

# The Good Project

Newsletter: October 2013

Dear Friend of The Good Project,

We hope that you all are enjoying autumn so far! This month's issue of the newsletter is representative of some of the vast research, practice, and outreach initiatives the "Good Community" is involved in, and we are happy to have you all as a part of this community. If you have ideas for future newsletters, please email Paromita De at [paromita\\_de@harvard.edu](mailto:paromita_de@harvard.edu). Thank you and we hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter!

Sincerely,  
The Good Team

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## Good Participation Team Update



On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, Professor Joseph Kahne from Mills College spoke to Harvard Graduate School of Education's [Civic and Moral Education Initiative](#) (CMEI) community. Professor Kahne argued that the digital age is shaping public life and participation in ways that are fundamentally different, and we need a new, redesigned civic education as a consequence. He explored how digital media tools are now central to politics, including how money is raised, how people are mobilized, where people get information, and where youth voice concerns. New dynamics, including fewer gatekeepers, powerful social networks, individual choice, digital tools and a participatory culture offer tools and norms to access political life in novel ways.

[Good Participation](#) researcher Emily Weinstein served as the discussant, raising questions about how we can best prepare adults to support youth for participation in a networked world. Emily echoed excitement for Professor Kahne's call for a new model of civic education, but also raised concerns - based on the Good Participation team's research - about the risks for individual youth who participate publicly and may face backlash in their offline lives. Emily asked others to consider how to scaffold both high quality participation and thoughtful reflection about the implications of different participatory practices.

Both Emily and Professor Kahne referenced the Good Participation team's current work with Facing History and Ourselves, which is aimed at actualizing a redesigned civic education curriculum. The units draw on Facing History and Ourselves' decades of experience with transformative classroom lessons and the Good Participation team's research with young contemporary civic actors. The curriculum aims to enable reflection and empower youth for high quality participatory actions in the digital world. The first lessons will reach pilot schools in this spring – stay tuned!

### **Good Idea of the Month: Mentors**



What do business tycoons Warren Buffett and Bill Gates, philosophers Socrates and Plato, journalists Mike Wallace and Barbara Walters, and singers Usher and Justin Bieber all have in common? They are examples of mentor-mentee relationships, where a mentor provides guidance to a mentee on similar academic and professional interests. Mentors provide us with knowledge and perspectives on what opportunities are available to us, how we can achieve our goals, and how to handle challenges we face in our work. In the same light, having a mentee allows us to help out and share our knowledge with individuals who want to learn more about the field we work in, ensures that we can pass down professional values and standards, and allows us to see our work from a different perspective - that of our mentees. The benefits of having mentors for students and professionals may be numerous. In the book *Making Good: How Young People Cope with Moral Dilemmas at Work* by Wendy Fischman, Becca Solomon, Deborah Greenspan, and Howard

Gardner, the authors state that not only do “Young people appreciate the opportunity to observe and learn from role models,” but also that “One’s moral identity often represents an amalgam of practices and orientations gleaned from a number of these pivotal roles” (p. 169-170). Given that mentors can help us learn how to make decisions in our careers and shape our professional paths, finding out how to foster mentor-mentee relationships may be imperative to pursuing good work. In a feature from the Harvard Gazette, ["A Blessing of Influences"](#), Howard Gardner states of mentor-mentee relationships, “We are the sum of whoever we worked with.”

*Who have been your mentors? What qualities did you admire in them? How can we ensure that younger individuals have mentors?*

**Young Children Exploring the 3 Es: A developmental perspective**  
**by Jo Hoffman, Ed.D**

For a couple of years now, my daughter Amy and I have been working with the Elementary Toolkit that Amy developed and has been using in her 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade multiage classroom since September 2011. The key players that have been involved with us – students, parents, administrators, teachers, and the Toolkit team -- all share the belief that the Good Work concepts can and should be introduced at a young age. From my years as a public school teacher in the early elementary grades, I know the great thinking and the inherent good-natured humanity that young children possess. This is what brought me to the Toolkit and the Good Work Project initially. After learning about Good Work from Howard Gardner, I felt strongly that teachers would have success and students would grow from activities related to the 3 Es adapted for elementary-aged learners. Drawing on my teaching experience and my knowledge of child development, I knew that young children would need active, meaningful concrete experiences to engage and grow in their understandings of the 3Es in order for them to be able to think and understand the abstract kinds of concepts that the 3Es represent. It was this starting point where Amy and I joined the work of the Toolkit Team in adapting toolkit activities for younger students.



We’ve written about it on the GWT blog from different perspectives and we facilitated an Elementary Toolkit course at the GoodWork conference in March. After the March conference, Amy and I often reflected on comments and conversations we had with conference attendees that had a similar theme—how did we know that the 3 E activities were making a difference? How did Amy know that her students were developmentally ready to tackle these kinds of discussions and thinking about GoodWork? So I began a look into the literature--a

limited exploration of the research base supporting our work with the 3Es and 6-9 year old children. How does the nature of childhood development and the developmental sciences contribute to the validity of the Elementary Toolkit? It was not an exhaustive review of the literature, and many of the studies I read but did not include here were borne from examining and comparing the effects of different character education programs. I was looking for a different angle – more about the nature of child development, less about character education itself -- uncovering solid reasoning and inroads to inform us in analyzing the products of the Good Work that Amy has collected from her amazing students!

*The Journal of Moral Education* offered two articles where I found there to be strong cases for supporting 3Es activities in the elementary classroom. **Kim and Shankey (2009)** argue that moral development does not occur via invariant states but that each child is “an emergent self-organizing organism in which [moral] development is highly variable, dynamic, and often non-linear.” They argue that each child’s development of moral behaviors should be viewed through the lens of the “Dynamic Systems Approach.” At the basic level, their DSA paradigm is that moral development shares the same dynamic processes found within the whole of human development, including cognitive and physical development. Their discussion echoed that of NAEYC and developmentally appropriate practice in that development is holistic. (See <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSDAP.pdf> - p. 11 ). I found this quote in particular to be a strong argument for utilizing the Toolkit via activities developed for the 6-9 year old:

Our native ability as organisms to categorize our perceptions, coupled with an inborn predilection to value, in response to salient and meaningful experiences laid down in memory, provides the neurobiological rudiments for morality and moral development...the child through repeated interaction with multiple environments develops a more complex, differentiated and stable set of attractor basins. Then comes adolescence, a time of dynamic stability and instability...emotions gradually come under the executive control of the prefrontal lobes...indeed the transition through adolescence towards adulthood ‘may represent a loss of degrees of freedom in individual development that can never be regained’ (cites Lewis, 2005, Self-organizing individual differences in brain development. *Developmental Review* 25 (1), p.266.)

In a more recent issue, **Lewis (2012)** references Michael Polanyi, “a scientist-turned-philosopher whose large philosophical project was launched by a desire to see Western society flourish” initially to frame his argument that moral education is more relevant than ever due to the recent insights from psychology and the neurosciences. For instance, he discusses recent studies that have led to an account of moral development as a four component model. According to this model, four mutually influential psychological processes are necessary to produce moral behavior. The first is that of interpretation, that is one must be ethically sensitive or perceptive so as to be able to read clues from the environment such as emotional expressions and perspectives of others, as well as to perceive possible actions and their consequences. Second, one needs to be willing to judge a course of action as morally right or obligatory under the circumstances. Third, one must hold moral values as a priority above

other concerns. Finally, one needs to have a strong enough self-identity and a skill set to implement action.

Lewis goes on to build the case that moral development should be thought of as a developing expertise and we should explore how experts differ from novices. He points to neuroscience findings such as Kim and Sankey's 'attractor basins' that neural pathways are shaped by experiences. On page 163 he brings back the work of Polanyi and argues moral education is fostered and skills for moral development are best learned under the "tutelage of a master in a convivial community of explorers ...fully-fledged participants in the ongoing public conversation about what constitutes the good life." He invites teachers of moral education "to see themselves as active participants in each child's personal trajectory through a shifting attractor landscape and to empathize with students when they exhibit shifting stabilities and instabilities instead of more stable moral developmental stages that, as teachers, we might prefer."

Additionally, I found *The Journal of Philosophy of Education* to have potential for informing the work we're doing. Aspects of the Toolkit are philosophical and there is a field of literature that focuses on the use of philosophy in educational practice. For instance, in an article from this journal, **Biesta (2011)** argues that the main reason for educational use of philosophy with children is that it can help them to develop skills for thinking critically, reflectively, and reasonably. Furthermore he states that by "locating the acquisition of such skills within communities of enquiry, the further claim is that engagement with philosophy can foster the development of moral reflection and sensitivity and of social and democratic skills more generally."

My next steps will delve into the studies that will inform the kinds of coding we can do when looking at student responses and other varieties of data such as audio recordings of class discussions and other products. Also, Amy and the Toolkit Team have developed a pre and post assessment rubric for assessing student responses to the activities that incorporate the 3 Es in their classroom community this fall. Lots to report back to blog readers in upcoming posts!!

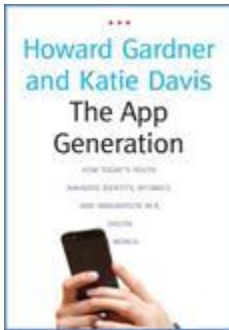
#### Cited Works:

Biesta, Gert (2011). Philosophy, exposure, and children: How to resist the instrumentalisation of philosophy in education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. 45(2), 305-319.

Kim, M. and Sankey, D. (2009). Towards a dynamic systems approach to moral development and moral education: A response to the JME Special Issue, September, 2008. *Journal of Moral Education*, 3(38). 283-298.

Lewis, Paul (2012). In defence of Aristotle on character: Toward a synthesis of recent psychology, neuroscience, and the thought of Michael Polanyi. *Journal of Moral Education*, 41(2), 155-170.

## ***The App Generation* Events Announcement**



A new book from Good Project veterans Howard Gardner and Katie Davis, *The App Generation*, will be released on October 22, 2013. Gardner and Davis will be discussing the book at several upcoming author events in Boston and New York; we hope that you will be able to join us!

- Monday November 18, 2013 at 7pm: *The App Generation Cambridge Forum*  
First Parish in Cambridge, 3 Church Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
- Monday December 9, 2013 at 8:15pm: *Howard Gardner on The App Generation at 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y*  
92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y, Bittenwieser Hall, 1395 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10128

### **Recent Blogs**

[\*Cracking the code: How the youngest generation is "Standing Up"\*](#) (September 18, 2013)  
Emily Weinstein and Paromita De, Research Assistants at The Good Project, discuss what it takes for youth to be civically engaged, using the new book, *Stand Up! 75 Young Activists Who Rock the World and How You Can Too!* as the starting point.

[\*Sifting Through Your Values\*](#) (September 24, 2013)  
Amma Marfo, Assistant Director of Student Activities for Involvement and Assessment at Emmanuel College, shares insights from her use of the Good Work Toolkit's Value-Sort Activity while training student organization officers.

[\*Connecting the Elementary Toolkit to Models of Thinking\*](#) (October 15, 2013)  
Amy Hoffman, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher at Unity Charter School in New Jersey, discusses how visuospatial thinking was applied in her class to teach students about the 3 E's.

### **Announcement: Request from Middle School Teacher Working with GoodWork Toolkit**

A middle school teacher, Tim Coleman, is currently working with the GoodWork Toolkit and would like to connect with other middle school teachers who are doing the same. If you are interested, please email Paromita De at [Paromita\\_de@harvard.edu](mailto:Paromita_de@harvard.edu) to be a part of this working group.

**Announcement: Elementary GoodWork Twitter Chat on Tuesday October 29<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

Elementary educators, please join Amy Hoffman (@alh2230) for the Elementary GoodWork Twitter Chat on Tuesday October 29<sup>th</sup> at 7pm as she leads a discussion on how we can teach good work to elementary school students. For more information, please [click here](#).

**Also of Interest**

[Pursuing Passion? Selling Out? Buying Time? Inside Recruiting at Harvard \(10/10/13, Harvard Crimson\)](#)