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The Good Project

Newsletter: December 2014

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Dear Friend of The Good Project,

We hope that this newsletter finds you well! In this issue, we feature The Family Dinner Project's #GivingTuesday campaign. We also will showcase the work of two Good Work Toolkit practitioners: June Weissman, an upper elementary teacher in New Jersey, and the work of our colleagues at Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania. For the Good Idea of the Month, we discuss Civic Engagement. We also showcase recent blog posts and relevant links.

If you have ideas for future newsletters or would like your own work to be highlighted, please email Paromita De at _paromita_de@harvard.edu. Thank you and we hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter!

Sincerely,
The Good Team

The Family Dinner Project Makes Giving a Family Affair

[The Family Dinner Project](#) (FDP), an initiative founded in 2009, has joined the Good Project this year, with Good Project manager and FDP co-founder Lynn Barendsen serving as Executive Director. The initiative supports families in their efforts to have more frequent and higher quality family dinners as a means of providing numerous health, academic, and socio-emotional benefits. In Good Project terms, this is part of a foundation through which families have important conversations about their own values.

For the second year in a row, FDP is partnering with #GivingTuesday, an initiative based at New York City's 92nd Street Y, which encourages individuals to make every day, but especially the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, a day of giving. This year, FDP is encouraging families to be involved in dinner-oriented acts of giving through a movement called [#Family](#)

[Dinner Forward](#), from December 2nd-16th. Examples of dinner-oriented acts of giving could be cooking a meal for a family member, friend, or neighbor; giving canned goods to a food pantry; making a contribution to an organization fighting hunger; or cooking and serving meals at a soup kitchen. To motivate people to get involved in the spirit of giving, FDP is asking individuals to share photos of their dinner-oriented acts of giving on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram using the hashtag #familydinnerforward. For any photos shared from December 2nd-16th, the individual who posted the photos will be entered into a contest where they will have a chance to win a prize from Lenox China.

FDP is providing tips to families to participate in Family Dinner Forward through [blog posts](#) featuring different ways for parents to talk about and instill the importance of giving in their kids. FDP also hosted a Twitter Chat on December 1st, where individuals discussed family dinners and how they can get involved in dinner-oriented acts of giving, using the hashtag #familydinnerforward. Further, FDP team member Amy Yelin has written a [Huffington Post piece](#) on teaching her kids the importance of giving during her struggle with breast cancer. Research has proven that kids who have parents who talk about giving and model giving in their lives through volunteering, charitable donations, etc., are more likely to give back themselves. As both parents and educators, if we want the next generation to care and show responsibility for people and groups beyond themselves, it is important for us to first demonstrate and discuss with kids the care and responsibility that we ourselves have for others.

Good Idea of the Month: Civic Engagement



In response to two separate decisions by grand juries, one in Ferguson, MO, and another in New York City, not to indict police officers who had killed unarmed African-American men, millions of Americans have raised their voices in protest over the past two weeks. People across the country have taken to marches on the streets and to political messages on social media to express their desire for justice and change.

Civic engagement - both on the streets and online - can be seen as "good work" aimed at improving our larger communities, society, and world. Although our communities are made up of many people whom we just pass on the street, and may never come to know, through civic activities, we can touch their lives - and hopefully for the better. The inspiration for civic engagement may come from anywhere - from personal experience to reading a news story about events in another country. Often, our civic tendencies can be fostered by observing how the people closest to us - family, friends, neighbors, teachers, etc. - are engaged in social and political causes. At the same time, the news and social media can inform us of issues that require the public's attention. Reflecting on what we value as members of society helps us to understand what responsibilities we hold to each other. If we care about our environment, we may want to petition to preserve greenery where we live. If we care about homelessness, we may be

motivated to support the development of shelters. Civic engagement requires us to look at what rights or assets we need to feel like we are respected as members of society, recognizing that we or others may not have access to these, and to work so that these social "goods" can be ensured for all.

The Good Participation Team is currently involved in the MacArthur Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics. They are conducting research on young people's civic engagement, including what their influences/supports are, what challenges they face, and what digital platforms and tools they use for their civic interaction. The Good Participation Team is also developing a curriculum on civic engagement with Facing History and Ourselves. For more information, please [click here](#).

Questions for reflection:

What social and political causes matter to you? Why do they matter? How do you take part in supporting these causes?

Who has inspired the things you do to have impact on your community or world?

What differences are there between civic engagement that takes place on-the-ground and online? How can these two arenas for civic engagement support each other?

Stories from Practitioners of the Good Work Toolkit



June Weissman, a teacher of 5th grade gifted students in New Jersey, and Mary Katherine Duncan, a professor at Bloomsburg University, have been for years creatively applying the [Good Work Toolkit](#) for their own educational purposes specific to the settings and students with whom they work. They have provided us with updates on how they have been applying Good Work concepts to their own work in teaching and student development below:

June Weissman:

The Good Work philosophy has inspired my teaching and my students since the Toolkit's pilot. My classes begin with wonder. Students in my gifted and talented classes each share something that caused a "Huh?" moment. We discuss issues and topics that crossed their minds that week-compelling thoughts that urged them to learn more. We realize that a job worth doing is worth doing well. Our efforts and motivations are examined in terms of ethics, engagement, excellence and social responsibility. These goals dovetail naturally as we reflect upon various timely narratives including the ethics of colonizing Mars and the possible repercussions involved with the creation of sentient robots. We consider 3-D printing in light of the many products, benign, life-saving, and/or destructive that result. As medical techniques progress, we worry about overpopulation and overuse of our limited resources. Students propose topics for long-term research. The final question in their application explores their concept of Good Work as a basis for what they hope to achieve. The Good Work philosophy is our lodestar to quality thought and action.

Mary Katherine Waibel-Duncan:

Since the Fall 2011, [Bloomsburg University Good Work Initiative](#) project leaders have been afforded the time, space, and opportunity to introduce first-year undergraduates to the expectations of higher education through Good Work-inspired summer reading assignments and freshman orientation workshops (Johnson and Duncan, 2013; Duncan and Johnson, 2014). Over the years, the Good Work Toolkit has been a valuable model guiding our selection and development of new case studies, self-reflective exercises, and small group discussion topics relevant to our study body. Assessments of past programming has shown us that students arrive on our campus with certain misconceptions about what it means to do academic good work. For example, they tend to equate effort with excellence, making good personal choices with ethics, and getting involved with engagement.

This past summer, we proactively addressed these misconceptions by assigning incoming first-year students a 2-page reading about what it means to do academic good work. Next, we required incoming students to analyze two case studies (one pulled from national headlines and the other a made-up scenario) to determine whether the subject of each one demonstrated academic good work. Finally, incoming students wrote an essay describing how their own role models demonstrate each of the three Es of good work in their respective professions (Johnson, Duncan, & Schoener, in preparation). We have been pleased to find that our programming impacts first-year undergraduates' understanding of academic good work and teaches them how to apply the concepts of excellence, ethics, and engagement to evaluations of their own and others' work. We have been equally delighted to discover that students highly value learning about the concept of good work and feel inspired by the good work message as they embark on the next phase of their academic and professional development.

We are pleased to hear of the different ways the Toolkit is being used with students to help them reflect on and carry out good work, from the elementary years to adulthood.

In what ways have you found Good Work to be relevant to the work you do? If you'd like to share ways you have used the Good Work Toolkit in your classroom or group, please email Paromita De at paromita_de@hvard.edu and let us know!

Recent Blogs

[Retooling India's Rural Schools using Good Work and Social Enterprise](#)

(December 1, 2014)

Sandeep Deshmukh of the Hemendra Kothari Foundation discusses how a focus on doing Good Work is helping to create innovative solutions for challenges with rural education in India.

[Civil Servants' Craftsmanship: a Good Work Toolkit Approach](#)

(October 24, 2014)

Wiljan Hendrikx and Hans Wilmink discuss the work of the Professional Honor Foundation in The Netherlands of delivering workshops to Dutch civil servants to explore the 3 E's.

Links of Interest

[The Global Search for Education: Good or Bad?:](#)

[Interview with Howard Gardner and Jeffrey Beard](#)

(December 11, 2014)

By C.M. Rubin, Huffington Post Education

[Why the Obamas should consider teaching in an urban public school after 2016](#)

(December 2, 2014)

By Howard Gardner and Jim Reese,
The Washington Post

[Technology doesn't make us 'Appy: young Hong Kongers 'depressed by social media'](#) (December 2, 2014)

By Kate Whitehead, South Morning China Post

[Beyond Online Safety: Teaching Moral and Ethical Decision Making:](#)

[Interview with Carrie James](#)

(November 7, 2014)

The Social Network Work

[Identity, intimacy, and imagination and the digital world](#)

(October 16, 2014)

By Emer Sexton, Irish Examiner

[Beyond Wit and Grit: Howard Gardner's Talk at '8 for 8' at](#)

[Harvard Graduate School of Education](#)

(September 19, 2014)

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