



How to Think, How to Learn?

Information about our new school contains the statement: "In every discipline how to think and learn is as important as what to think and learn." In the original "wordier" brochure I added the following statement: "We don't want students mistaking the map for the territory, or the menu for the meal."

I offer the following story (adapted from the writings of Nassim Taleb)

Jonathon, a PhD financial analyst for Price Wantsmor, and Ricky, a highly successful marine products businessman with an Associates Degree in Turf Management, are asked the same question: "A nickel, with an equal likelihood of landing heads or tails, lands 25 heads in a row. What is the likelihood of the coin landing tails on the 26th toss?" Jonathon states, "Because it has an equal probability, the chances of each head or tail event would always be 50% regardless of the previous sequence of events." Ricky responds, "Come on, forget the probability, that's bogus ... it has way less than a 50% chance. The coin has to be loaded (a trick coin) to land heads-up 25 times in a row." Jonathon is an accomplished within-the-box thinker. Ricky, apparently as aware of probability as Jonathon, sees the question for what it is and responds with an out-of-the box answer.

At Watershed, I'd like to see our students graduate capable of making both responses – of having the tools and the habit of working both within, and outside of the box. As teachers it's our responsibility to provide training in the use of accepted academic tools. But I also see it as our responsibility to occasionally, appropriately, show students "the box" within which we work and to humbly point out its limitations. It's not simply humility we'd like to foster. Clear seeing, hearing, and thinking depend on an awareness of context, on noticing where we are with "the box" of our assumptions or level of understanding.

My wish for the New Year is for our students to see and understand the map and the real world, the menu and the always-possible feast.

With love and best wishes for the Holidays and for 2008,

Philip Gerard, Director



AP History Student, Josie Davis stands guard during a recent visit to Boston's Freedom Trail

Dates and Reminders:

December 21: Fall Semester Ends - School begins on FRIDAY, January 4th with the start of Project Week. All students are expected to be on campus Friday the 4th unless other arrangements have been made.

January 11: Project Week and Semester Exhibition 5:30 p.m. in the LSC Gallery & Theater.

Feb 1-3: Quebec Trip – The School will be staying at Auberge de la Paix, 31, Couillard Street, Quebec, QC, Canada, G1R 3T4

www.aubergedelapaix.com / (418) 694-0735

Please be reminded that all travelers need a current US Passport. Travel details and trip activities will follow in early January.

February 18- 24: Vacation Week

February 25-29: Workshop Week - Details and daily schedules will follow mid January.

Wish List:

A replacement couch for the "sunshine room." If you have one to donate, please contact the office.

Weight bench set & dumbbells gathering dust? Please give us a call and we will arrange to pick up.



From the Faculty: “Musing On Modern Media” by *Melissa Waterman Journalism Teacher*

I was fifteen when I discovered *The New York Times*. I recall my parents reading the *Providence Journal* on Sundays and sharing the comic pages with my siblings and me. *The New York Times*, however, was in a different league altogether, something exotic that the summer people occasionally brought with them to the beach. I found “the Times,” as the more sophisticated students at the high school I attended in western Massachusetts called it, one fall afternoon in the reading room of the school’s library. The Sunday edition was heavy and fat and left ink all over my hands. Finally I had access to what I realized was a major conduit to a larger world than the one I had long lived in – politics, art, international stories, editorials, and a glossy magazine featuring people and events of which I had never heard.

Today young people gather the news from not one but a dizzying array of sources. While most adult Americans still get much of the news from television, adults under the age of 30 typically use the Web to learn about world events. Fewer and fewer Americans subscribe to or read a daily newspaper at all.

Students in the Watershed School’s fall Journalism class have been introduced to complex issues concerning contemporary journalism. Currently five major corporations own 85% of the nation’s radio and television stations, newspapers, cable channels, magazines, and book publishing houses. Given the consolidation of the media and the proliferation of blogs and other Web-based news outlets, how do we know the news we are given is true? How do we discern bias in the news? How have the standards for news reporting changed in the Internet age? What happens to a democracy when there’s lots of news and very little information?

The New York Times and the other major newspapers of the nation have paled in stature since I was fifteen. Yet we still look to working journalists, in whatever medium we prefer, to give us a clear and factual account of the world. Being able to judge the veracity and meaning of that information will continue to be critical to our democracy.

From the Students: “Unjustly Ignored Luna Lovegood and More on Harry Potter” by *Sam Auciello Fantasy Literature Student*

Of all the characters in J. K. Rowling’s renowned Harry Potter series, the most unjustly ignored is clearly Luna Lovegood. She has far more potential for development than any other character and yet she only appears a few times and only in the last few books.

The books center around a popular jock who believes that he is better than everyone else. The fact that he is right only makes him less interesting as a character. After him, the main characters fill out the necessary roles of resident genius/female role model and best friend/foil to the resident genius. Interestingly enough, the least developed of these three main characters is the only one with a decent actor in the film adaptation. But I digress.

Harry may have had a rough childhood but that is easily forgotten when he becomes a wizard celebrity and a hero. Luna on the other hand is hated almost universally. She is the classic downtrodden loser. But does she succumb to peer pressure and conform to the social norms? No. She stands by what she believes in. Luna is who “emos” and goths wish they were. The whole idea of nonconformity comes from people realizing how cool it was to be like Luna and then making it less cool by conforming to it. This is a message that should be sent to kids: “Stop worrying about what other people think and be yourself.” I’d read that book. Sure, maybe it’s a little cliché, but it’s better than “Be good at everything and don’t follow the rules and everyone will love you.”

Speaking of love, the books’ overarching themes are love and bravery. The passage in book seven where the heroes see Luna’s room and their own faces painted there is, if nothing else, a clear illustration (mind the pun) of Luna’s love for her friends. And as for bravery — Harry spends the majority of book seven in hiding. Luna, on the other hand, stands up for what she believes in from the start, and her bravery is culminated in book seven when she is imprisoned for her defiance. You couldn’t ask for a better poster child for the books’ themes.

Why then is she so undeveloped? Why does she appear for the first time in book five? Why is she only part of the story of book seven in four places? Could it be that for all her talk of bravery, J. K. Rowling is afraid to spotlight a nonconformist? Or are these merely the mad ravings of an obsessed fan-boy?



Alum Letter: *by Scout Mackay '06*

The first time my mother and I met with Phil Gerard, the director at Watershed Community School in Rockland Maine, I knew immediately that the school was an opportunity that I could not turn down. Phil seemed quite relaxed talking about the school, introducing the mission of the school and classes that I would be taking with an underlying implication that this was the way high school should be. As a prospective eleventh grader who'd attended no less than nine schools including prestigious prep schools, low-end public schools, and a Quaker school I could not have agreed more. Having experienced just about every kind of school possible in the ten years I'd had of schooling, I knew exactly what I wanted by the time I was sixteen. I didn't want to take any science or history classes, and math was out of the question.

Within two weeks of my admission, the year began. Our class schedules were handed out and I was livid to see that not only was United States History one of my classes, but I'd be taking Physics and Geometry as well. When I presented my complaints to the faculty, protesting that I did not need any of those classes, that I'd already taken math in my career as student, I found my efforts useless and joined the rest of my six geometry classmates at a table in one of the two classrooms. As soon as our teacher walked in, I learned one of the most important lessons that I took away from Watershed. Math was not scary. Math came in the form of a friendly looking woman who carried a black brief case. Out of it she drew a handful of colored pencils, a stack of geometry paper, and some books about Celtic knots. Similar things occurred in United States History and Physics. Will Galloway read us a story and Pete Kalajian climbed to the roof of the Lincoln Street Center and dropped a few tennis balls.

Classes at Watershed did not consist of typical activities found at other schools. For a lesson in marine biology, my classmates and I examined crab shells, took a walk on the beach and played with seaweed. Discussions in Ethics class resulted in students standing on (and some hiding under) tables. Other classes that I took at Watershed were tai chi, African Dance, Latin Dance, and Ultimate Frisbee for P.E., Ceramics, Painting, Music Composition and Voice.

And still there are many that I loved and have not listed, all made unique by the faculty members who presented the ideas and the students who added to them.

One of the most profoundly different things about Watershed is the instructors are all experts in their fields and love what they teach. They bring both humor and open minds for intellectual thought with an attitude that they are students as well. This makes Watershed a school where both faculty and students learn together, lending an opportunity for the school to operate as a community.

The friendships that I made at Watershed with students and faculty alike, and the lessons that I gained from my experience there are invaluable, and have stayed with me since I graduated in 2006. Since then, I have spent a year in rural Costa Rica, assistant-teaching first and second grade. During my time there, I applied the values that I learned from my teachers at Watershed, and understood what a gift it is to be able to teach! No wonder the faculty at Watershed is so positive! Now that I've returned from Costa Rica, I am studying music at the University of Maine at Augusta. Had I not gone to Watershed, I would not have ended up in Maine where this fantastic music program is!

But what I am most grateful to the Watershed Community School for is teaching me *how to learn*, reminding me to *be curious*, and offering an environment where I formed friendships that will last for my entire life.

Anyone who is part of the community now is incredibly lucky, and any prospective student who'd be willing to pass up this unique opportunity of a lifetime would be out of their mind.



Former exchange student Niko Riedel sent this photo from Germany and writes: "See the fleece I'm wearing in the picture? With pride I walk through the ancient stone halls of St. Raphael Gymnasium..."

Watershed School

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