

## Audience Comments Arising from a Screening of *Beyond Measure*

Provided by [OPERI](#)

Before the Ottawa screening of *Beyond Measure* on January 28, 2016, the audience was given pencils and index cards to jot down thoughts during and after the screening. At the end of the night the cards were collected and the following is what they contained. The comments are provided verbatim. No attempt has been made to edit them other than to categorize them. They don't all fit neatly into the categories created so expect to feel that some are misplaced.

A second document providing summaries of the comments and some responses to them can be viewed by following the link: [Summaries and Responses](#).

*"If they cannot learn  
the way we teach;  
we must teach  
the way they will learn."*

- anonymous  
(from the *Beyond Measure* Notes)



**Wellbeing** (Anonymous artist: Drawn during the screening of *Beyond Measure*.)

### Assessment

- Show alternative assessments work
- Standardized testing = BOO
- Evaluation of only one kind of intelligence = BOO
- The impact on people's self-esteem by having their value judged constantly by the system is not worth any possible benefit of the school system
- I am here because, among others, I care about education. I am a parent of 2

*"Nobody ever got taller  
by being measured  
more often."*

children. I am a teacher (post graduate level, medical school). I recognize the need and have seen results of schooling that allowed (at least in large part) children's creativity to flourish (Waldorf education) and am seeing detrimental affects of incessant measuring –

industrialization applied to human lives. Testing and standardization does not work not only in education; it's a vice of our society at large, e.g. heart care.

- The emphasis on testing and the pointlessness of these particular tests made me very sad. What are these children feeling?
- I work in a school that does not do standard assessments, and am interested in what is being done elsewhere
- Standardized testing is not helpful for the learning styles of many students.
- Still too much focus on tests and not practical, hands-on learning. Still too much memorization.
- Let teachers do their job and eliminate EQAO
- Test and punish

### **Canadian Society**

- I'm here because I am interested in moving Canadian society towards more creative and critical thinkers. I believe this will help us make better decisions as a country. Thank you for showing this film!
- I enjoy learning, but didn't enjoy school. I would like to see the way we teach our children change. I believe a different view of education is needed for our society to be more successful.
- I came to connect with like-minded people on issues that we face in our daily lives regarding our kids' future.
- It's one thing to advocate for change, but kid's CURRENTLY suffering due to inflexibility of school boards can't and shouldn't have to be left with no other choices.
- What brought me here? – Saw TED talks by Sir Ken Robinson and read article about Finland's education system. This sparked my interest/  
key: developing people for needs of the future (in terms of jobs and much more – prepared to face the problems of the future).
- Critical thinking will help develop the future and with the access to information these days, it's going to be important to focus on how students use that information, not just whether they can memorize it!
- The purpose of public education is to create a public
- As a principal I want to find a way to encourage student voice and the trailer looked great! – to shift the focus. That's why I'm here.

*“Ultimately, it comes down to Human Rights where kids are not given choice on what they want to learn, where they want to learn, and how.”*

### **Creativity**

- Deprogramming needs to happen – value in creativity
- “We are going to produce kids that shine.” No – kids are already shining. Just do not shut them down.
- To create thinking classrooms in all classrooms in school
- See “Creating Thinking Classrooms” by Garfield Gini-Newman and Roland Case. <http://tc2.ca>

- Concerns: How to encourage kids' creativity while getting them ready for some of the structure of real life after school.
- Creativity is innate, it doesn't need to be taught.
- Worried that he was losing the love of learning at such a young age – this became my focus at home and thought “Why can't this happen at school too?” I heard about the documentary and knew I had to see it.
- Schools are designed specifically to destroy the natural creativity and curiosity of children.

I have had concerns for the development of the whole child and tapping into their creative spirit. My son stated when he was in grade one, “**I don't get to be creative in school anymore.**”

### Curriculum

- Indigenous language in curriculum = IMPORTANT for many reasons
- How can the curriculum be covered?
- Concern with the breadth that can be covered will be narrow
- I think the movie tells us learning to learn is the way.
- Stop the teaching to the test
- Whenever I go down the thought path of “What's the best curriculum?” my only conclusion is: NO CURRICULUM.
- We have to be careful to create change that allows **true** student-directed learning. So, in my opinion, Montessori is problematic because it purports to give freedom, but is often still bound to a province-mandated curriculum.
- If we want kids to be the initiators of their learning, then we have to make sure that the structure/curriculum is one that they have agreed to.
- Math is one of the worst courses for rote memorization with no understanding. Because of this what is learned is quickly forgotten. Teachers are not all together with way new math is to be taught.
- No time to complete curriculum well – children don't know where to go.
- Not sure how it applies to humanities
- PHYS. ED?
- Ethic to do quality work
- How far is pendulum swinging away from basic 3R's?
- Does a broader view of education and intelligence still encompass the current narrow view?
- Apply what they know – how do we decide what they need to know?

### Engagement

- Lack of Joy
- Alienation
- Demonstrate how the learning is real
- Students leading

- Much of the time in school is wasting the kids life when instead they could be being creative, innovative and engaged with life
- Advancing education is a priority for our school, which despite being private has a public purpose. We also believe in finding “fit” for all students either @Ashbury or elsewhere.
- Student engagement and staff engagement
- How do you manage individual student differences? Some will be more driven than others.
- “We are killing their soul.” No, the soul doesn’t die. We just become disconnected from it and then in adulthood we (hopefully) try and connect to it again. We need to stay connected right from the beginning.
- Interested in innovative ways of facilitating learning
- As a homeschooling mother of 10 years, and an outdoor/experiential educator with a B.Ed from Queens, I have always sought out alternatives to the classroom for my educational efforts/work. My children are now attending a public school and I can see so many unrealized opportunities for rich learning in unconventional settings that allow children to be excited about and invested in their education. I want to be a part of that change.
- The importance of authentic relationships between learners and between learners and teachers
- How to encourage curiosity and engagement rather than extinguish it
- I’m struck by how much is possible, and also at how challenging it is to get it right, and create an environment that truly engages students
- I came here because I see that the current model of “school” does not fit all students. I am saddened (disheartened), as a teacher to see students check-out and feel they are not ‘smart’ and their self-esteem and self-worth suffers. How do we support the “Matt Whalan’s” of our schools. How do we “Pull out the greatness that lays within each child.”? How de we help every child see their potential? Guiding thoughts.
- High school students are not given enough “outlets” and “out-of-the-box” thinking when they show that traditional learning is not compatible with their skills.
- I am in high school and I am very interested in knowing before I graduate what changes will hopefully take place. Just knowing the struggles I faced because of certain teaching styles, I am excited for the education system to change for when I plan to be involved working with students, checking in as a SSW.
- How to engage students in their own learning. How to make them understand/discover their potential



**Play** (Anonymous artist: Drawn during the screening of Beyond Measure.)

### **Film evaluation:**

- Film was too wordy at the beginning. Much better later.
- American stories are nice – want to learn more about what is working internationally.
- Mainly focused on teen stuff. What about others???
- Education is constantly evolving and Beyond Measure is just one of the waves that is making education truly a threshold adventure.

*The audience was asked to focus attention on the three schools Trigg County, Monument Mountain and High Tech High. These are the notes provided by one viewer.*

- Students with good grades struggling in college
- Teaching for test, not for real life
- Form of assessment – driver of ED programs
- Curriculum – currently narrow concept of intelligence
- Finding purpose/meaning in education – this may involve customizing to individual students
- Current culture often COMPETITIVE – this is encouraged by testing
- More useful today to collaborate – find opportunities to learn from each other.
- How to learn to learn. Much greater flexibility required for future challenges
- High Tech High (Interesting example)
- “NO BOUNDARIES” Access curriculum in different ways
- make students teachers, not just learners – very collaborative
- very little homework – focus on getting work done at school
- high level of comfort and trust
- problem solving
- bottom-up
- quality in thinking and work is key to success in whatever one does in life, but tends to be overlooked

### **Making change happen:**

- This is exciting
- For OPERI: Why here?
- Looking forward to seeing change in Ottawa. Interested in being part of it.
- Some people are ready, some not. Get those who are ready. DON'T WASTE TIME TO CONVINCE THE ONES WHO ARE NOT READY.

### **Parents**

- Parents free to be involved and participate if desired

- Concern that change needs to be supported by teachers and parents. Need for parents to have training to support this as well as teachers.
- The Mother of Matt in the film said, "I have an education. I am educated so I should know. I should know to trust the professionals and system." This mother was not able to trust her heart and wisdom (knowing something was not right) because she put more value into her being "educated". She dismissed her wisdom. "I am educated, so I know." Education (the way it is now) does not equal knowing.
- Do it with students and parents.
- I am here for more personal reasons because my son does not fit the main stream education system. Tests, etc. . . . are challenging and I'm curious to explore what can be done differently for him and other students that are not engaged but bright – but their marks don't reflect this.
- I want my son to receive the best education, not one that is teacher centric, but student centric and where he can be creative and not have to conform to meet "standards" based on just grades.
- Parent of a teen from COMPASS for Self-Directed. Profession: Occasional teacher with OCDSB – Former teacher OCSB. Concerns: traditional school system does not meet all kids needs. I withdrew my kids and enrolled them in Waldorf and COMPASS. Traditional system creates more damage than good. I witness the short comings as a supply teacher everyday.

## **PBL**

**"Problem-based learning (PBL)** is a student-centered **pedagogy** in which students learn about a subject through the experience of solving an open-ended problem." (Definition from Wikipedia)

- I love the environment @ High Tech High
- **I am not that close to what is happening in classrooms in Ottawa today. The Boards of Ed would say they are moving to self-directed, inquiry-based learning now. Not sure of the reality.**
- **I want to know more about PBL – what can this look like in our larger systems? How can this start? Who else is interested?**
- **We are seeing smaller things like PBL. How can this be sustained and grown?**
- Like making groups, ie. kids of different strengths
- Numerous project based opportunities in Ottawa (cardboard boat comp, culinary comp @ Algonquin College, Link crew events. What about alternate learning such as Norman Johnson? (Norman Johnson is an OCDSB alternate school for students at risk. Link Crew is a structured year-long high school transition program that provides mentoring and character development - <http://www.boomerangproject.com/link/yearlong-program>)
- I see a lot of doing projects. Lots of IQ development – No EQ focus: ability to self-reflect

## **Resources**



- Use resources in the community like the expertise of parents. Example: we homeschool and get to draw from parents who are biophysicists, architects, chiropractors, engineers, etc. Kids get to learn from people in the field.
- OPERI comment: Teachers and community members at two OCDSB high schools are planning a human library event on March 23<sup>rd</sup> at which students will be able to pick the brains of a wide variety of community members who have something to share. It provides an example of how traditional school can make some use of community resources, but it also accentuates that the current system makes it difficult to tap into those resources compared to the free flow that exists for homeschoolers.
- Homeschool kids should have access to the facilities the parents are paying taxes for like chemistry labs, gyms, metal and wood shops etc.

### **Scaffolding**

- My students are the same (as those in movie). It's "Sir! Just tell us what we need to know." I think next week I will really try to prompt the kids to find problems to solve "with scaffolding". I will try to encourage taking responsibility for self.
- Concerns: how it will effect the kids with upcoming changes at OCDSB? Hoe to make smooth transfer for them.
- It's hard for the parents and kids to face the changes, but sometimes it's necessary - how we can do it, and how to help the changes happen

### **Systemic change**

- Reform of the system = YAY
- School is teaching to an outdated employment model. Life isn't about getting good grades and a good job and be set for life. The real world need innovation and creativity.

*"We have to work together, and we must persist. It takes education and patience to change."*

- Engage in dialogue on progressive education and to begin collaboration towards coordinated systemic reform. First impression – film serves as a catalyst to this effort.
- Strategically subversive
- First impressions: Concerns for education. In education, we are trying to fit children into an institutionalized idea instead of letting them have a more active role.
- Speak to kids like adults
- In school we are taught someone else knows what is right/right for us. Our value depends on their judgment. In real life we need to know that we know enough and are enough on our own.
- It seems insurmountable to overcome the status-quo

- The world needs new breath in order to take in unimaginable better directions
- Problems are large – need fresh approach – war, discrimination, environment pollution, greed/power, inequality, economy, corporate greed\*, abuse, stress, mental illness. ?HOW? Future generation can't do status-quo
- Investment in change is very NB (important) because the status-quo isn't working.
- Too many "blocks" of time. (factory model)
- Like getting rid of scheduling/bell.
- Not sure scheduling is the problem. Isn't it teaching style?
- Free children from artificial frames of timelines, curriculum and grades.
- Times of day individuals are more awake
- Independent process
- Kids should be empowered to feel they are directing their own paths and have ownership of their lives, journey and process
- As a parent of two preschoolers I found this event of great interest. I have had concerns since my daughter started school last year and seen changes in their behaviours. So, I totally would like to support an educational system that frees our children's way of thinking and creating rather than telling them how or what to think.
- Keep it low tech – don't need lots of money
- You can't do it alone
- As a homeschool parent whose 9 year old entered school for the first time, I now understand the power that the system has to pull kids into its workings. Within a distressingly short period of time, her goals became centered on doing well on the tests (and there are so many of them). Real learning, academics, social seems to have largely disappeared from her life.
- Change is needed. Students need to be more in control of their learning and focus on their strengths to move towards their full potential – well-rounded individuals, collaboration

*"COMPASS exists to give families the change they want to see in the future of public education, NOW in the Present!"*

- COMPASS: We know this is where education is heading, and are proud to lead by example to schools as one example of how kids can be successful self-directing their education, and how new roles for adults and teachers can

exist to support a new generation of happy and inquisitive youth.

- Focus on learning, not on education.
- I'm excited about the awareness there is that current education doesn't cut it and the changes that we may see in the future
- Do most people think they need to be taught to learn? How do we start to overcome society's lack of trust in kids?



- I came here with COMPASS Centre for Self-Directed Learning where I am one of the members. Education is changing finally.
- I have been talking about the theories of an alternate educational system for a very long time. This movie made me feel validated and hopeful. Finally.
- First Impressions: Observable need for change – needed shift in thinking – not producing critical thinkers, seeking inspiration. PUSH THROUGH):
- Not addressing HOW to change existing framework (province)
- Need a shared vision
- Being on the trajectory is what's important
- The nature of learning pathologized differences
- Initially, I think parents/kids who want alternatives should threaten and leave schools/boards that aren't offering true/various alternatives.
- Need for different types of schools
- Concerned that the current structure only caters to a very specific subset of students and can be discouraging for the rest (which has lifelong ramifications).

## Teachers

- Holding teachers accountable
- Teachers need to be empowered in their interests
- Support teachers who want their students to learn how to learn = YAY
- Teachers present as mentors
- We are so busy as teachers “teaching” information as opposed to letting a student develop through their own learning.
- “It’s our job as teachers to bring it (creativity) out. No – your job is to sit back and support (when wanted) others as they show you their creativity naturally.
- Ideas to go ahead with: pulling out the greatness in each child
- As an educator: I’m always looking for an alternative, non-traditional way to teach/help kids learn – especially kids who don’t fit into the regular program. (I work with at-risk teenagers – a tough crowd to motivate.)
- I want my son to be around teachers who will focus on what he can do and not what he can’t do, and who will help bring the genius out in him that I believe exists in every child.
- Teachers work harder than the students. Why?
- We want to fix things, rather than see them struggle.
- We expect students to fit within a box, teach what we know, not how they learn
- What brought me here is my curiosity and desire to be open to possibilities. As an educator I am always looking for ways to create a learning community that embraces diversity and encourages creativity.
- I came to “Beyond Measure” to challenge myself and my teaching practice.

*“I’m an educator. I want to be held accountable, but in a smart way.”*

- The students that sit before me in my class are screaming for innovation and the ability to showcase their interests, desires and creativity. The traditional paper and pencil just ain't cutting it. Where do I go with this being an ETFI teacher who only sees her students for two hours a day? I don't want to be the teacher who tries to fit all 27 students into a box, when all of them are so diverse and I recognize that.
- Teachers need to have more control over what and how they teach. They need to learn to learn
- How much of a priority is this to the teacher's union?
- Many innovative teaching techniques have been developed but none are being adapted by the OCDSB
- Want to know how we can encourage the OCDSB to pursue some new directions
- I'm an educator: I'm interested in opportunities for kids to think critically and creatively. And in creating communities of learning – true learning.
- Create the conditions for learning and meaning making for students.