

Dear Highlander Families and Friends,

Our days are filled with our families and activities sometimes leaving us little time to imagine the future. The times when we do slow down and pause to think about our futures, though, are important and can result in rich discussions about our family choices. Similarly, educators go through this same process. National and international issues do shape our futures and most definitely the futures of our children.

Current trends in educational thinking about learning help us to adapt our LHPS programs and instruction to meet the future needs of our students. Technology and globalization are hot topics right now for the general public especially with the publishing of books such as *The World Is Flat* by Thomas Friedman and *Freakonomics* by Stephen Levitt and Stephen Dubner. Also, in educational circles more focus is brought to these issues by psychologists and educators like Howard Gardner, author of *Multiple Intelligences* and Fernando Reimers, Ford Foundation Professor of International Education at Harvard University.

One such topic is the ways in which technology and media are most definitely affecting all of our lives. Information is now readily accessible from most any place and at most any time through multiple technology tools and media delivery systems. Whereas, we used to consult an encyclopedia or professional journal which went through several editing cycles, our students today can access “information” from an almost limitless number of sources some with little or no quality control or editing boards. Sifting through that massive amount of information and choosing quality sources is an important skill for our students. Howard Gardner’s newest book *The Five Minds of the Future* (2007) outlines five ways of thinking that we should be cultivating including the “synthesizing mind—the mind that can survey a wide range of sources, decide what is important and worth paying attention to; and then put this information together in ways that make sense to oneself and to others.”

In addition, media and visual imagery are powerful learning tools. They are ever present in our lives unlike even ten years ago, before 24 hour programming, cell phones, wireless access and ever present screens delivering society’s messages and most current news. It is no doubt an exciting time of information sharing and collaboration! But necessary skills and abilities to make healthy and moral choices are even more important for our students due to the increased influences in their daily lives. Howard Gardner makes a case that the “ethical mind” is important to cultivate for the individual but also to become keepers of our community values. The “ethical mind is able to think about himself and the world abstractly and ask what kind of person do I want to be and what kind of world would it be if all persons behave the way I do? Choosing to live in accordance with those choices even when behaviors clash with self interest” is what makes ethical living difficult especially amidst today’s influences.

Globalization, economic changes and population changes seem to be rapidly forcing us to face a world in which skills including cultural understanding, second language proficiency, diplomacy and citizenship firmly anchored to democratic values are needed.

Fernando Reimers finds Howard Gardner's "respectful and ethical minds necessary to address the challenges of the interconnected 21st century. The respectful mind welcomes exposure to diverse persons and groups, displays initial trust, tries to form links and avoids prejudicial judgments." Reimers does make the statement though, which is most important to underscore, that these competencies and abilities need to be cultivated but not at the expense of academic competencies such as math, science and arts which inform our understanding of the world. Of importance also especially with young adults is developing a sense of purpose which can be accomplished by connecting the disciplines with a "broader civic and global purpose."

These topics are BIG topics for educators and LHP faculty to ponder, dialogue about and utilize in instructional planning. They are also important for families to ponder for the new year 2007 and the 21st century.

With respect,