scholar, who could argue with that? A year later, when I was asked to create my own definition of creativity I was initially taken off guard. In all my 17 years of formal schooling, I believed this was the first time I was ever asked to confront what I’ve learned and to create new knowledge in the form of something typically taken as given - a definition. I now know there are so many ways to be creative and how one defines creativity can evolve as they evolve. My current personal definition “*Creativity is the courage to color outside the lines, risk failure and ridicule to bring something you believe has value to the world*” fuels not only my philosophy but also my vision and gives structure to my strategic plan. Buckle up and enjoy the ride!

I believe every human is born creative; it is the natural state of existence. If you watch young children you see observant, curious, imaginative, risk-taking individuals with a high tolerance for ambiguity who see possibilities others usually don’t. These are all characteristics of creative people according to Robert Allen Black (as cited in Miller, Vehar, Firestien, Thurber, & Nielson, 2011, p.24). Children not only color outside the lines, they make the sky green and the grass blue and don’t yet comprehend failure; they only know you try until you succeed. These characteristics enable them to rapidly learn naturally from their surroundings. While it may take years of accumulated experience to reach great creative achievement as indicated in Ruth Noller’s creativity formula:  $C=fa(K,I,E)$  which reads as *Creativity (C)* is a function of *Attitude (a)* applied to

*Knowledge (K), Imagination (I) and Evaluation (E)* - the unfortunate reality is that most of these creative characteristics will not survive childhood (as cited in Puccio, Mance, Barbero-Switalski, & Reali, 2012, p. 28).

In a society that consumes resources at an outstanding pace, it is not surprising that the United States shows little respect for the innate creativity of young children. We systematically squander this remarkable natural resource. In the most viewed TED talk of all time, Sir Ken Robinson explains the history of our modern education system and how the hierarchy of academic subjects, which has devalued creativity, came to be. According to him we educate our students out of their creativity (TED, 2007).

E. Paul Torrance (1977) describes this diminishing creativity trend by explaining the pattern of development of creative abilities throughout childhood. In a National Education Association report to teachers, Torrance articulates how children between four and four and a half years old are at the peak of creative imagination. This creative imagination drops for the first time when children enter school (known as the Kindergarten Slump). Creative thinking increases between first and third grades but drops sharply in fourth (known as the Fourth-Grade Slump), rises again in fifth and sixth grade and then begins another decline in seventh (known as the Seventh-Grade Slump). His studies show an increase until the end of high school and then there is a leveling or slight decline. He concludes that this is not biologically inevitable but rather a societal or cultural phenomenon (p. 22).

George Land explains research with NASA that produced similar results. NASA wanted a way to select the people who are most creative for positions that required the most problem-solving. Researchers developed a simple test of the ability to look at problems and “come up with new, different and innovative ideas.” It was used by NASA but also administered to 1,600 children

starting around age 5. What they found was that the percentage of 4 to 5 year olds that fell into the genius category was 98%! They turned it into a longitudinal study and tested the group 5 years later and only 30% scored genius at 10 years old; and a dismal 12% at 15 years old. The study was discontinued at that time but other research shows that only 2% of adults score genius (TEDx Talks, 2011). What a tragic waste of creative abilities!

Schools unintentionally contribute to this decline in creativity throughout childhood. These drops in creativity are not written into the curriculum but are a clear byproduct of the environment. Davis (2004) attributes the loss of individuality and creativity to fear of being different and conformity to the expectations of others. (p.23) Children learn that coloring outside the lines is not the “right” way to do things. Their friends laugh at their drawing of blue trees and green skies. Group dynamics can increase conformity especially in decision making where the members of the group are prone to follow majority judgment (Puccio, Mance, Barbero-Switalski, & Reali, 2012, p. 60). It is not hard to see how this can influence the decisions children start to make, limiting their range of choices to those deemed acceptable to their peers.

You might think “can schools really be held accountable for this conformity; isn’t this just peer pressure?” That is an excellent question! Salman Khan (2012) has a lot to say about the problems created by age batching students in grades, and setting expectations for what is acceptable within each grade (otherwise known as standards). His focus was mostly on explaining how these can slow down the fast students and lose the slow students and why self-paced, self-directed learning is a solution to these problems, which I agree with as you shall see later. I also believe that age-batching and rigid standards create a breeding ground for this culture of conformity to begin to grow in the hearts and minds of children at a very young age and that peer-pressure may simply be a learned by-product of this culture.

If conformity was the only contributing factor schools have on diminishing creativity, I'm sure there would be a parade of programs ready to help schools remediate this problem. The slew of "effective" anti-bullying programs is proof that it only takes the latest Band-Aid to fix a wicked problem. As you've probably already surmised, conformity is not the only contributing factor. The structure and culture of schools is not conducive to creativity either. One such element is the lack of freedom that is at the heart of compulsory schooling and woven throughout the climate.

I believe creativity and freedom are inextricably linked. Goran Ekvall studied the dimensions of a highly creative work environment and found 10 essential climate ingredients, freedom is one of them. Isaksen & Ekvall (2010) define freedom as "The degree of independence shown by the people in the organization. High levels of Freedom imply more perceived autonomy and ability for individual discretion" (p. 76). When I think about the climate within school environments, I realize that students not only lack freedom in the way in which Isaksen & Ekvall define it. The controlled and regimented environment determines how and when children can be playful, be lively, take risks, debate, share and support ideas – six more of the dimensions of a creative work environment. This overly structured environment significantly limits the freedom students have in these other dimensions which further stifles their creativity.

Does this suppressive school environment allow children the space to grow and learn who they really are and to pursue that? Abraham Maslow (1943) articulated a theory of motivation called the hierarchy of needs which distinguishes five human needs that manifest themselves in a predictable order because "the appearance of one need usually rests on the prior satisfaction of another" (p. 370). Ideally students have their basic physiological, safety, love and belonging needs met by their family, and when that is lacking, as is all too often the case, a combination of extended family, community, foster parenting and/or caring adult educators can help those students meet

these needs. Next is the esteem needs which is “a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others (Maslow, 1943, p. 381).” One way a child can achieve this desired self-esteem and esteem of others is good grades and doing everything their parents and teachers ask of them with excellence. This narrow band of success can make the most compliant kids beam with pride! (I personally find this a sad state of affairs; I’m simply reporting my observations.)

I believe the struggle that our children are having, and that our outdated industrial age school system cannot sustain, is that some children, I suspect the most creative of the lot, really need something more than these external motivators to feel self-esteemed. In their quest to esteem themselves they may choose to not develop, even ignore, the things that are valued by their parents and/or teachers and instead choose to do what *they want*. A great example of this choice to feed an esteem need is my son, who frequently decided to seize a moment of inspiration in the middle of a boring lesson to drop a one-liner that the teacher annoyingly exclaimed “distracted the whole class.” As a parent who struggled to balance the demands from school against my vision for my son, I chose to inform that 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher that “I will have a conversation with my son about the right time and place for his humor, but I will not try to “beat” it out of him; it is a valuable skillset that while inconvenient in your class, will serve him well for the rest of his life.” Needless to say the remaining years in school didn’t get much easier as classes got even more boring and he, emboldened by his parents, continued to develop his comedic abilities while never quite mastering, or choosing to sometimes ignore, when and where it was appropriate to use those abilities. Unfortunately, I don’t think many creative children get the freedom and support to develop their strengths when those assets are not valued by, and so clearly upset, the establishment.

Maslow's (1943) deeper description of esteem needs goes on to say "first, the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom (p. 381)." There is that freedom thing again! The pinnacle of the hierarchy of needs is self-actualization, which is described by Davis (2004) as a synthesis of Maslow and Roger's thinking in this way "using all of one's talents to become what one is capable of becoming – actualizing one's potential. (p. 2)." Without the freedom to truly esteem themselves, independently and confidently "based upon real capacity (Maslow, 1943, p.381)" students flounder, thrashing in ways that only secure more negative attention from parents and teachers, rarely discovering who they are because they are unable to freely pursue their own interests. When they reach adulthood, spirit broken from 12+ years of confinement or aimless after prematurely attaining the needed freedom at the high cost of dropping out, these children enter the world "free at last" but completely untrained in how to handle true freedom.

Viktor Frankl (1959/2006), a psychiatrist who survived a Nazi concentration camp explained that liberated prisoners did not know how to respond to their emancipation. He wrote:

"Freedom"- we repeated to ourselves, and yet we could not grasp it. We had said this word so often during all the years we dreamed about it, that it had lost its meaning. Its reality did not penetrate into our consciousness; we could not grasp the fact that freedom was ours (p. 87).

When I think about the minimal amount of freedom that children get before they graduate high school, I believe they cannot grasp it; its meaning diminished and equated with simply being beyond the control of parents and teachers. It is unlikely that the true meaning of freedom, penetrated the boredom of history and civics lessons to reach their consciousness. Is that really how we want to launch our youth into adulthood?

When will they get to figure out who they are, their strengths and passions? There is a lot of overlap between the characteristics of creative people and those of self-actualized people (Davis, 2004, p. 2). Few people achieve this pinnacle of the hierarchy pyramid. As I've already pointed out children naturally possess many creative characteristics. It makes me question whether self-actualization would be so rare if our society and schools protected and nurtured the creativity of children. What if we simply encouraged children to dream? Not to just set goals to achieve what we've unintentionally brainwashed them to believe...but to truly dream.

I believe in the power of dreaming...vividly. In his book, *Manifesto: A Guide to Developing a Creative Career*, Torrance (2002) explains in great detail the 22-year longitudinal studies behind the original Manifesto for Children (see Appendix A). He considered the search for your identity "one of the most important things that a person ever does (p. 32)." Having a dream – a clear image of the future that you have fallen in love with is the driving force behind self-fulfillment and the greatest source of creative energy. My own personal journey proves this case.

In 2008 I started a Dream Inventory which is a lot like a bucket list. In 2010 in a document entitled "MY DREAM" in a folder called "What's Next" I articulated a plan for a "United Way of Youth Programs." In 2013 I started 30DreamDays.com in which I challenged myself and others to "Transform your life in 30 days by giving yourself permission to dream...vividly." I blogged through more than 30 days of dreaming and have re-read those posts many times, most recently in the divergent phase of assembling this philosophy. I can now see the seeds of my current vision clearly in all three of these phases of dreaming that spanned over 8 years...and I have fallen in love with it!

Childhood is the time to dream, follow your own interests and figure out who you really are so you can transition into adulthood and build on that solid foundation. Transformation Theory is a

model of growth first postulated by George Land (1973/1986) in his book *Grow or die: The unifying principle of transformation* and later developed by Land & Jarmin (1992/2000) in their book *Breakpoint and beyond: Mastering the future today*. The theory claims that the whole natural world follows the same three phase creative change process reflected in an S-curve (see Appendix B). Phase 1 (let's call this childhood) is divergent, disorderly, experimental, explorative and highly creative. It is characterized by trial and error - putting things together and pulling them apart in search of a repeatable pattern that once found, brings the child to the first breakpoint where she shifts into Phase 2 (let's call this adulthood). In Phase 2 the focus is on repeating success through continuous improvement. However, eventually the rules that made Phase 2 so successful change, or stop working, and the adult hits a second breakpoint (let's call this mid-life crisis, now showing up even earlier as quarter-life crisis) where the choice is either "grow or die". If the adult stays on the path created in Phase 2 she is on the way to obsolescence. However if she chooses to innovate (let's call this re-invent herself), she starts a whole new cycle of innovation characterized by integration and diversification.

Problems arise when a child shifts into adulthood pursuing a repeatable pattern that did not emerge from her own interests but instead is in line with societal expectations. These problems are so well portrayed in the movie *I'm Fine, Thanks*. This documentary captures the stories of people who, after years of complacency chasing the universal script we call the American Dream, eventually decide to make radical changes so they can pursue their own dream. Through a variety of stories, you come to see the many ways that society has "taught" us what we are supposed to do and how easy it is to wake up one day and feel trapped in a life that doesn't bring you any joy. It is best summed up by Vanda, a former successful advertising executive who says:

But I was really unhappy...I mean finally at 32 I realized that you know...I've heard subsequently this great metaphor where you know...you're climbing the ladder and you get to the top and you realize you have it leaned up against the wrong wall...I didn't even know what the right wall was. (Baker, 2012, minute 18:20)

This is what is at the heart of the quarter or mid-life crisis! Can this be avoided? If so, how?

I believe simply becoming aware that you are - in fact - creative, can be life changing.

There is a predominant myth that confuses artistic with creative and in a comparison culture, the perception is that some people are creative and some people aren't. The sad truth is that most people do not consider themselves creative and therefore do not fulfill their creative potential.

In 2011, my husband and I embarked on training to become facilitators of Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage seminars. One part of the training required us to learn how to understand and decipher the results of an assessment tool called The Flag Page®. After administering over 100 assessments as part of our preparation for in-class training, we finally met with the developer of the tool and were able to ask questions. The flag showed your top five motivations and most people had a list of other motivations that they also rated highly. I noticed that I didn't have any additional motivations, my top five were the only ones I had rated highly (see Appendix C). I asked the developer what that meant, and he informed me "that indicates a person who will succeed in a really narrow band." And then he changed my life with the following statement, "the good news is that because you are so creative, you can apply your creativity to any topic" (L. Bilotta, personal communication, n.d.). According to his assessment, three of my top five motivations fell into the creativity family - one of five motivation families. Prior to his declaration of my creativity, I never considered myself creative. I was only mildly artistic and that was what I associated with creativity.

I was completely clueless to anything related to creativity beyond that. This simple moment of awareness changed my life.

Children should not grow up unaware of their inborn creativity. Creativity can and should be protected and nurtured by parents and educators. In my humble opinion, it is a matter of national security because our nation will increasingly be at risk if we continue to do nothing. The birth of the study of creativity has roots in the survival studies during the Korean War where Torrance, then a research psychologist with the United States Air Force, trained jet pilots on survival. He published extensive research and developed a survival definition of creativity, "whenever one is faced with a problem for which he has no practiced or learned solution, some degree of creativity is required" (as cited in Hébert, Cramond, Speirs Neumeister, Millar, & Silvian, 2002). The difference that helped pilots shot down behind enemy lines survive from those that did not, was then and still is today, creativity. Today, soldiers and fighter pilots are not the only citizens protecting our safety and freedom. Threats and opportunities abound even in virtual spaces we cannot easily see. An internal strength of our nation is that we have historically been more creative than other countries. However, a growing weakness is that changes in public policy toward standardization and high-stakes testing threaten to further squelch the creativity of our greatest resource, the next generation. When you realize that creativity is so vital to our surviving and thriving, doesn't it make sense to revamp our education system to maximize the creative potential of our future – our children?

As I've stated, the stifling of creativity is an unintended byproduct of schooling. Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning touts the importance of the 4Cs in this way:

Learning and Innovation Skills are being recognized as those that separate students who are prepared for a more and more complex life and work environments in the 21st century, and

those who are not. A focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration is essential to prepare students for the future (P21, 2015).

Creativity is a modern buzzword in all organizations – businesses, schools, non-profits and even governments. While it is recognized as very important, unfortunately it is poorly understood. Schools seeking to increase the creativity of their students are turning back to the arts, which is fantastic, but creativity is so much more than the arts. Despite prolific research and writing for over 50 years by Torrance and other creativity researchers who have articulated what creativity is and how it can be taught, the education profession seems to be largely unaware of this information.

The reality is creativity can be taught. As a result of his extensive research into creativity and education including a 22 year longitudinal study, Torrance developed a list of 18 creativity skills and the Torrance Incubation Model of Teaching and Learning otherwise known as TIM. TIM teaches any academic content in a way that weaves one of the 18 creativity skills into the lesson plan so that the student is both learning their regular academic content and creativity at the same time (Murdock & Keller-Mathers, 2002). Torrance (1977) and other researchers found that “intelligent use of creative curricular materials could avert the fourth-grade slump in creative functioning (p. 23).” Countless studies, including the Creative Studies Project have evaluated and found that learning Creative Problem Solving (CPS), a deliberate creativity process that is modeled after the natural creative process, can significantly improve a variety of creative abilities (Parnes, 1987).

Simply teaching children to separate divergent and convergent thinking would be an improvement. Divergent thinking is when you generate lots of possible ideas, facts, problem definitions, evaluation criteria, implementation strategies, etc. (Davis, 2004, p. 125). Convergent thinking is when you start to affirmatively judge those results meaning you evaluate them by first

focusing on what's good before you enlist your natural inner critic. We never really teach children to separate these two kinds of thinking, unless they learned CPS which has a divergent and convergent phase at each stage of the process. In his TEDx talk (2011) George Land explains that when you look inside the brain on an fMRI it shows that neurons are actually fighting each other and diminishing the power of the brain when these two kinds of thinking are not clearly separated. If K-12 educators learned and used TIM and/or CPS it would help preserve the creativity of our children, ensuring this essential skillset is at their disposal for the rest of their lives and available to help solve the wicked problems plaguing our world.

I believe life is our greatest creative teacher; lessons are abundant everywhere every day. When we are first born we start to learn by doing. We make connections in context and learning is a process of repeated failure before success. Shekerjian studied MacArthur Fellows, recipients of a highly selective “no-strings attached” grant to pursue their creative endeavors. Through that research she developed a list of recommendations for creative people (see Appendix D), one of which says “break free from the seductive pull of book learning and research and the million other preparatory steps that could delay for the entire span of a life and immerse yourself in the doing” (as cited in Torrance, 2004). Society sends an overwhelming message that if you want to be educated, stay in school. While many students struggle in school for the reasons I've described, there is also a large and growing number of students who accumulate degrees and have not immersed themselves in doing. Book learning, research and school are inadequate ways to learn in context, through trial and error. This is why I am a big advocate for entrepreneurship education.

After 12 years of entrepreneurship, it became obvious to me that the learning I was accumulating was so far beyond what I ever did in school. It was self-directed, in pursuit of knowledge I was both interested in and needed to know. Some of the most valuable lessons were learned the hard way, through failure. Despite my growing frustration with school as my own

children were growing up, it never dawned on me how powerful entrepreneurship education could be until I read *World class learners: Educating creative and entrepreneurial students* by Yong Zhao. Zhao's (2012) own interest in youth entrepreneurship was initially sparked after reading a book which included the story of Suhas Gopinath, a 14 year old who started his own website development company and after only a decade his company was a multi-million dollar global company operating in numerous countries (p. 1).

Next I was further inspired by The World Economic Forum's (2009) report, *Educating the Next Wave of Entrepreneurs: Unlocking Entrepreneurial Capabilities to Meet the Global Challenges of the 21st Century* which calls upon the education systems of the world to transform and include entrepreneurship at the core all grade levels, not just on the perimeter or through incremental change. According to the report "Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action and is therefore a key competence for all, helping young people to be more creative and self-confident in whatever they undertake" (p. 9). They believe "entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and behaviours can be learned, and that exposure to entrepreneurship education throughout an individual's lifelong learning path, starting from youth and continuing through adulthood into higher education...is imperative" (p. 6). They go on to say "Entrepreneurship empowers people, in all societies and at all levels, to take their own destiny into their hands (p.9)."

In January 2016 the World Economic Forum published an article which included the Top 10 Skills needed to thrive in 2020 as shown in Appendix E (Gray, 2016). It is my contention that each and every one of these skills can be optimally learned in an entrepreneurship context. The *Future of Jobs* report, from which this information was extracted, makes another plea for change in our education systems. It cites "by one popular estimate 65% of children entering primary schools today will ultimately work in new job types and functions that currently don't yet exist" (World Economic Forum, 2016, p. 32). It goes on to say "Businesses should work closely

with governments, education providers and others to imagine what a true 21st century curriculum might look like” (World Economic Forum, 2016, p. 32).

In July 2014 when I first started contemplating the idea of starting an entrepreneurship education program I attended a youth entrepreneurship pitch event hosted by Build.org in Boston. On the wall of their offices was this quote: “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” Florida (2010) and others articulate the disintegration of the social contract of corporate loyalty to employees. Intuit (2010) predicts that by 2020 more than 40% of the American workforce will be contingent, freelance workers. With all this in mind I can come to no clearer conclusion: the key to preparing the next generation to thrive in this world that continues to change at an ever-increasingly rapid pace, is to empower children to create their own futures by learning creativity and entrepreneurship.

What does learning entrepreneurship even look like? Minniti and Bygrave (2001) “model entrepreneurial learning as a calibrated algorithm of an iterated choice problem in which entrepreneurs learn by updating a subjective stock of knowledge accumulated on the basis of past experiences” (p. 5) This sounds more complicated than it is. They explain that entrepreneurial decisions are a function of two types of knowledge - technical, product or industry specific and “how to be entrepreneurial. This knowledge can be acquired only through learning-by-doing or by direct observation” (p.6). Failure is equally as important as success; both provide valuable information for the entrepreneur’s ongoing decisions. They proceed to explain a unique form of experiential, self-directed learning and claim “entrepreneurship is a process of learning, and a theory of entrepreneurship requires a theory of learning” (p. 7).

Tseng found self-directed learning had an important relationship with entrepreneurial learning and performance as well. Tseng concludes that “entrepreneurs who learn and develop their self-management and self-monitoring skills have more opportunities to enhance entrepreneurial

knowledge and experiences in the entrepreneurial development process” (p. 425). Tseng explains that self-directed learning “has emerged as a primary way of learning for entrepreneurs to meet the complex demands and performance associated with the changing world of work” (p. 426).

As you can see, my philosophy about creativity weaves together many diverse perspectives. It was developed through my own experience with entrepreneurship and because I am so interested in education, it has been explained in that context. Next I will present My Vision which is a combination of many of my interests and will allow me to bring my Philosophy to life! Without further ado...

### **My Vision**

*Stimulating change in education by challenging the status quo and making a ruckus; disrupting pervasive mindlessness and setting people free from self-imposed constraints.*

What I see myself doing is recruiting 3-7 teenagers who have either already dropped out of school or who are ready to drop out of school and launching Teen Liberated Learning Community (TeenLLC.org). These teenagers and I will be the founding team and will co-create the program with my vision as the starting point. I am not sure yet whether it will be structured as a democratic learning community or more like a business partnership. I do know that all members of the team will have a voice.

Teen LLC is a self-directed entrepreneurship education venture that will seek to answer “what might be all the ways to learn, grow and discover who we are while building a thriving self-sustaining learning community?” Learning will be real-world, experiential, experimental and iterative. The goal will be to build a beautiful portfolio of failures and successes (aka LEARNING) by consistently experimenting with new projects. We may decide to maintain certain product lines or income streams especially if they are fun and/or funding our fun.

Teen LLC will be a brand that represents the values of creativity and freedom and will seek to cultivate a market with the tweens, teens and the young at heart. We will also seek to connect to tribes that believe in creativity and self-directed learning. TeenLLC.org will maintain an online storefront (including platforms like etsy) where patrons can support our educational escapades by purchasing our products and keeping up to date on our latest projects. Not all “products” will be items. We may decide to run a summer entrepreneurship camp and/or after-school program for elementary school children and middle-schoolers. Since we will be using facilitation and creative-problem solving methods all the time, we could even offer CPS facilitations, trainings and other workshops/classes. The ever-evolving interests of the team and the demands of our followers will determine production projects.

Through this entrepreneurship education the team will learn the following, by doing:

- professional writing and communications skills
- the art of collaboration
- math through bargain hunting, haggling, cost analysis, pricing, accounting, etc
- science and history will be a source of inspiration for our creative process and we will explore topics as the need arises
- art and music will be abundant throughout our environment and process and will likely be part of some of our creative products and marketing

Initially, it will take a lot of downtime to get to know ourselves and each other better and to start grasping the basics of self-directing and entrepreneurship. Ultimately, the students will self-direct their own learning based on the roles they choose for each new project. I will serve as mentor and facilitator and focus on growth of the individual team members through providing what Carl Rogers referred to as a “psychologically safe environment” (as cited in Davis, 2004, p. 11) and patiently working through issues together to develop deep supportive relationships. I will also

focus on general external communications such as networking, public relations and brand development.

A certain percentage of time will be similar to Google 20% time for students to pursue their own interests, just for enjoyment. In this downtime new product ideas may surface as well. My goal is to ignite the self-directed learning capacities of team members so that they are perpetually learning and exploring their passions and interests even when they are not here. Our time together will be primarily focused on our projects so as to resemble a regular workplace as not all team members will decide to use their entrepreneurship skills in self-employment.

Team members will also be exposed to the roles in a business such as marketing, accounting, leadership, and will also be immersed in networking, negotiation and cultivating relationships. Over time team members will develop expertise in one or more of these areas as they discover their strengths or decide what most interests them. Once strengths and passions are clear, we will work toward greater interdependence by leveraging each other's strengths. This will be especially important for me as I predict having to fill in a lot of gaps over our first year. My Foursight preference combination is High Ideator & High Clarifier meaning I am extremely energetic on the front end when everything is new but have little tolerance for daily mundane routine responsibilities. The future of the organization will depend especially on me working within my strengths and finding supports for my weaknesses.

My house will be transformed into home base and a minivan will be our main mode of transportation to our "classrooms" which will be anywhere and everywhere our learning interests take us. Maybe we will collaborate with a local makerspace or do trash to treasure finding and makeovers. **What we won't do is get bored and sit around all day.**

We will do an annual cross-country learning and speaking tour, visiting other alternative schools, and participating in TEDx and other change-making events to spread our story.

Eventually, we will have an RV or converted bus so we can be a traveling experience and storefront.

Team members will develop their online portfolios and resumes throughout their time on the team. Initially, so as to avoid any legal issues, team members will likely be 16-21 years old. Once team members become adults, if they are interested in leadership, we will begin to prepare them to lead another team, allowing growth through multiplication. Team members will not have to leave at a certain age but we will make sure they have been and will continue to work on their growth and self-sufficiency. Eventually we will multiply to several 3-7 person teams. We will have to decide whether teams always stay together or whether periodically they choose to cross-pollinate or create strategic partnerships with other groups.

I see us eventually building a new homebase, preferably by the water. That house can serve as a co-working hacker-house and host visiting annual retreats for entrepreneurs, education reformers, accelerator/startups, etc. Our team will help others CPS their ideas and learn from what we are doing.

The goal will be to fine-tune this model and then ignite others to do the same so that we help the alternative education movement to challenge the status quo while making a ruckus as Seth Godin would say; Our teams can help mentor these spin-offs from the first inquiry call, through all the planning and be by their side to celebrate when their dream is realized and the new community is born. I see multiple communities like this around the world, each hosting teams from other areas as they tour the country. I also see members of teams collaborating via distance on shared interests, negotiating revenue-sharing agreements for joint ventures and making incredible things.

All proceeds from our center will first pay expenses, including my minimum salary of \$40,000 and then profits will be divided in accordance with the profit-sharing plan developed by the founding team. I don't want all team members to feel they have to be involved in every project as

we may have more than one project going at a time and so they can have time to pursue their own interests. For this reason, the revenue-sharing plan may involve some element of “you get out what you put in.” I want to make sure this mimics the real world of entrepreneurship as much as possible so I will investigate this further to figure out what might be all the ways to handle this.

As team members start to mature in their entrepreneurship skills and think about starting their own venture, they may request to revive a prior TeenLLC project. Since all projects are property of TeenLLC, there will need to be a spin-off plan developed that may include revenue-sharing or buyout terms.

The design of this program will incorporate the philosophy I’ve articulated, The Manifesto for Children (see Appendix A) and will seek to disrupt the mindlessness learned through years of schooling, setting team members free from self-imposed constraints. I plan to take a graduate course called the School Starter’s Course that is a collaboration between the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) and Antioch University New England Graduate School of Keene, New Hampshire. That course will help me learn the history of the alternative education movement and the varieties of programs that abound within that movement. In the Spring I may want to do an independent study to allow me to dig deeper into the creativity literature to ensure my program provides a solid foundation for creative development.

### **My Strategic Plan**

I decided to do a SWOT analysis. I will convene a CPS resource group in the future to develop this idea further using POINT.

#### **Strengths**

- Founder has 12 years entrepreneurship experience
- Founder has launched, grown and sold three very different businesses

- Founder has extensive knowledge including Marketing, Networking, Blogging, Teaching, Training, Coaching, Public Speaking, CPS Facilitation and more
- The program will be self-sustainable in its funding

#### **Weaknesses**

- Team members will be young and lack experience
- While I can and have done all functions within running and growing a business for extended periods of time, my Foursight preference combination is “Early Bird” which means that I should be trying to find a Developer or Implementer who can help me lead the organization. At some point, when we are successful, there will be a lot of organization-level things that need to be taken care of on an ongoing basis and I would rather stab myself with a fork in the leg than have responsibility for those things as well

#### **Opportunities**

- Alternative Education Movement is growing
- Expansion of the model through like-minded individuals
- Expand to include younger students
- Endless opportunities for products and services once the creativity of all team members is awakened from its slumber and developed

#### **Threats**

- Group dynamics within the team might disintegrate
- Individual team members may resist growth
- Laws in the future may prevent TeenLLC from working with younger ‘unschoolers’

**A detailed to do list which simultaneously articulates my strategic decisions is included in Appendix F.**

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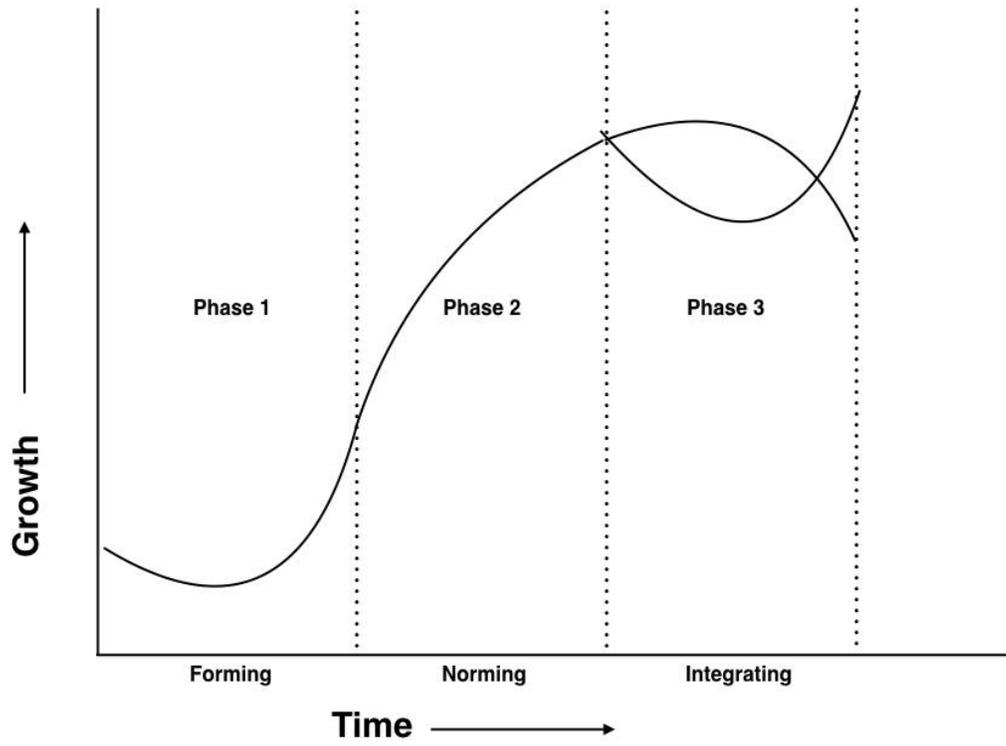
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## Appendix A – Manifesto for Children

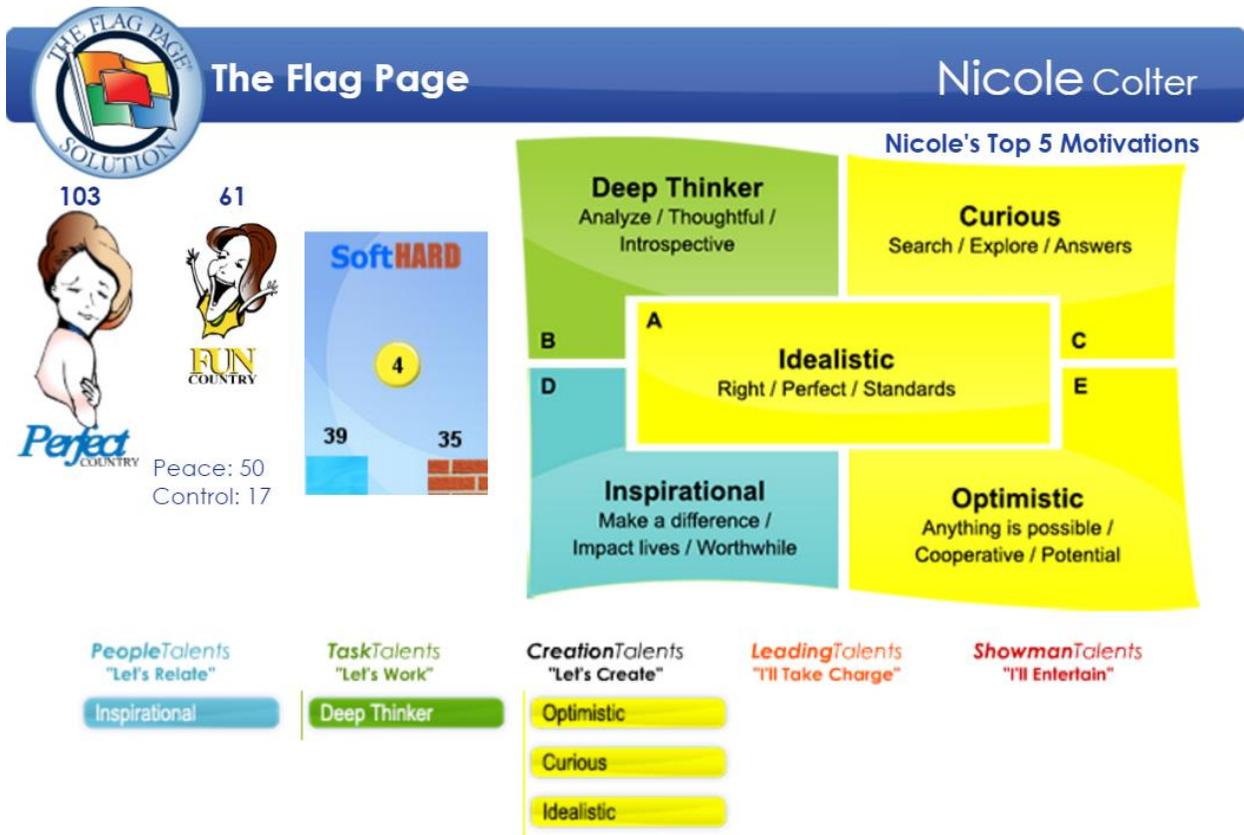
1. Don't be afraid to fall in love with something & pursue it with intensity.
2. Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, exploit & enjoy your greatest strengths.
3. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others & to walk away from the games they impose on you. Free yourself to play your own game.
4. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.
5. Don't waste energy trying to be well-rounded.
6. Do what you love and can do well.
7. Learn the skills of interdependence.

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Appendix B – Cycle of Change based on Transformation Theory



Appendix C - The Flag Page® (a motivations assessment)



## Appendix D

**Recommendations for Creative People****By Shekerjian (as cited in Torrance, 2004)**

1. Find your talent.
2. Commit to it and make it shine.
3. Don't be afraid of risk. Or even failure, which if seen in its proper light, brings insight and opportunity.
4. Find courage by looking to something stronger and better than your puny, vulnerable self.
5. No lusting after quick resolutions. Relax. Stay loose.
6. Get to know yourself; understand your needs and the specific conditions you favor.
7. Respect, too, your culture.
8. Then, finally, break free from the seductive pull of book learning and research and the million other preparatory steps that could delay for the entire span of a life and immerse yourself in the doing.

## Appendix E

# Top 10 skills

## in 2020

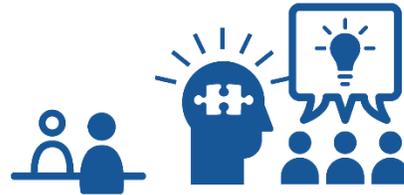
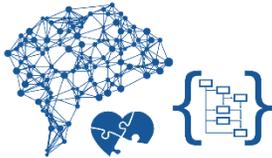
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1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Critical Thinking
3. Creativity
4. People Management
5. Coordinating with Others
6. Emotional Intelligence
7. Judgment and Decision Making
8. Service Orientation
9. Negotiation
10. Cognitive Flexibility

## in 2015

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1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Coordinating with Others
3. People Management
4. Critical Thinking
5. Negotiation
6. Quality Control
7. Service Orientation
8. Judgment and Decision Making
9. Active Listening
10. Creativity



Source: Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum

## Appendix F

Below is the detailed To Do list I have created shown in chronological order. The items in blue indicate those items I would package as an Independent Study or Master's Project.

Action	By Who?	By When?	Master's Credits Completed
Finish Vision and Strategic Plan	Me	July 19, 2016	15
Ask Joan (targeted mentor) to meet weekly	Me	Immediate	
Need to set up 2nd monitor for my computer to work more efficiently again		Immediate	
Revise my NicoleColter.com Education Page with Vision	Me	Immediate	
Consider Liberated Learners Webinar	Me	Immediate	
Call AERO schools that have been helped to ask questions about their Start an Educational Alternative Master's degree course	Me	Late July 2016	
Call with Cyndi to discuss transfer of AERO graduate course and if the launch planning for TeenLLC is an Independent Study or Master's Project?	Me	Late July 2016	
Assemble a resource group to CPS develop this further	Me	August 2016	
Conversation with my CPA about questions and concerns - when should I start process if I want to maximize deductions and minimize costs but be in a position to hit the ground running Summer 2017	Me	August 2016	
Recruit an Advisory Team - ask Joan, my husband, Michelle Jacobik, Deb Miller, Vicktrie, Katynia, Sara, Alice, ICSC Community and former QMC students Quin, Josh, Tim E, Lynsey W and Charles S	Me	Fall 2016	
CRS 580 - earn Graduate Certificate and Apply for Master's	Me	Fall 2016	18
AERO Start a School Master's Class	Me	Fall 2016	21
Visit Mountain Laurel Sudbury in New Britain on "Columbus Day"		Fall 2016	
Visit Self-Directed Learning Centers	Me	Depends on work schedule	
Contact my nephew Robbie who is a filmmaker for help with first Kickstarter Campaign and ideating our documentary plan		Fall 2016	

Figure out H2 get time off for CEE & CIPSI? I don't care if it is unpaid but I don't want to burn bridges at QMC or Eastconn	Me	January 2017	
Launch Planning-Master's Project or Independent Credit	Me	Spring 2017	24
Start TeenLLC.org Website	Me	Spring 2017	
Establish organization as non-profit?	Me	Spring 2017	
Break up my Philosophy, Vision and Strategic Plan into multiple blog posts and create a blog strategy and plan to execute regularly	Me	Spring 2017	
Write the plan	Me	Spring 2017	
Design my program to embrace the Torrance Manifesto for Children		Spring 2017	
Investigate creative community (as I want TeenLLC to develop into and advance creative community) and whether there is a connection to mentoring and growth		Spring 2017	
Conversation with my attorney and concerns	Me	Spring 2017 or as soon as CPA says to	
Read Man's Search for Meaning-Viktor Frankl		Spring 2017	
Read writings by A.S. Neill, John Holt, Carl Rogers, Ellen Langer, Anna Craft	Me	Spring 2017	
Start developing relationships with CT Homeschooling and Unschooling Parents	Me	Spring 2017	
Continue conversations with Sara Smith regarding shared interests in Education and Creative Community		Spring 2017	
Investigate if there is a connection between creativity training and reduced anxiety		Spring 2017	
Spend time getting to know the Creativity Journals and other Journals to stay-up-to-date on. Start with Journal of Creativity in Mental Health		Spring 2017	
Investigate anabolic energy and its relationship to creativity		Spring 2017	
Read <a href="#">A Course in Miracles</a> which inspired Marianne Williamson's <i>A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles</i> which includes my all-time favorite quote: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,		Spring 2017	

talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”			
Read the World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report - Design my program to include the Top 10 Skills for 2020 and other concepts from the report		Spring 2017	
CPS and develop annual fundraising events - something similar to trivia night, scavenger hunt, cornhole competition		Spring 2017	
Join Toastmasters with my sister Ari	Me	Spring 2017	
Connect to RISD alumni		Spring 2017	
Speak at Rotary, BNI and ask for scholarship/sponsorship money for CIPSI for team members	Me	Late Spring 2017	
Recruit Interested Team Members	Me	Late Spring 2017	
Document the WHOLE process on film from Day 1 for future documentary	Me/Team or Filmmaking Student	Late Spring 2017	
Attend CIPSI or AERO with confirmed team members (earn 3 credits by completing the conference course)	Me/Team	Early Summer 2017	27
Attend CEE Conference and/or Good Life Project Camp-(earn 3 credits by completing the conference course)	Me	Summer 2017	30
Weekly Team Meetings and Asynchronous Online Collaboration-initial project should be a holiday sales item or items and will be packaged as part of a Kickstarter Campaign	Me/Team	Summer 2017	
Create "marketing graphics" and post through social media. These would be quotes, graphics etc. Things that get people curious who TeenLLC.org is and drives followers and web traffic. THIS WILL BE ONGOING MARKETING	Me/Team	Summer 2017	
CRS 625-interested in Ellen Langer's work on	Me	Fall 2017	33

Mindfulness			
CRS 625-Submit article for publication in Big Questions in Creativity re this topic	Me	Fall 2017	
Add online store to website & work toward holiday sales goal	Team	Fall 2017	
Kickstarter Video Production and Campaign Plan	Team	Fall 2017	
Partner with Makerspace		Fall 2017	
Consider whether to join a barter exchange		Fall 2017	
Finalize Budget for 2018 & start monthly budget meetings	Me/Team	December 2017	
Field Trip to NYC - NY Neofuturist, Quirky and other fun yet creativity fueling places		December 2017	
A Year in Review - work together to combine and synthesize the lessons learned	Me/Team	January 2018	
Strategic Planning - Using lessons learned, review strategic plan and readjust priorities for 2018 and beyond if needed	Me/Team	January 2018	
Start planning first annual learning/speaking tour	Team	January 2018	
Connect to Detroit creatives and alternative education contacts to try to plant our first TeenLLC-like community there. I have an interest in being part of Detroit's recovery and this could be one way. May try to travel between Buffalo & Detroit areas between graduation, CIPSI & CEE in May - June 2018		January 2018	
Consider whether to organize a local chapter of Creative Mornings	Me/Team	January 2018	
Consider whether to create a TEDx planning team for late 2018 or 2019 event - I would want to be involved but not be the leader so I can be a speaker and hopefully at least one of our team members can as well	Team Event Planner with Outside Community Members	January 2018	
Co-write Blog	Me/Team	Spring 2018	
Volunteer with team members at 99u	Me/Team	May 2018	
Master's Degree graduation with my family and team	Me/Team	May 2018	
First annual learning/speaking tour Graduation, CIPSI, CEE in Buffalo, Detroit and surrounding areas	Me/Team	May-June 2018	
Visit Oxford Community School in Oakland County, MI to learn about their entrepreneurial projects (Zhao, p. 216) while on our Learning		May-June 2018	

Speaking Tour			
My article will get published in Big Questions in Creativity	Me	Late Spring 2018 or 2019	
Start planning second annual learning/speaking tour	Team Event Planner with Team	Summer 2018 through reflection on the road at 1st annual tour	
Attend CIPSI, CEE & AERO, present at a minimum of one of them	Me	Summer 2018	
Co-write Book - Anthology (watch Freedom Writers and have team look at other anthologies like Chicken Soup for the Soul). Have it be ready before 100 years of Summerhill	Me/Team	2018-2020	
Start planning first annual Start Your Dream Retreat (or whatever we name it). We may come up with better ideas or at least a better name but I would like to host people here once a year to start exploring the possibility of an "entrepreneurship camp" for adults.		Fall 2018	
Network the Creative Scene to recruit teaching volunteers, alternative classrooms - such as Mode Merr clothesmaker in RI. Her and I have discussed this type of thing before.	Me	2018	
Meet with import/export people for learning and to expand our boundaries		2018	
Research and Apply for Grants	Me/Team	January 2019	
Begin reviewing footage for documentary		January 2019	
2nd Annual Speaking/Learning Tour		May-June 2019	
Connect to an organization that helps entrepreneurship in Third World Countries to investigate the possibility of us mentoring and/or doing a trip overseas	Me	January 2019	
Host first annual Start Your Dream Retreat (if we decide to move forward)	Me/Team	Fall 2019	
Attend BurningMan.org with team members as part of 2nd or 3rd Annual Learning/Speaking Tour		Summer 2019 or 2020	
Release book and documentary before 100 years of Summerhill		By end of 2020	

Meet with the Steering Board of the Global Education Initiative (GEI), World Economic Forum to advance youth education through entrepreneurship		By 2026	
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