

# EDUCATION



DISCOVERING  
THE PROMISE OF  
REALITY

# REDISCOVERING THE EDUCATIONAL EVENT



Andrew Wyeth, "Wind from the Sea,"  
1947, National Gallery of Art

What kind  
of education is  
beneficial to the human  
person? Is it possible to  
educate in a genuinely  
human way in the  
current context?

Amidst  
decades-  
long cries  
of an American  
educational crisis,

this exhibit invites visitors into a conversation about American education, what education has to do with life, and the nature of education as experience. Developed by educators from across the U.S. who, through the perspective of Luigi Giussani's pedagogy, have discovered that crisis is not a limit, but the path to a broader horizon, this exhibit offers a space for hopeful dialogue about possibilities for education in present day America. Without reducing the scope of the issue to endorsements of specific teaching techniques or school systems, this exhibit documents an approach to educating the human person which supersedes the boundaries of any particular educational environment.

# EVENTS THAT SHAPED AMERICAN SCHOOLS

## and attempts to address the crisis

1983

*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* report is published by President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education. The report contributed to the ever-growing assertion that American schools were failing, and it touched off a wave of local, state, and federal reform efforts.

1980s

The popularity of the Constructivist theory and practices in education grows.

2000

Widespread closure of Catholic schools begins. Nearly 2000 Catholic schools close in the first two decades of the new century.

1970s

The term "achievement gap" is first used in an academic journal to refer to a widening achievement gap between [whites and nonwhites] as the general level of education increases.

2002

*No Child Left Behind Act* is signed into law. The NCLB significantly increases the federal role in holding schools responsible for the academic progress of all students. It put a special focus on ensuring that states and schools boost the performance of certain groups of students, such as English-language learners, students in special education, and poor and minority children.

1954

*Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision declares state-sanctioned segregation of public schools is a violation of the 14th amendment and is therefore unconstitutional. Desegregation of schools begin.

2009

*Race to the Top* grant is announced fostering charter expansion. United States Department of Education announces competitive grants created to spur and reward innovation and reforms in state and local district K-12 education. States are awarded grants for satisfying certain educational policies, such as performance-based evaluations for teachers and principals based on multiple measures of educator effectiveness, adopting common standards, adoption of policies that do not prohibit the expansion of charter schools, turning around the lowest-performing schools, and building and using data systems.

1938

John Dewey publishes *Experience and Education*, ushering in a call for education reform based on experiential learning.

1925

Supreme Court decision *Pierce v. The Society of Sisters* declares unconstitutional an Oregon law that required public school attendance, thus securing the rights of religious and private schools to exist in the US. Public funding for such schools still prohibited

2010

Common Core State Standards for English and Math are released. CCSS is an educational initiative that details what content and skills K-12 students should master in English language arts and mathematics at the end of each grade. It seeks to establish consistent educational standards across the states. The CCSS are adopted by 42 states.

1904

Catholic educators formed an organization to coordinate their efforts on a national scale. The Catholic Educational Association later changed its name to the National Catholic Educational Association.

1880s

Most states passed a constitutional amendment, called the Blaine Amendment, forbidding tax money be used to fund parochial schools. Blaine Amendments were passed as a direct result of the nativist, anti-Catholic sentiment that was a recurring theme in American politics during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

2012

Next Generation Science Standards are released and adopted by 16 states, while other states have adopted very similar standards. The guidelines are based on a three-dimensional framework, binding core content to scientific practices and crosscutting concepts, or recurring patterns. Curricula based on the standards may cover fewer topics, but delves more deeply into specific topics, encouraging students to make connections to real-world issues and across scientific disciplines, and to employ skills such as primary investigation, analysis, and critical thinking.

1837

Massachusetts creates the nation's first board of education, with Horace Mann as its secretary. The Common School Movement, compulsory education and standardized teacher training begins. Mann was instrumental in the decision to adopt the Prussian education system in Massachusetts. This system evolved by the late 19th century into what later became known as factory model schools, referring to both a curriculum model and architecture type that would last until the 21st century.

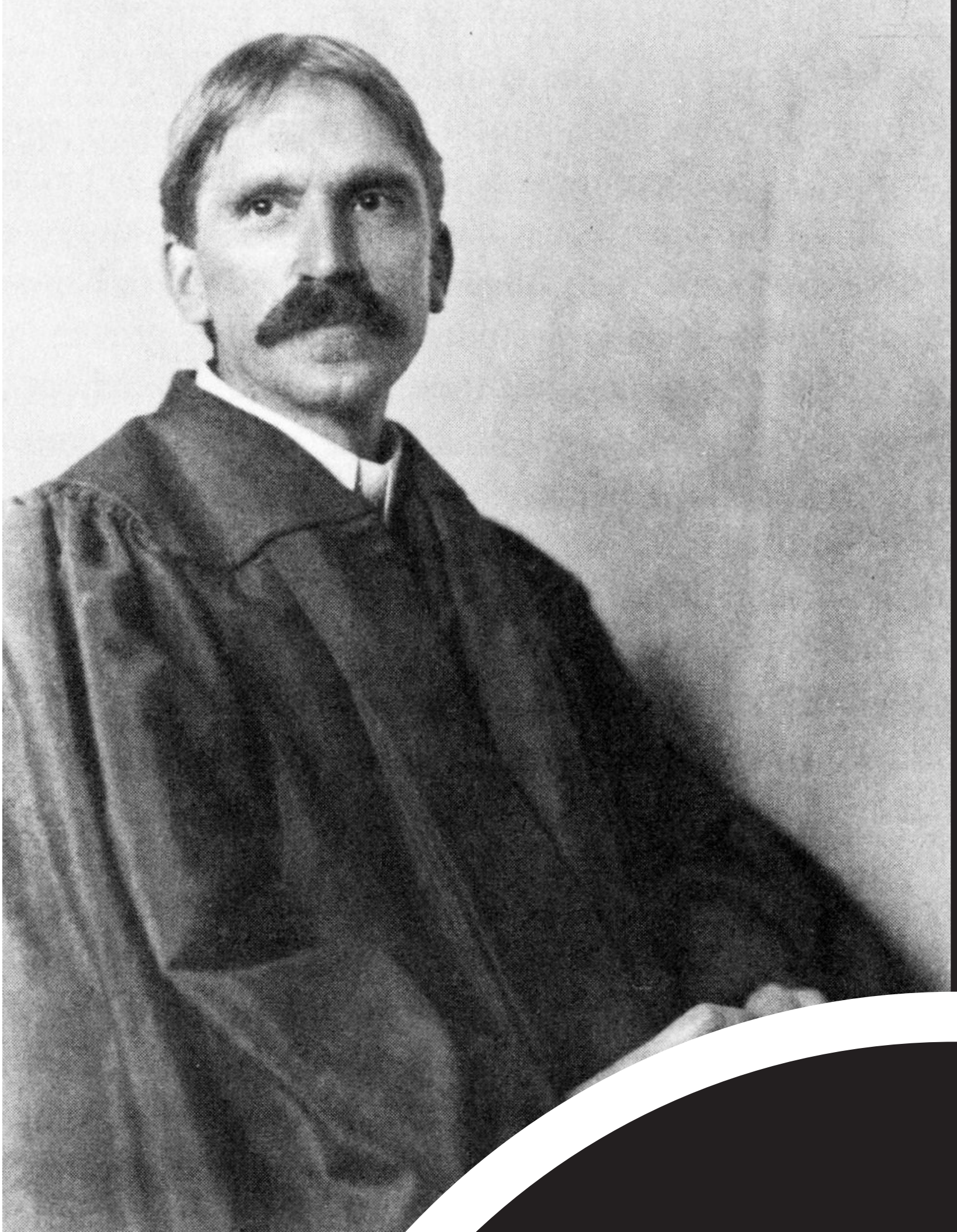


Norman Rockwell, "Boy Graduate," 1959, oil on canvas

# PRESUPPOSITIONS OF

# AMERICAN PEDAGOGY

## Experimentalism and Constructivism



John Dewey, 1902,  
Wikimedia Commons

John Dewey (1859-1952) was an American philosopher and psychologist; however, he is most well known for his publications and influence on American education. Theories that ring as hallmarks of John Dewey's work include pragmatism, progressive education (the counterpoint to "traditional," didactic education), and democracy. In particular, his ideas about democracy and the social order have left a profound imprint on American public education which, in its beginnings and continuing today, saw that the educational system's primary and markedly patriotic objective was to form good citizens. This resonated with Dewey because he understood the aim of education not as a vehicle to simply transmit content knowledge or certain skills, but to help young people learn and reflect on their experience, so they may live and move in society in service of its good.

John Dewey called for school reform of "traditional schools" based on his theory of experience: "Progressive education requires, in an urgent degree, a philosophy of education based on a philosophy of experience" (Dewey, *Experience & Education*, 1938).

For Dewey, the point of human experience is to help the student reach his full potential, which is, "to prepare him for the future life means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities" (Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, Article, 1897).

However, not all experiences are educative for Dewey. Rather, experience that is worthwhile is experience that allows a person to construct a better plan for a method of action in the future. This plan for the future he calls the formation of purpose.

The formation of purposes is, then, a rather complex intellectual operation. It involves (1) observation of surrounding conditions; (2) knowledge of what has happened in similar situations in the past, a knowledge obtained partly by recollection and partly from the information, advice, and warning of those who have had a wider experience; and (3) judgment which puts together what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify. A purpose differs from an original impulse and desire through its translation into a plan and method of action based upon foresight of the consequences of acting under given observed conditions in a certain way. (Dewey, *Experience & Education*, 1938)

What role  
does experience  
play in an  
education? How do  
I make sense of my  
experiences?

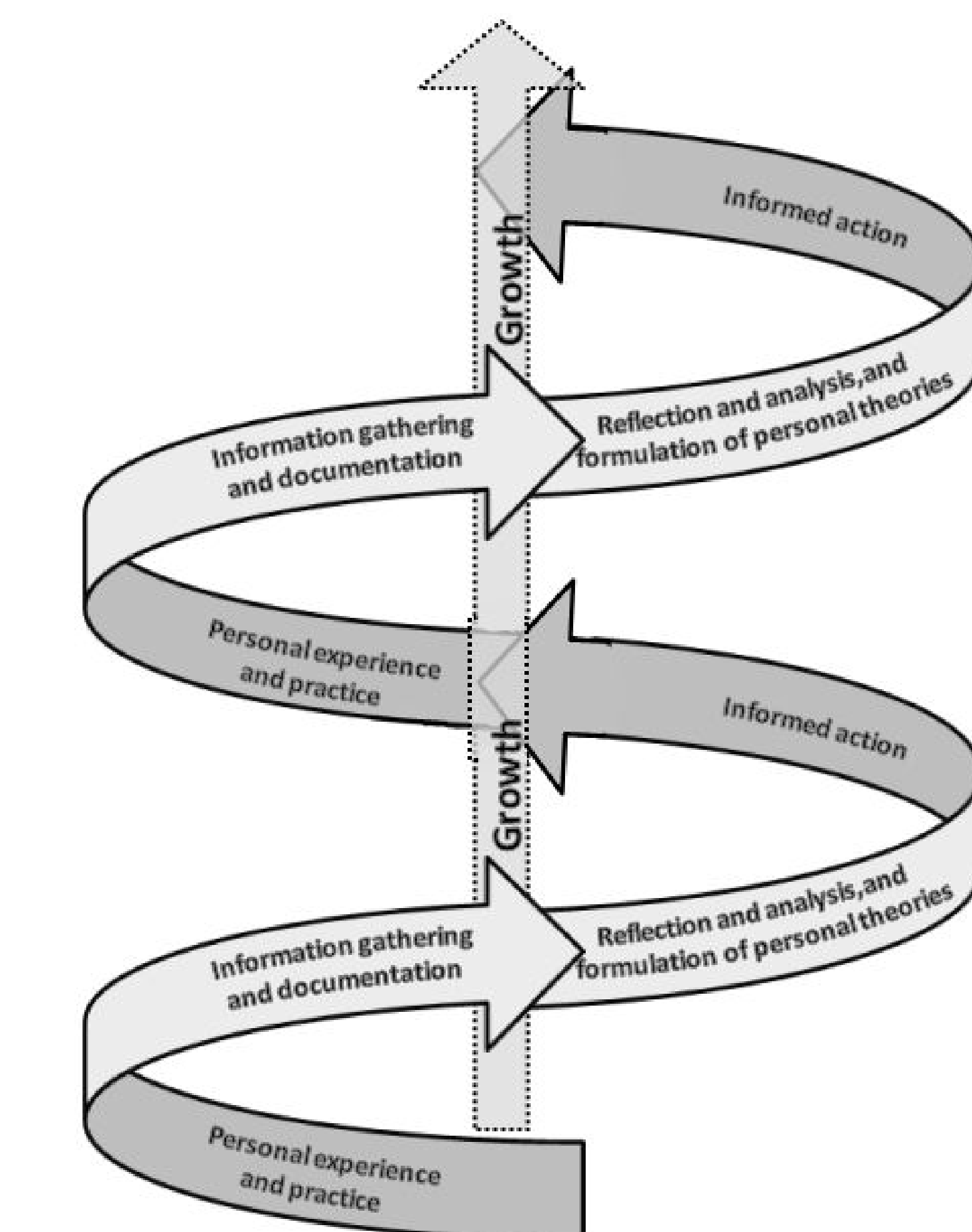
*Children have real understanding only of that which they invent themselves, and each time that we try to teach them too quickly, we keep them from reinventing it themselves. ~ Jean Piaget*

Piaget and Vygotsky's theories of knowledge construction became popular in the 1960s and 1970s, respectively, and continue to influence the American educational environment and educational jargon that has been dominant through the 1990s. Constructivism is generally the theory that learning happens when the individual



"Children business"

subject constructs knowledge on his own rather than as a result of the direct or didactic influence of others. Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was a Swiss clinical psychologist known for his pioneering work in child development; he is also considered to have originated the constructivist theory of knowing. For Piaget, the student creates knowledge, and



subsequently meaning, based on his experiences. Piaget's focus was on the act of learning, rather than what influences learning, which was more the concern of Vygotsky's work.

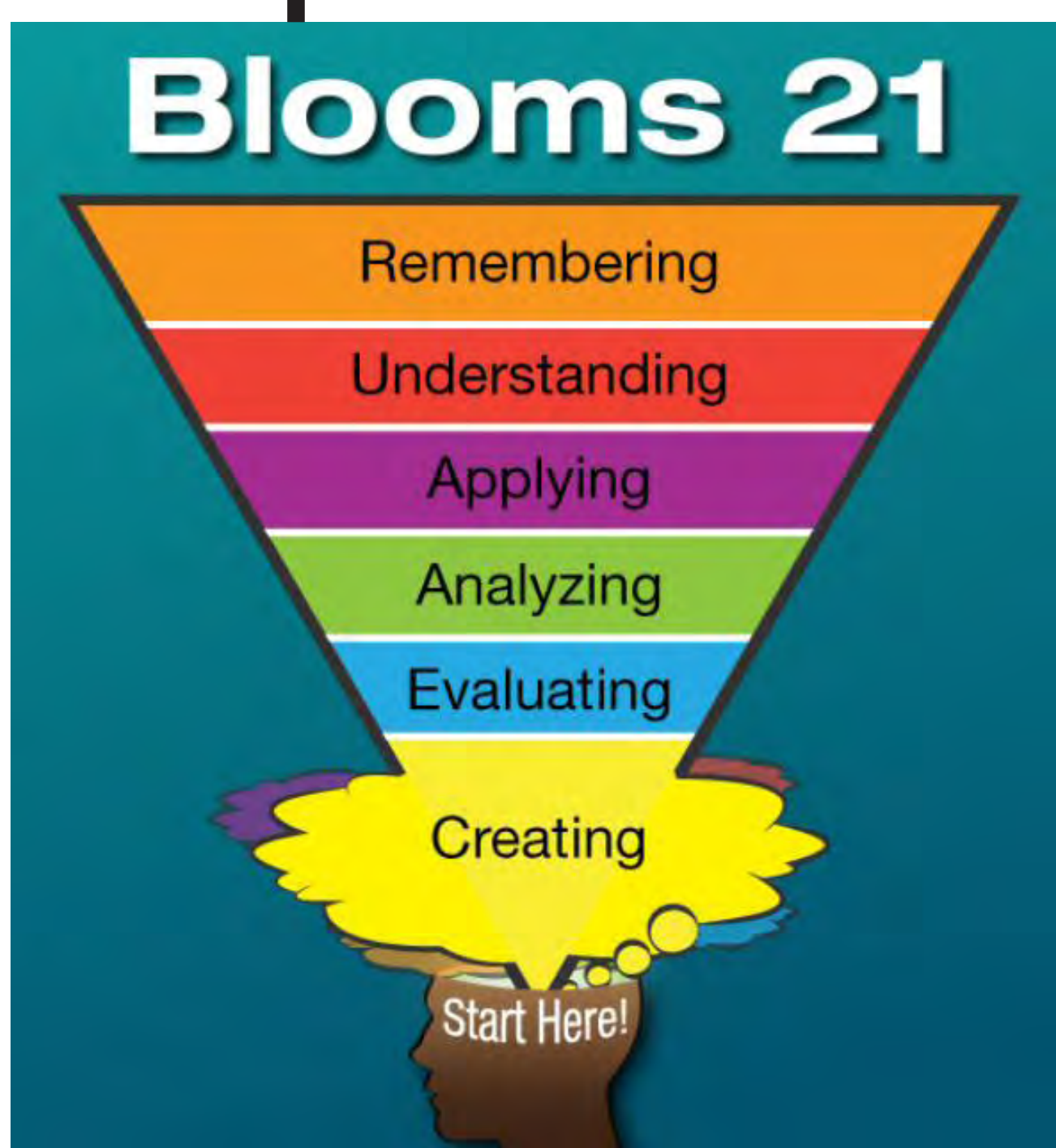
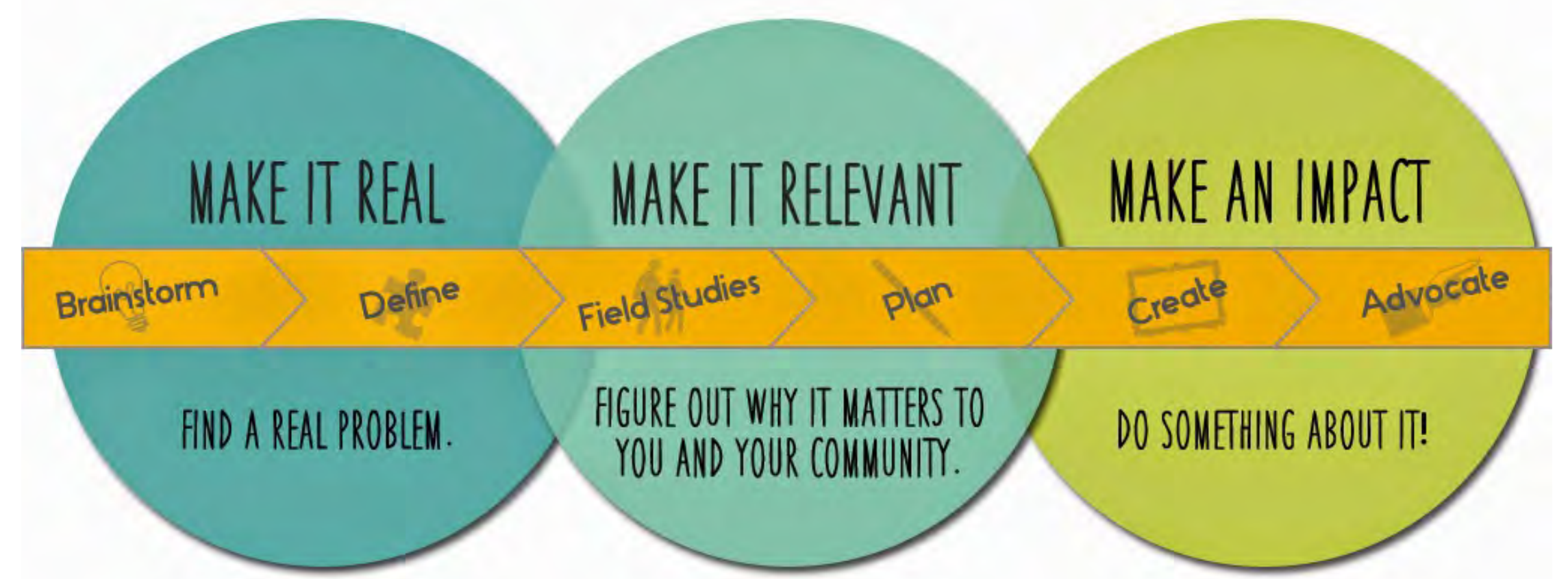
Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) was a Soviet psychologist who is also associated with constructivist pedagogy, but as social constructivism. He understood culture as playing a primary role in learning, which he believed to be the internalization of social experiences. He is also known for his concept of "zone of proximal development" which is a way of describing how new knowledge depends on previous knowledge gained in a social context; students can master concepts with the help of others which they

could not have understood on their own. Vygotsky died at the age of 38 in 1934, and most of his publications did not appear in English until after 1960.

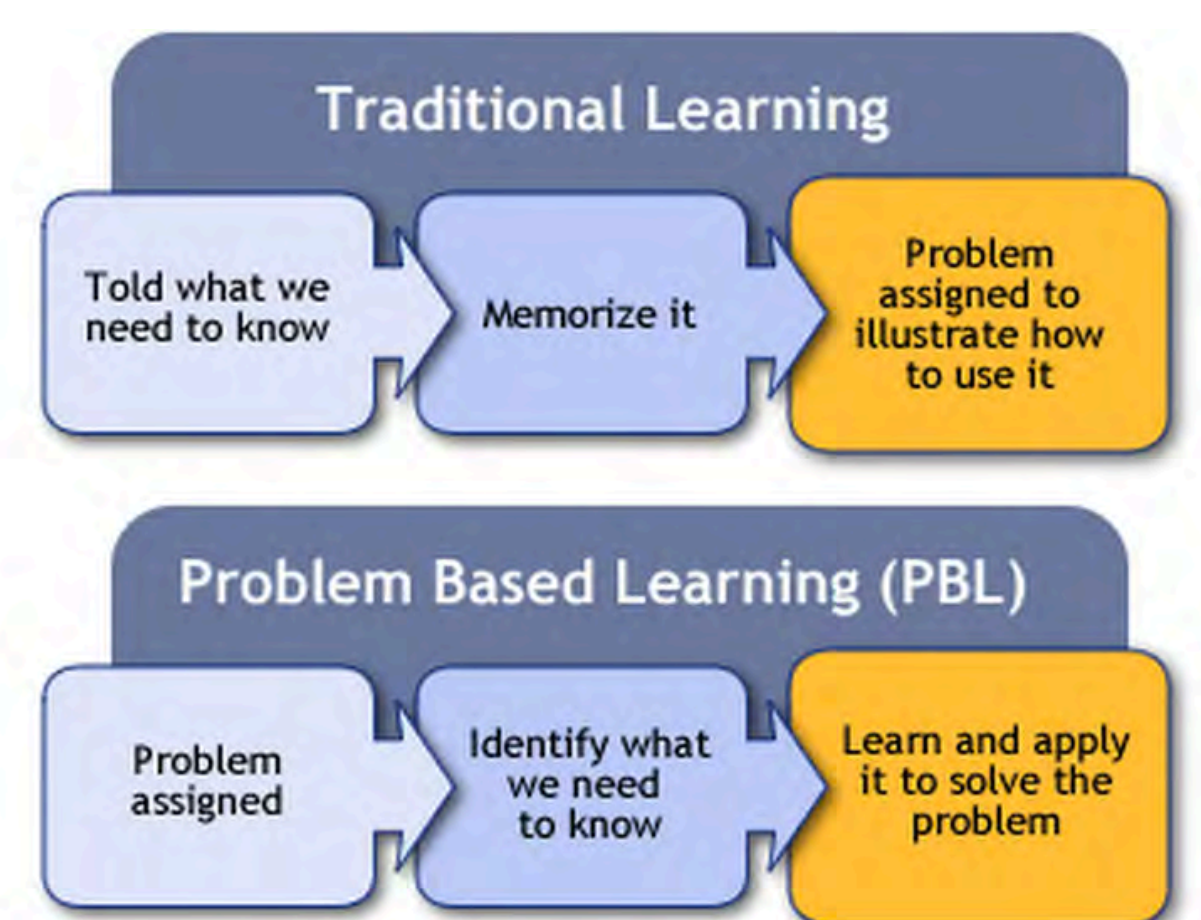
# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODELS

Experience based learning models dominate current teacher training programs, emphasizing "student-centered" and "inquiry-based" teaching methodologies. Recently developed standards, such as the Common Core in Math and Language Arts and Next Generation Science Standards, aim at facilitating classroom practices that focus on experiential learning and critical thinking.

## Project-Based Learning

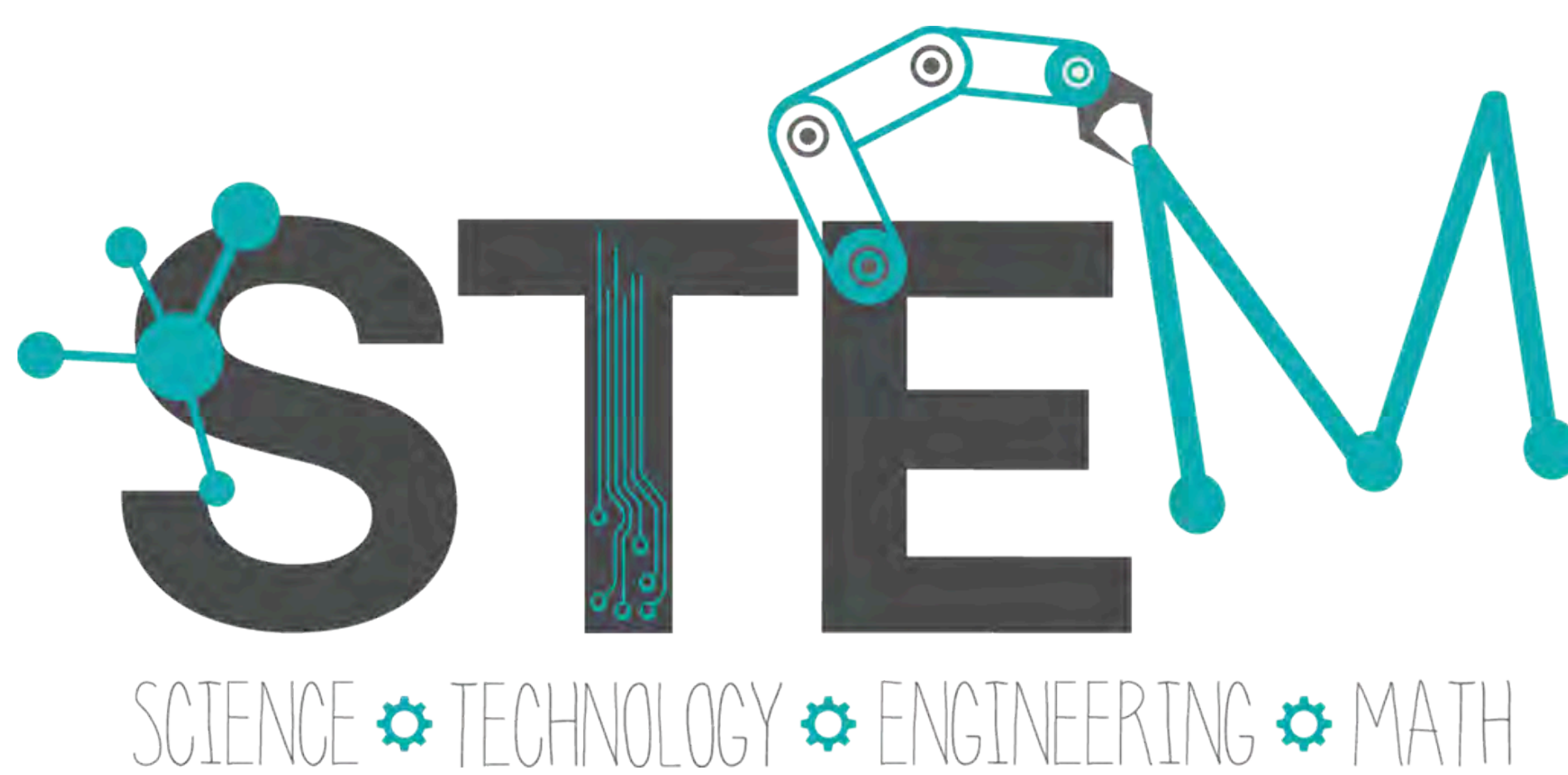


"Project Based Learning helps make learning relevant to students by establishing connections to life outside the classroom and by addressing real world issues. In the classroom, PBL gives teachers an opportunity to build relationships with students by acting as their coach, facilitator, and co-learner." the National Education Association



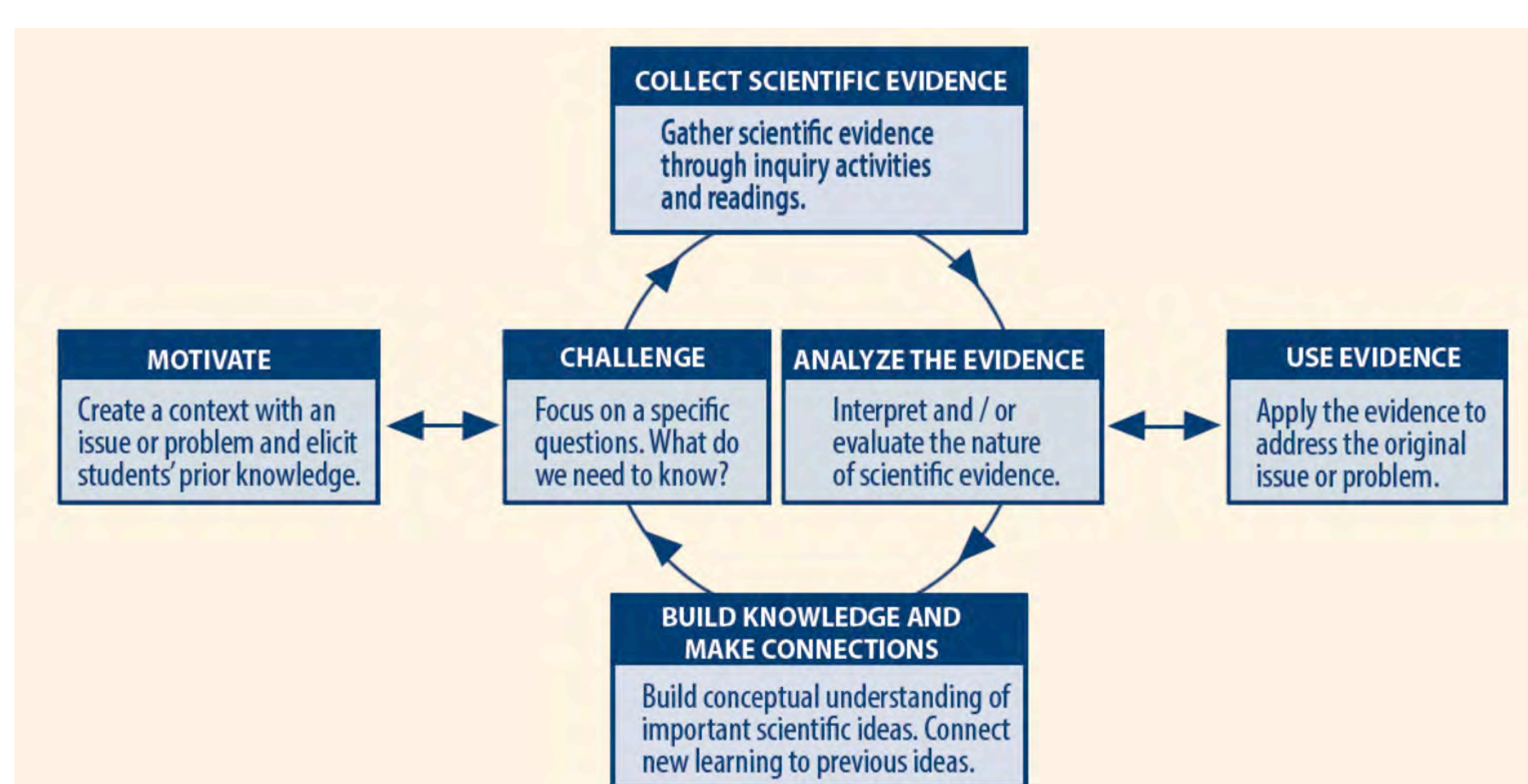
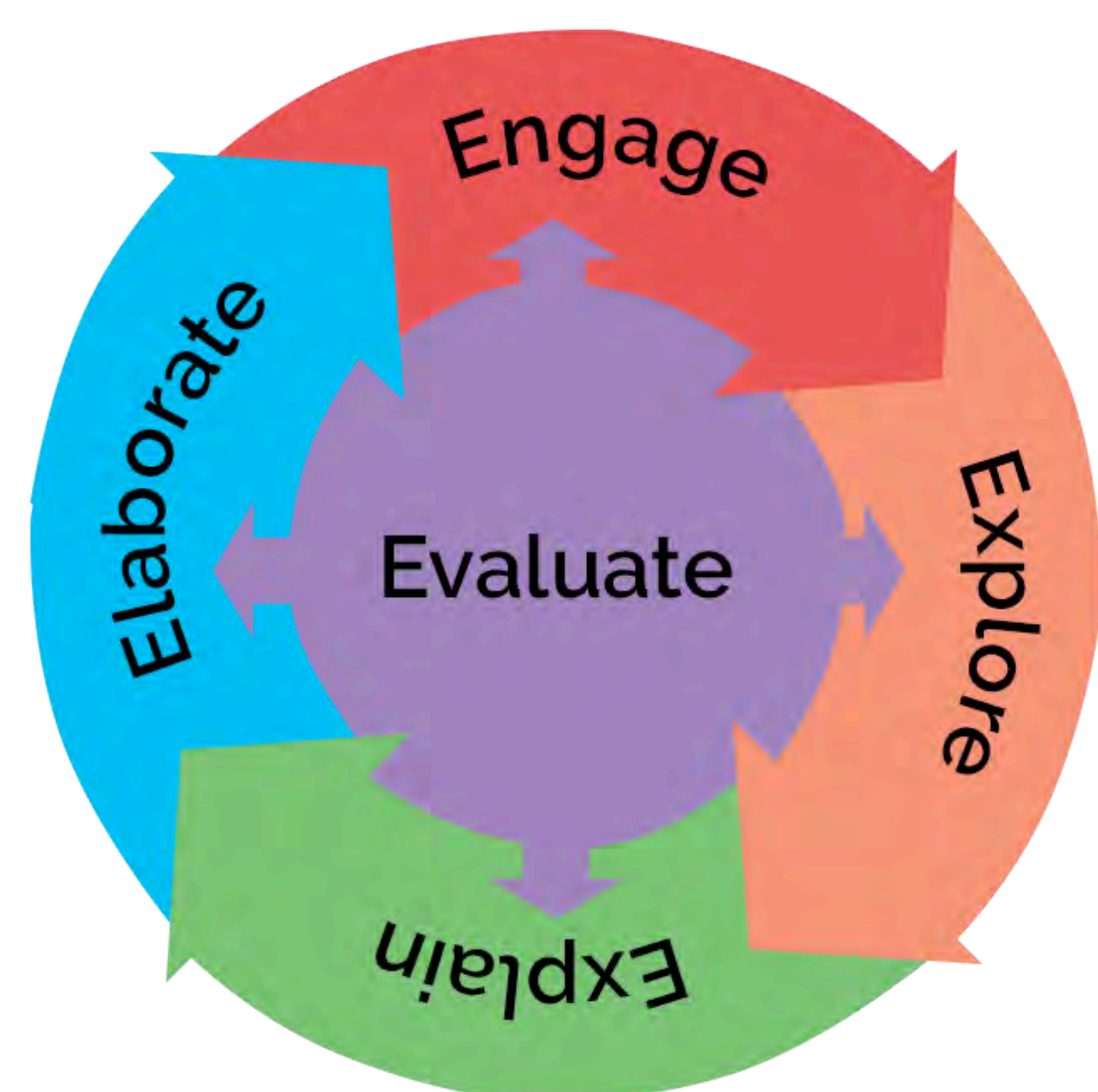
Constructivist theory flips Bloom's Taxonomy (above) upside down. Within project- or problem-based learning models, students create in order to remember. "We remember information because we have "worked" to use it in a meaningful way. Challenge a student to evaluate, and he will have to synthesize, analyze, apply, comprehend and utilize information... Challenge students to evaluate why an apple falls from a tree and they will function in all classifications of Bloom's Taxonomy." Institute for Learner-Centered Education

## Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math



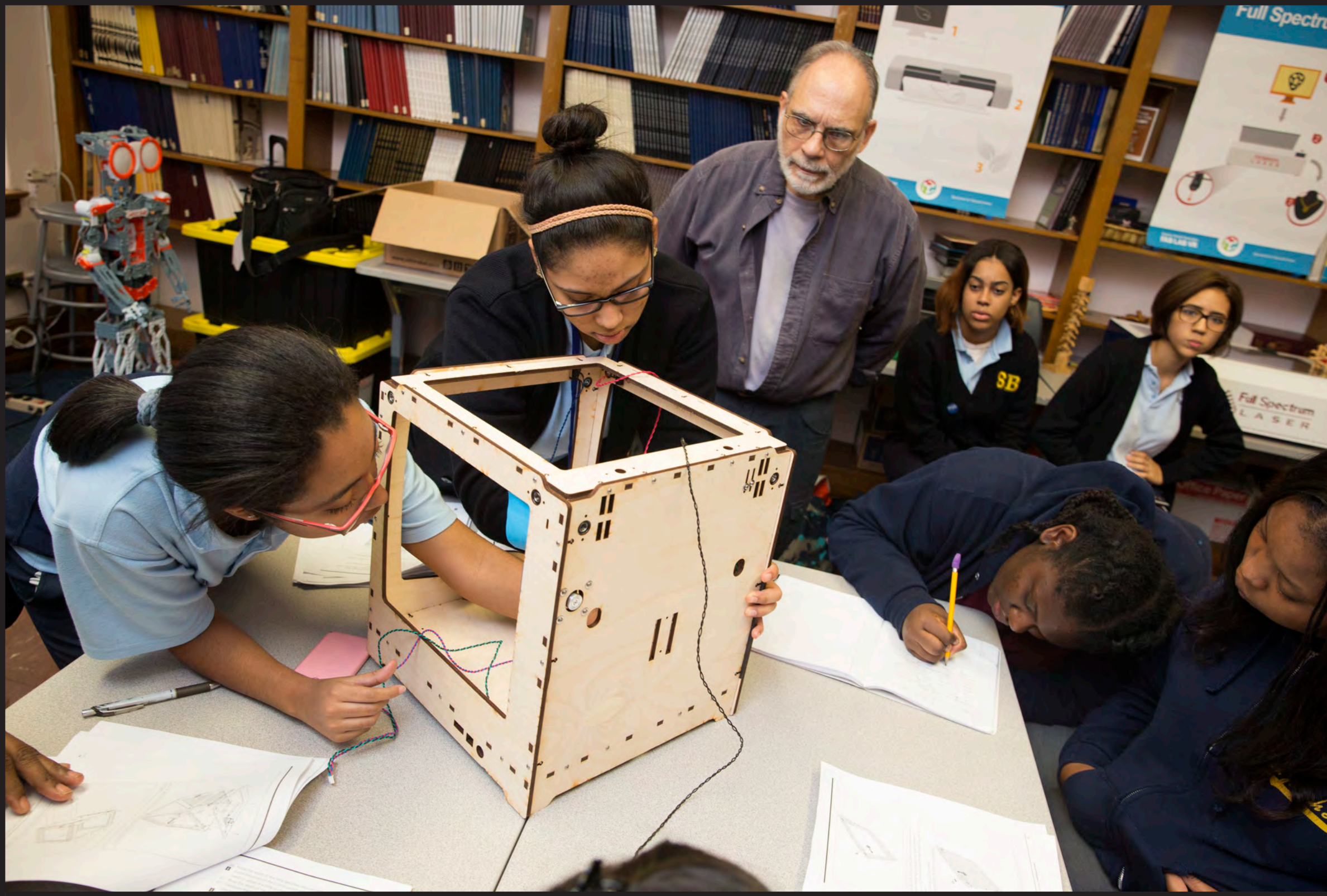
The recent adoption of the NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) has coincided with a rise in STEM education, which calls for the integration of science and math content with technology and engineering skills. Various experiential learning methods have emerged from within the STEM and NGSS umbrella.

The 5E's Learning Model (right) grows out of the constructivist approach. Students progress through five engaging phases of learning in order to build on and expand prior knowledge.



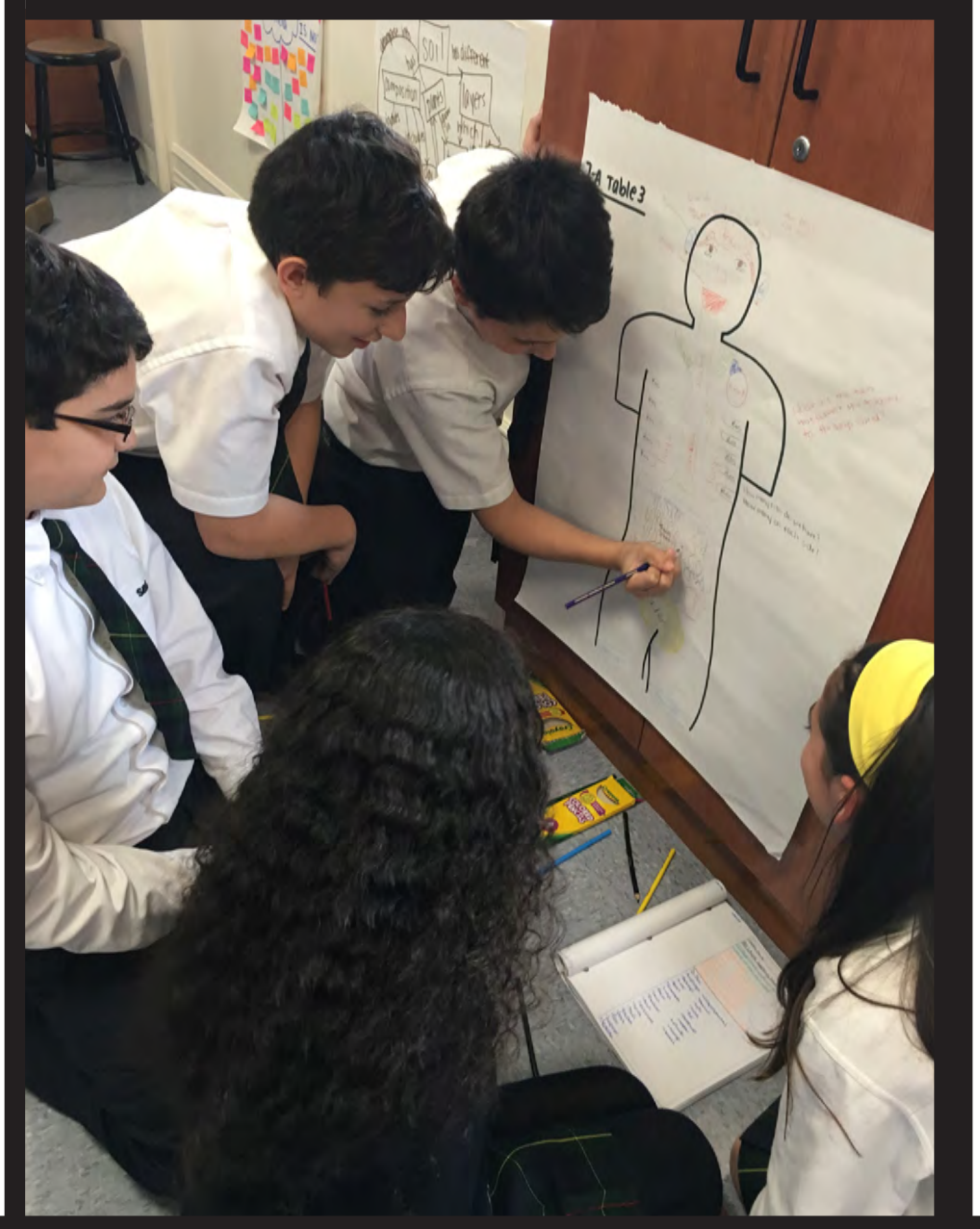
The SEPUP Instructional Model (left) similarly engages students, while taking an issue-oriented approach that is deeply rooted in discussion and evidence-based reasoning.

# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



*I want to communicate to my students that the world around them is fascinating, so that they might feel the natural compulsion to engage with it themselves. What is more worthwhile: forcing my students to remember a series of seemingly irrelevant and disconnected facts, or inviting them to join me in making connections and building knowledge based on past experiences? While both methods lead to basic knowledge, the latter has the potential to give the subject a sense of meaning and connection with respect to the world. For this reason, one of the most fulfilling aspects of my career has been to watch my students become increasingly engaged with reality.*

- Christina Zaccagnino, Science Teacher, St. Bernadette Catholic Academy, Brooklyn



results...  
As I saw/heard/felt/  
Smelled/Tasted, ...  
The measurements/  
data state that...  
etc...

Photos (from left to right) - Top row: St. Joseph High School, Brooklyn, NY; Notre Dame Academy, Los Angeles, CA  
Second row: PS112Q, Queens, NY; Third row: St. Bernadette Catholic Academy, Brooklyn, NY  
Fourth row: St. Benedict's Prep, Newark, NJ; St. Joseph High School, Brooklyn, NY  
Bottom row: St. Bernadette Catholic Academy, Brooklyn, NY

# MARIA MONTESSORI

*The stars, earth, stones, life of all kinds form a whole in relationship with all other things, and this relationship is so close that we cannot understand a stone without some understanding of the great sun!...A great curiosity arises, which can never be satisfied; so it will last a lifetime. The laws governing the universe can be made interesting and wonderful to a child, more interesting even than things in themselves, and he begins to ask: "Who am I?" (To Educate the Human Potential, Maria Montessori, Cap.1, p.13)*



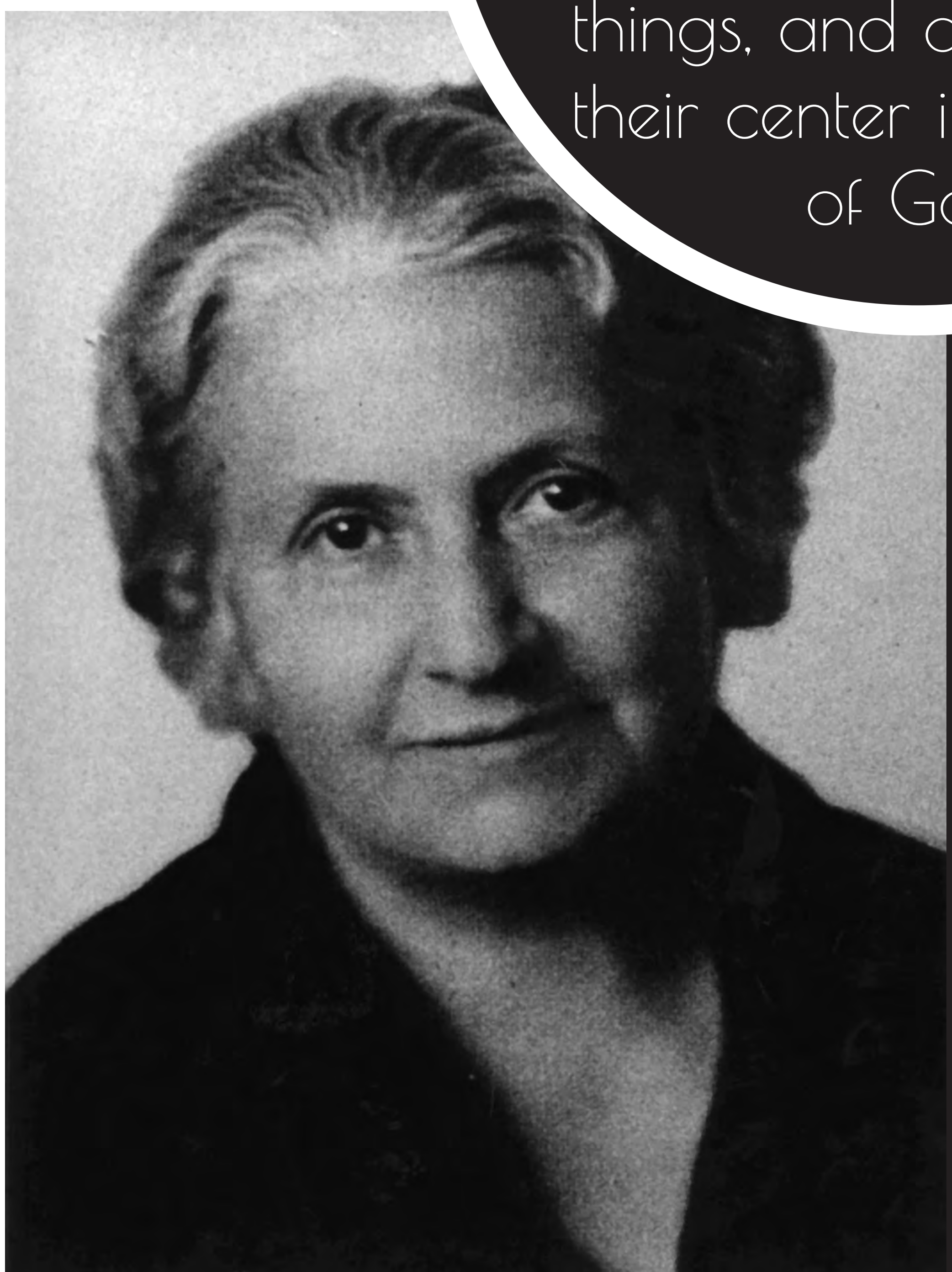
*Maria Montessori and a class*

Maria Montessori observed that children learned through tangible experiences of reality, by understanding the interrelatedness of all things, and discovering their center in the plan of God.

Maria Montessori, a 20th century medical doctor and pedagogue, also posited that the key to education lay in the experience of the child. In 1906, Montessori took on the care of a group of about 50 working-class children up to seven years old in a tenement in the San Lorenzo district of Rome. She established her first classroom, calling it the Casa dei Bambini, or Children's House. Here, Montessori made many of the observations that led her to develop the educational approach that would make her famous.

Some of her innovations from that time included:

- a mixed-age classroom
- student liberty to choose work and to pursue it without interruption
- freedom of movement within the classroom environment
- didactic materials for student use developed through research, observation, and experimentation
- materials for care of the classroom environment, such as brooms and mops
- activities for the development of physical abilities, such as pouring and fastening buttons
- child-sized furniture and child-accessible equipment
- a new conception of the adult role as observer and guide rather than direct instructor



*Maria Montessori, 1933*

Today there are about 4,500 schools in the U.S. that claim to use the Montessori method.

One of Montessori's foundational educational tenants is that the individual's most important formation happens during the first stages of life. Emphasis in her pedagogy is on the attention given to the first six years of a child's life.

According to Montessori, the teacher serves as the link between the learner and the world, lighting the fire of curiosity in the student so that the he may enter into and begin to discover reality for himself. Grades, teacher led learning exercises, homework, rewards and punishments, rows of desks, and other elements common to the American classroom, are not found in a Montessori school environment. The goal is to create an environment that allows students to discover the world for themselves and to share their discoveries with one another.



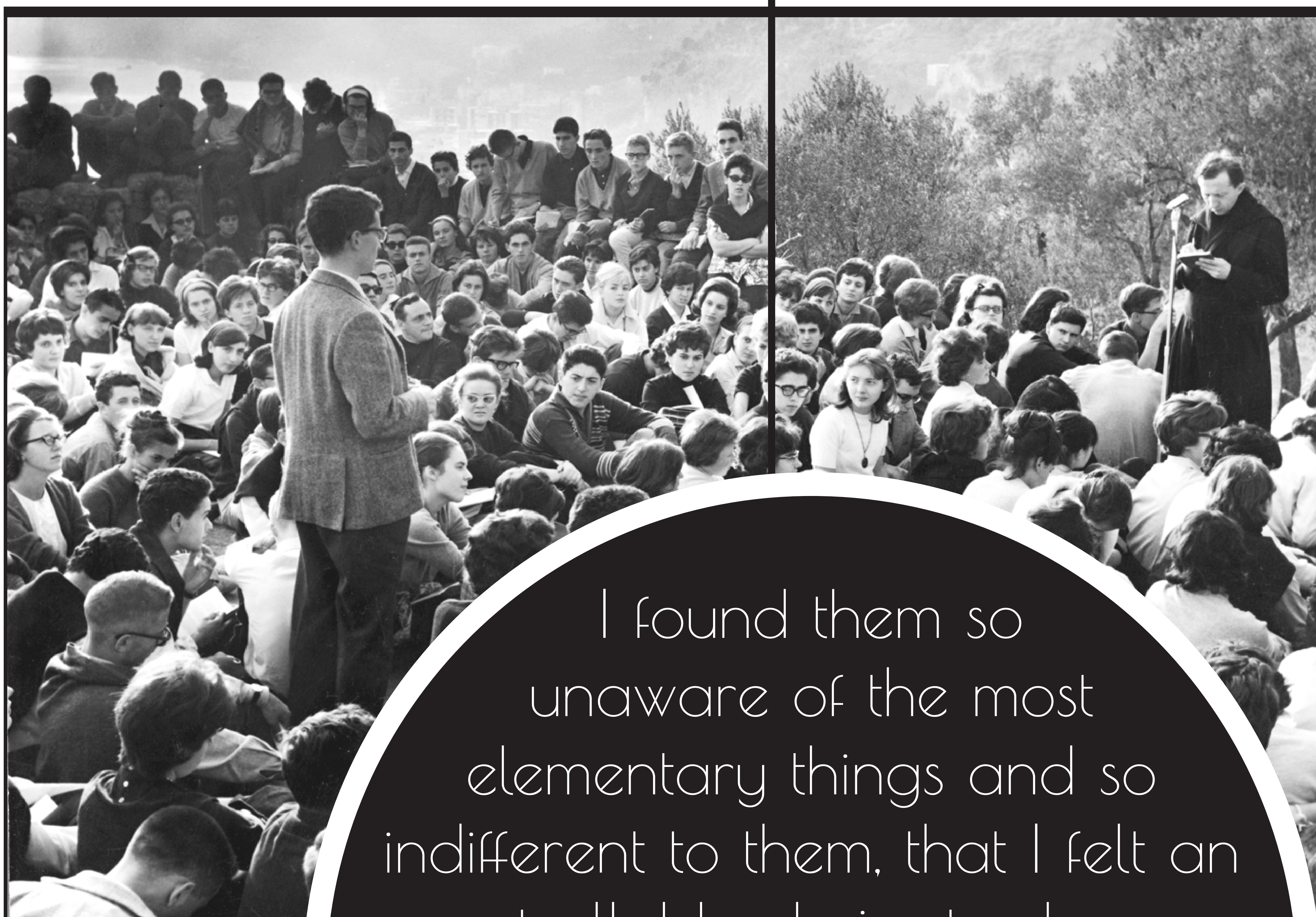
*Rossella Carone's Montessori classroom*

*"As a Montessori teacher, because we don't use homework or punitive methods, I am able to tell my students: "You have a value because you are, not because of what you do."*

- Rossella Carone, teacher at Ave Maria Montessori school, Florida

# LUIGI GIUSSANI

an education of the heart



I found them so unaware of the most elementary things and so indifferent to them, that I felt an uncontrollable desire to share my experience with them. I wanted them to have, as I had had, the experience of the 'beautiful day'.

– Luigi Giussani, *How a Movement is Born*

Fr. Luigi Giussani, a young priest from the north of Italy, took a train ride in 1954 that would change his life, and the world. He met some teenagers on that train and was moved by the fact that their formal knowledge of the Christian faith was completely abstracted from the reality of their lives. This encounter provoked pity and compassion in him for those young people. He wanted them to know more; he wanted them to know what had been given to him. And so, he requested to leave teaching in the seminary and began teaching and accompanying high school students.

From the relationships that formed around this young priest, a movement was born. That movement spread out from Italy to the whole world and reached us here in America. Fr. Giussani's intuition on that train trip in 1954 was that these young people could know more; that theirs was a problem of a lack of experience of the faith. Thus, Giussani's educational method has, at its heart, a concept of experience that implies a relationship between teacher and student, in which the teacher becomes a living proposal for the student to verify within his or her own experience. But what is experience?

Above: Luigi Giussani and students  
Below: Students at Berchet High School in Milan

*As I climbed for the first time the three steps at the entrance to Berchet High School, where I had been sent to teach religion, it was clear to me, although I was aware of my limitations, that this was a matter of re-launching the announcement of Christianity as a present event of human interest and suitable for anyone who does not want to renounce the fulfillment of his or her hopes and expectations, as well as the use, without diminishment of the gift of reason.*

~Luigi Giussani, *The Journey to Truth is an Experience*





an expanded definition of

# EXPERIENCE

Fr. Giussani, like other prominent pedagogs of the 20th century, recognized human experience as the terrain in which education takes place. But his understanding of experience bursts the categories of environment, reflective thought, and the perfection of behavior in order to master circumstances, to which it had been relegated. Giussani describes human experience as the discovery of something both promising and mysterious within reality. This discovery, in some way, matches up with the expectations inherent in the human person. In order for this discovery to take place, and therefore for experience to become educative, the person must make a critical judgment about what is happening.



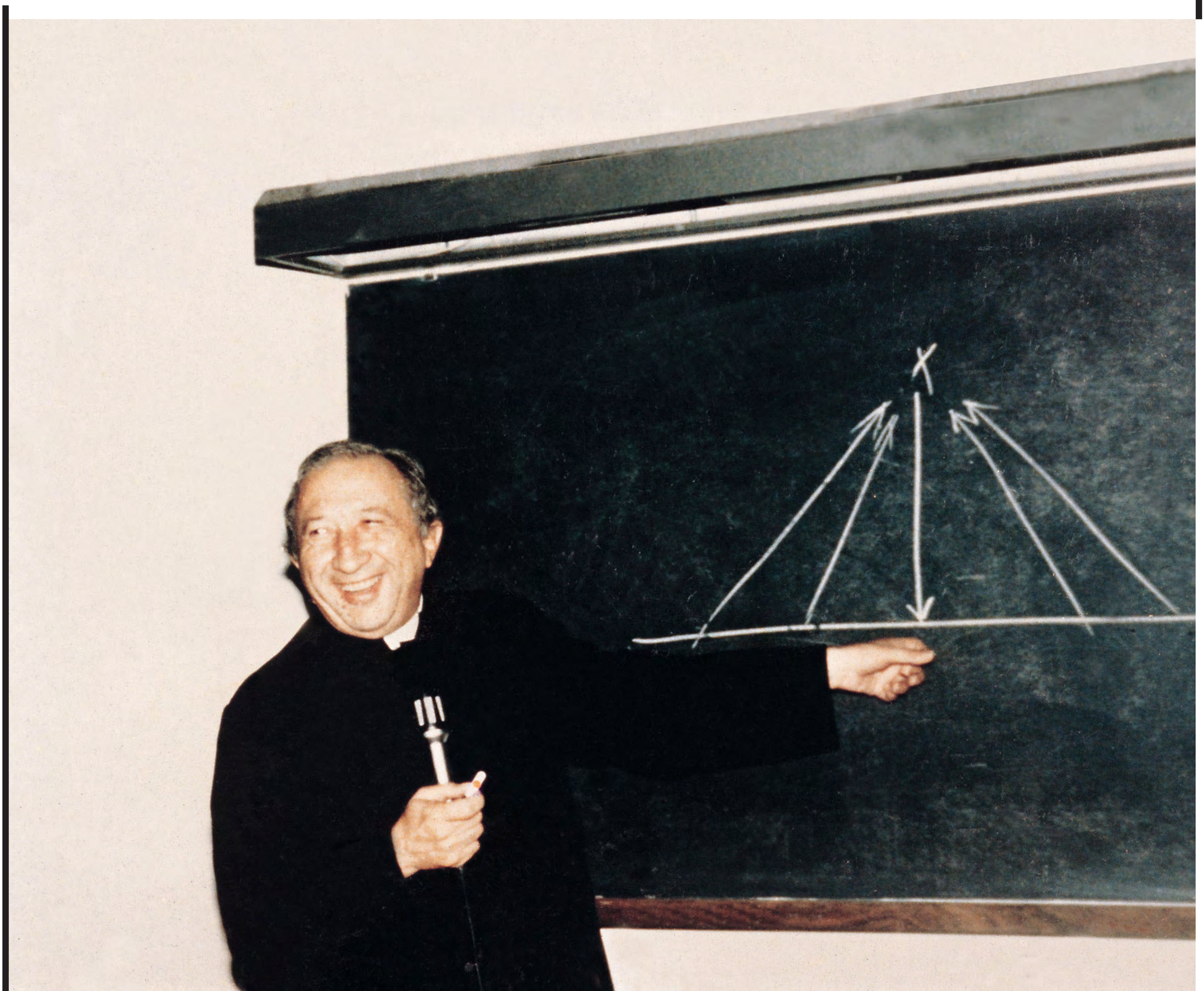
*He taught us a method for approaching the world, for being happy. It consisted of comparing every proposal—whether coming from him or the other teachers—with our profound humanity. But in order to do this, a new concept of reason was needed, understood as an openness to all of reality, as a tension toward the ultimate meaning of reality, against every rationalistic reduction.*

*I am always moved by the memory of the lesson in which he defined this concept of reason.*

- Excerpted from an interview with one of Fr. Giussani's first students, Fr. Luigi Negri, "That First Hour", Traces Magazine

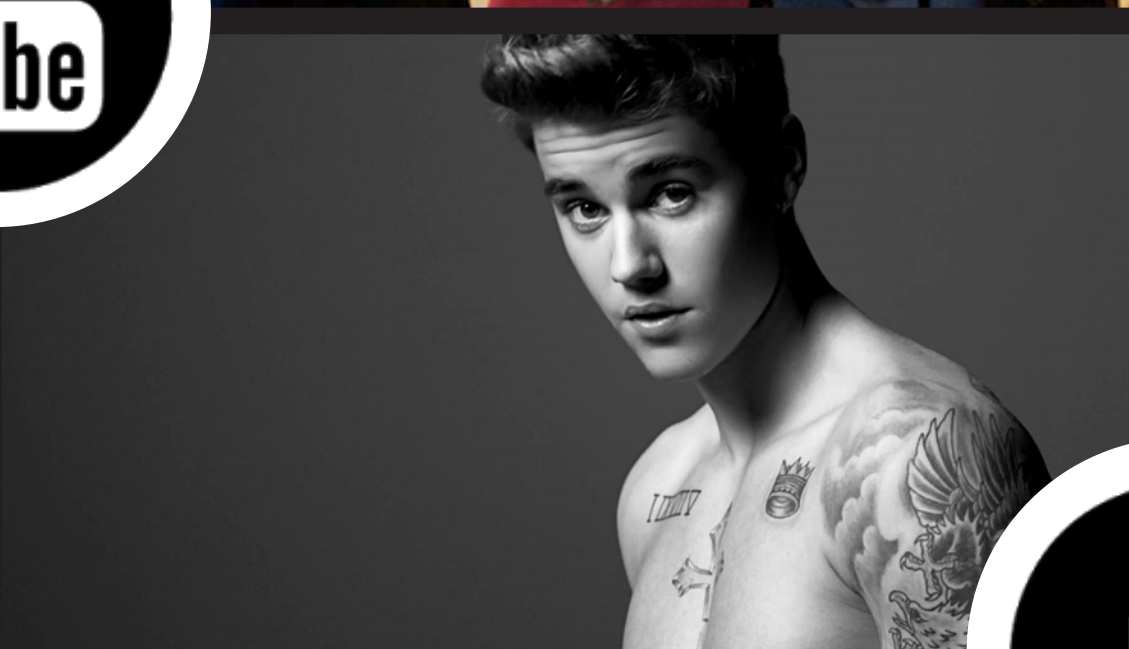
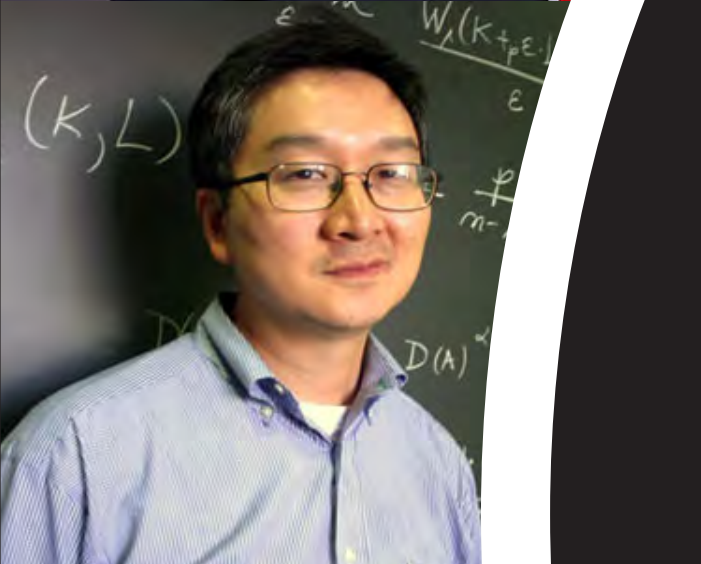
True experience throws us into the rhythms of the real, drawing us irresistibly toward our union with the ultimate aspect of things and their true, definitive meaning.  
**Luigi Giussani, The Risk of Education**

*"Experience certainly means "trying" something, but primarily it coincides with a judgement we make about what we try. Above all, the person is self-awareness. Thus, what characterizes experience is not so much action, that is, mechanically establishing relations with reality: what defines experience is understanding something, discovering it's meaning. "*  
- Luigi Giussani, The Religious Sense



Above: Salvador Dali, "Woman at the Window"  
Below: Luigi Giussani in classroom

# THE TEACHER



Who educates?  
What does it mean to be a teacher?  
Where do I find proposals about the meaning of things? Who do I trust?

*The overall education of children is a "most serious duty" and at the same time a "primary right" of parents. This is not just a task or a burden, but an essential and inalienable right that parents are called to defend and of which no one may claim to deprive them. The State offers educational programmes in a subsidiary way, supporting the parents in their indeclinable role; parents themselves enjoy the right to choose freely the kind of education – accessible and of good quality – which they wish to give their children in accordance with their convictions. Schools do*

*not replace parents, but complement them. This is a basic principle: "all other participants in the process of education are only able to carry out their responsibilities in the name of the parents, with their consent and, to a certain degree, with their authorization." Still, "a rift has opened up between the family and society, between family and the school; the educational pact today has been broken and thus the educational alliance between society and the family is in crisis".*

- Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia

education happens within a

# RELATIONSHIP



Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan

*Q. Do you desire your sight more than anything else in the world?*

*A. No! No! I would rather walk with a friend in the dark than walk alone in the light. (from an interview with Helen Keller)*

Is it necessary for teachers to engage themselves in a relationship with their students?  
What role does our humanity play in the educational process?

*To say dialogue is an educative environment is to say that it is always an exchange between the I (the educator who proposes, and proposes himself), the you (the person to be educated who is introduced to total reality) and the very reality that can never be mechanically grasped because of its character as sign. There is no true dialogue if the freedom of the educator and the student does not come into play in ceaseless comparison with the real.*

Excerpted from "Education and Integral Experience" by Angelo Scola

At my school, one of my duties is to give a week of short reflections once a month at boys' morning prayer. I used to hate preparing and giving these talks. But at the beginning of this school year, I re-read *The Religious Sense* by Fr. Giussani, and found myself, for the first time,



Patrick Tomassi on a backpacking trip with students

wanting to share what I was reading with my students; I wanted to share what I was learning about my heart, my desire. I noticed that preparing and giving my reflections went from being a burden to a joy - I was sharing what I was trying to live with these people that I have come to love. I wasn't sure whether my reflections were helping my students, but for the first time they were helping me.

On the first day one of the older students asked me to talk with him more about my reflection. The conversation ended with him saying "I want to start asking why about everything I'm doing!" A couple days later, I had a discussion with one of my classes about why they are so concerned about grades. One student surprised me with how involved he was with the conversation. In the following weeks, there was a change in his attitude - he was more engaged in class, more curious about the subject matter, and more cheerful at school. The next time it was my turn to give the morning prayer reflections, he got really excited. I asked him what had changed, and he said "I decided to take the risk that what you were teaching us might actually be interesting. What I discovered is that it's amazing! So I care more because I found something to care about."

- Patrick Tomassi, Math and Science Teacher at Trinity Academy

# EDUCATION IS AN INVITATION

to discover the fullness of life



*Beyond the dramatic tensions that run through it, beyond its finitude, the real is a good. Education is an introduction to total reality precisely because total reality corresponds to the human person's heart (to his constitutive needs). It corresponds because it is for his good. It is therefore something positive. Here we have the keystone of Msgr. Giussani's educational proposal, and, therefore, of his thought.*

*The mystery of being gives itself in the real. Each manifestation of the real (every real sign) presents itself as*



*an event that calls our freedom to account by provoking (i.e., calling forth, arousing) it to adhere.(...) In this sense, education, which seeks to introduce the student into an integral experience of reality, leads him progressively to grasp its proper nature, that of being a sign of the mystery, whose paternal countenance has been revealed to us by Jesus.*

*Excerpted from "Education and Integral Experience"  
by Angelo Scola*

The comprehensibility of the world seems to me a wonder or eternal secret. Here lies the sense of wonder which increases even more with the development of our knowledge.  
- Albert Einstein

# THE HEART

## of the student

In reading Fr. Giussani I experience the peculiarity of what he says in that he is talking not about a technique but about something "alive". His proposal is alive, much more than other methods that can risk to becoming simply a technique. I'll give you an example: last year I noticed that the children really loved the director of the school in deep way. They flocked around her like bees to honey. So one day I asked her if she knew why they loved her so much and she said: "I think it is because I take them seriously. When I was a student I never liked it when teachers pretended to be interested in my life, but deep down it

was not a real interest. I discover myself sincerely always being very interested in the children and their stories and what they discover even if they are children. I am sure that this is the reason."  
- Rossella Carone, teacher at Ave Maria Montessori school, Florida

What do I have in common with my students? Where do I start? How can I reach them?



Henri Matisse, "Icarus"

*The problem of education is whether we have an answer to this urge inherent in living, such that we can communicate it, in our living. Therefore, it's not the kids' problem; it's the adults' problem. Only if we adults have this engagement with the real in its totality can we communicate a meaning.*  
- Julian Carron



Photograph by Elio Ciol

Therefore, in order to educate in truth, it is necessary first and foremost to know who the human person is, to know human nature. Contemplating the world around him, the Psalmist reflects: "When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you arranged, what is man that you should keep him in mind, mortal man that you care for him?" (Ps8:4-5). This is the fundamental question that must be asked: who is man? Man is a being who bears within his heart a thirst for the infinite, a thirst for truth – a truth which is not partial but capable of explaining life's meaning – since he was created in the image and likeness of God...  
- Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace, 2012

# EDUCATION

## INVOLVES A RISK

What is the role of the student's freedom in the educational event? Is a student's freedom to challenge my proposal an obstacle to the educational event?

*In order to prevent the desires of the heart from escaping from our deepest regions our wills must be educated and trained. We need an education system in which these desires are systematically reduced. We need an education system where the possible link with infinity is not even mentioned, an education in which our only recognized link with the stars is that cosmology shows we are made of the same material stuff: all this is necessary to prevent these desires from bursting out of the hearts of our young people, leading them to question every compromise we have made and to demand what our current views of sexuality, our economic system, and our politics cannot provide.*

- Lorenzo Albacete, God at the Ritz



Robert Doisneau, "Les tabliers de la rue de Rivoli, Paris," 1978

The young person must be guided gradually as he matures toward a personal and independent encounter with the reality that surrounds him. It is here that the educator's stability becomes important, for increasing autonomy of the student is a "risk" for the teacher's intelligence and heart, and even for her pride. It is precisely the risk of confrontation that helps create the pupil's personality in his relationship to all things; it is here that he develops his freedom.

- Luigi Giussani, *Risk of Education*

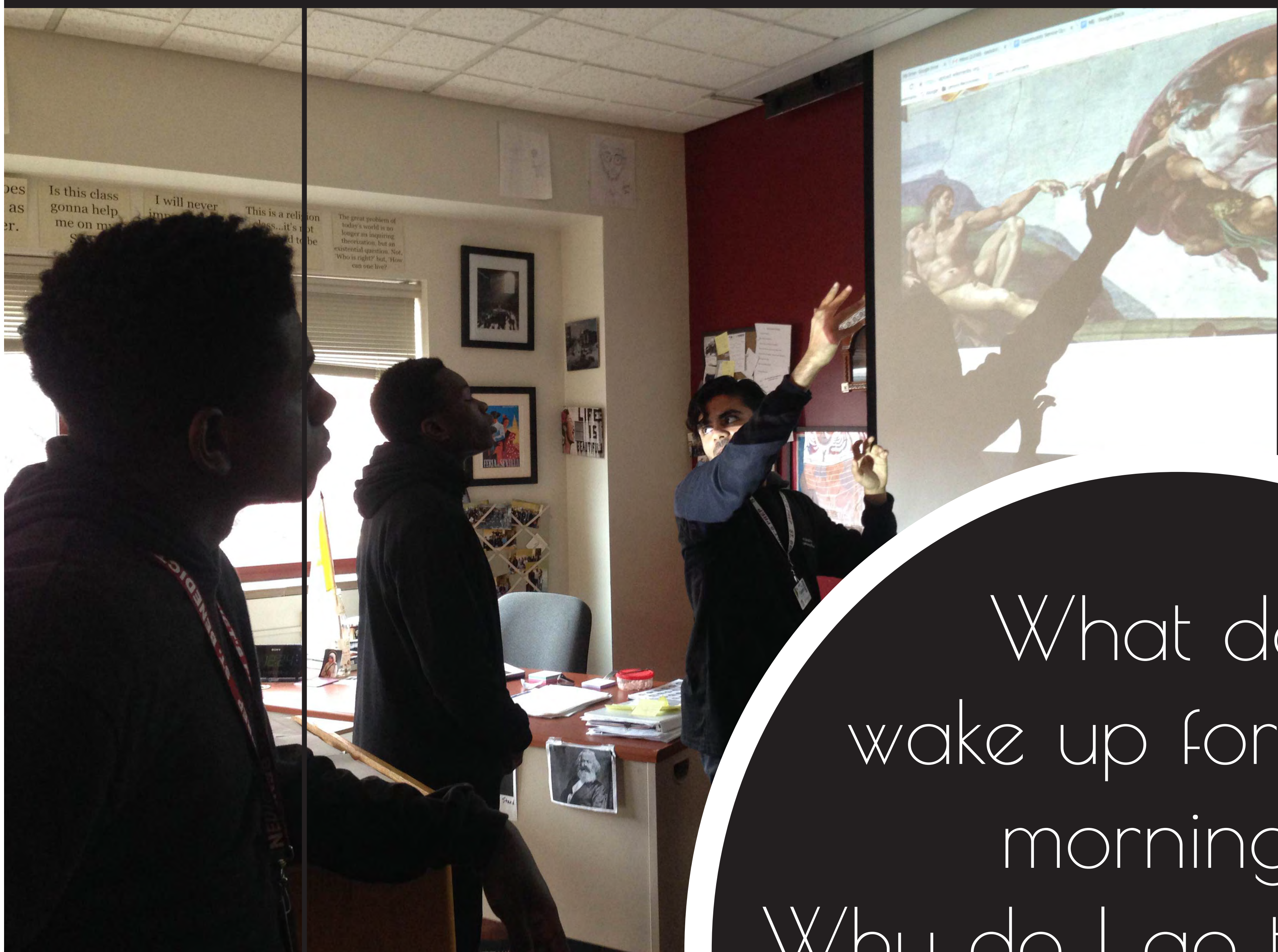


Philip Koch, "Edward Hopper's Room by the Sea, II,"

My deepest desire as a teacher is to enter the classroom with an open heart - ready to have a meaningful experience with my students, sharing with them the beauty of the content that we are learning, and being in relationship with them. Taking this desire seriously implies a risk; one can't have an "open heart" without allowing himself to be vulnerable. This means I must be willing to expose my emptiness and inadequacies, knowing that only Another who is more powerful than myself can make these beautiful experiences and relationships possible. But the golden standard of being the perfect teacher who never shows his weaknesses is not nearly as beautiful as being a human teacher whose relationship with his students is predicated upon the power of love. And the simple fact is that I'm more free when I live this way because it is more authentic to my humanity and to the desires of my heart.

- Stephen Aduvato- taken from the blog, *Cracks in Postmodernity*

# A UNIFYING HYPOTHESIS OF MEANING



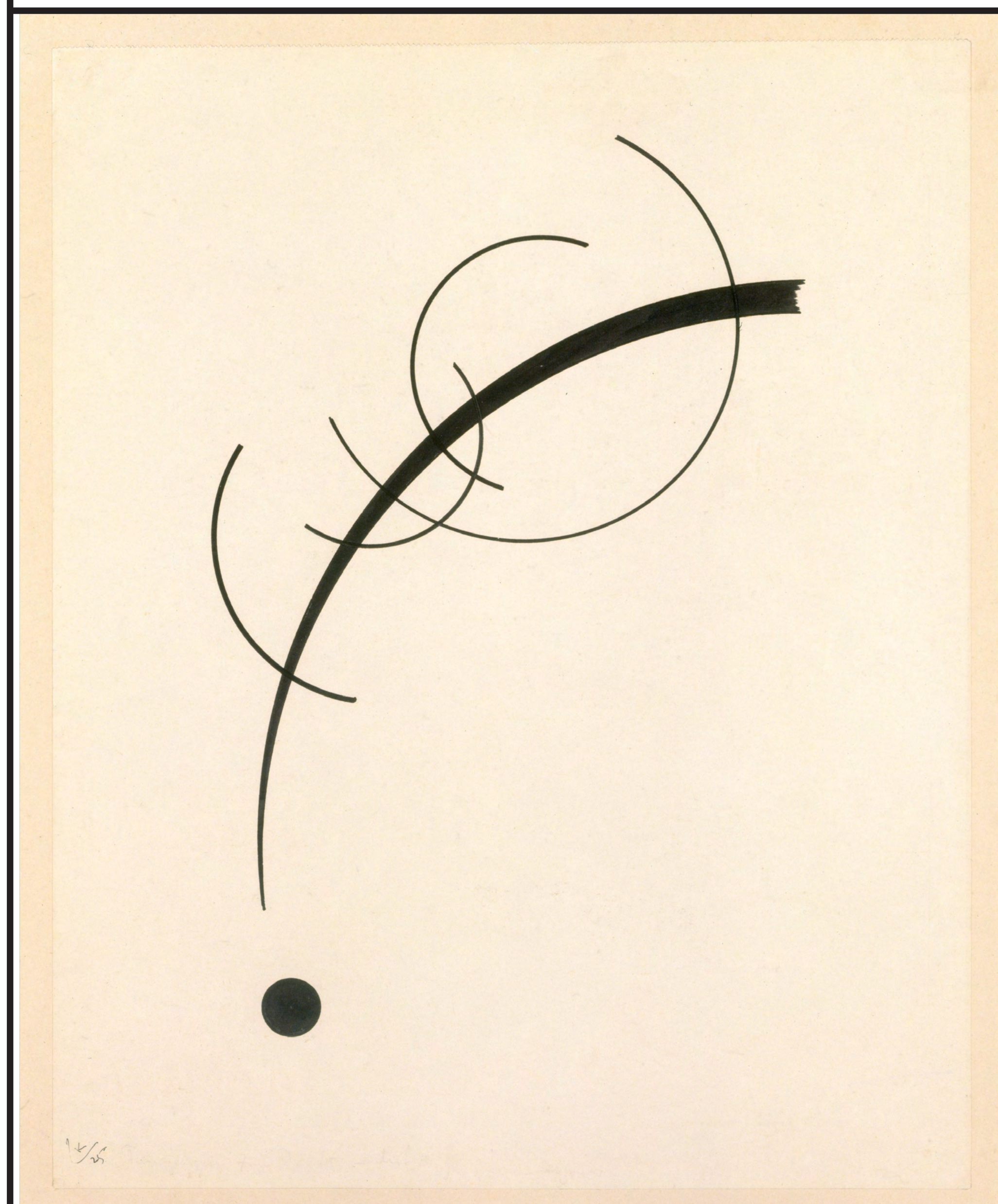
Stephen Adubato's theology class

What do I  
wake up for in the  
morning?  
Why do I go to work?  
What do I look for  
in the faces of my  
students?

Whether I know it or not, the answers to these questions become a proposal or hypothesis of meaning to my students. Whether I teach religion, philosophy, calculus, or chemistry, my convictions about the meaning of life are communicated implicitly through the way I present the content to my students.

In a math class, I can discover the ordered beauty of a formula or geometrical proof. In a history class, I can face the mystery of evil and violence head on. But what does all of this mean for my life? How does it all "come together"?

*"The marvelous eruption of discoveries, steps forward, and chains of connections which define the educational development of a human being—that is, his introduction to all of reality—cannot come about without an idea of meaning that presents itself to the individual in formation with solidity, intensity, and sureness." -Fr. Giussani*



V. Kandinsky, "Free Curve to the Point - Accompanying Sound of Geometric Curves," 1925

# AUTHORITY

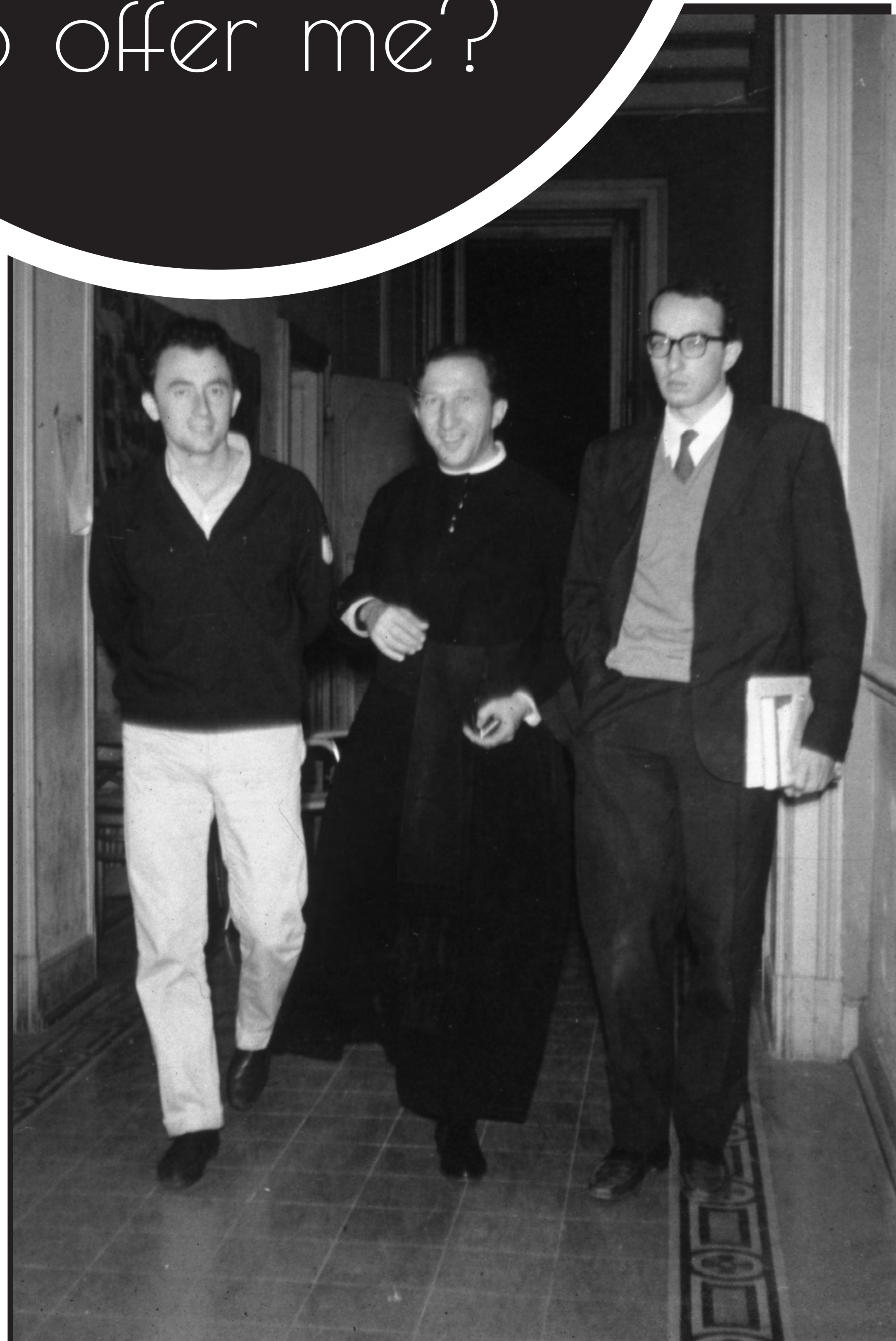


Above and right: Luigi Giussani with students

In many inner-city schools, children express the same resistance and disillusionment toward authority figures as many adults do. This tension often becomes a gift to me as it challenges me to take my own position of authority more seriously and to ask daily what it means to be a teacher to my students. My authority, and that of any other authority figure, is strengthened by my awareness of the origin and finality of the task that transcends me. Many of my students look at me as if my authority somehow limits their freedom and their capacity to express themselves. I constantly have to remind them that I'm on their side and that, rather than seeking to control or restrict their freedom and sense of identity, I desire for their freedom to flourish and for them to live their identity more fully. After a number of unpleasant confrontations, I have learned to value the moments in which my kids challenge my authority. I run the same risk of letting my authority become a license to incite violence when I am tempted to affirm myself and assert my own power, rather than to direct them to something that transcends all of us.

-Stephen Adubato, Religion teacher at St. Benedict's Prep, Newark, NJ

Why should I do what you tell me?  
What do you have to offer me?



*"We experience authority when we meet someone who possesses a full awareness of reality, who imposes on us a recognition and arouses surprise, novelty, and respect. There is an inevitable attraction within authority and an inexorable suggestion within us, since the experience of authority reminds one more or less clearly of one's poverty and limitations."*

-Fr. Luigi Giussani



# PRESENCE

When the educator becomes a sign of that which he seeks with his students

What is the ultimate value of the relationship between the teacher and student? Is the presence of the teacher necessary for the educational event to be authentic?

"For this reason, educating means being a presence in front of the other person. There is no education without presence, a presence able to fascinate the other, to move the other deep down. This is very different from covering over everything the other does, at one extreme, and from taking no interest at all in the other. If we think we can educate without presence, without being there with our whole selves, with a method that does not involve us, we are off the track!

Only when we involve ourselves in the first person with the other can we become a presence that captivates, that evokes the free involvement of the other. You just need to avoid losing

yourself in theories and ask yourself what helps us, and verify whether the way you behave with your children is the one that helps you, who are adults. The hypothesis, the ideal, is incarnated in the witness (in the educator), because education is a communication of self, that is, of the way I live the relationship with reality."

-Fr. Julian Carron



Ms. Christina Zaccagnino with her science students at St. Bernadette Catholic Academy in Brooklyn, NY.

In class, we discussed the meaning of life. Mr. Aduabato explained how people in the world live with no real purpose. People just move along with life with no end goal in mind. Mr. Aduabato asked us something along the lines of – do you know the purpose of your life. It took me sometime to think about it, and I realized that I did not know. My reflection on the question did not end in the classroom, it has changed my view on the meaning of life. At first I was down on myself for not knowing what my meaning in life is. Then I remembered a lyric from a song from Childish

Gambino in the song 3005, "I used to care what people thought. I mean, nobody out here's got it figured out" I came to the conclusion that nobody knows what the meaning of life is. I feel as if God created us to go on this search for what our purpose in life is. Right now as a senior, myself and my brothers are going through a lot of stress. As much as I try, I can't figure out what the point of going through this stress is. What I did realize is that I am not going through this alone. I have my senior class who is going through it with me and many members of the community to help me through this road to college. I am not going on this search for my purpose in life alone, I have God, family, and community. Another thing that stuck with me from class is that Mr. Aduabato always ask us how we're doing and if we have anything we have to let out. This impacted me because many people get a chance to let it all out, all the stress they are going through. After doing so, I felt great. Knowing that there was someone that cared about how my day or week was going was heart warming. This has inspired me to try and ask someone everyday how their life is going because we never know what they are going through on this search for the meaning of their life.

- Brian Benedict, student at St. Benedict's Prep, Newark, NJ

# IN THE WORDS OF STUDENTS

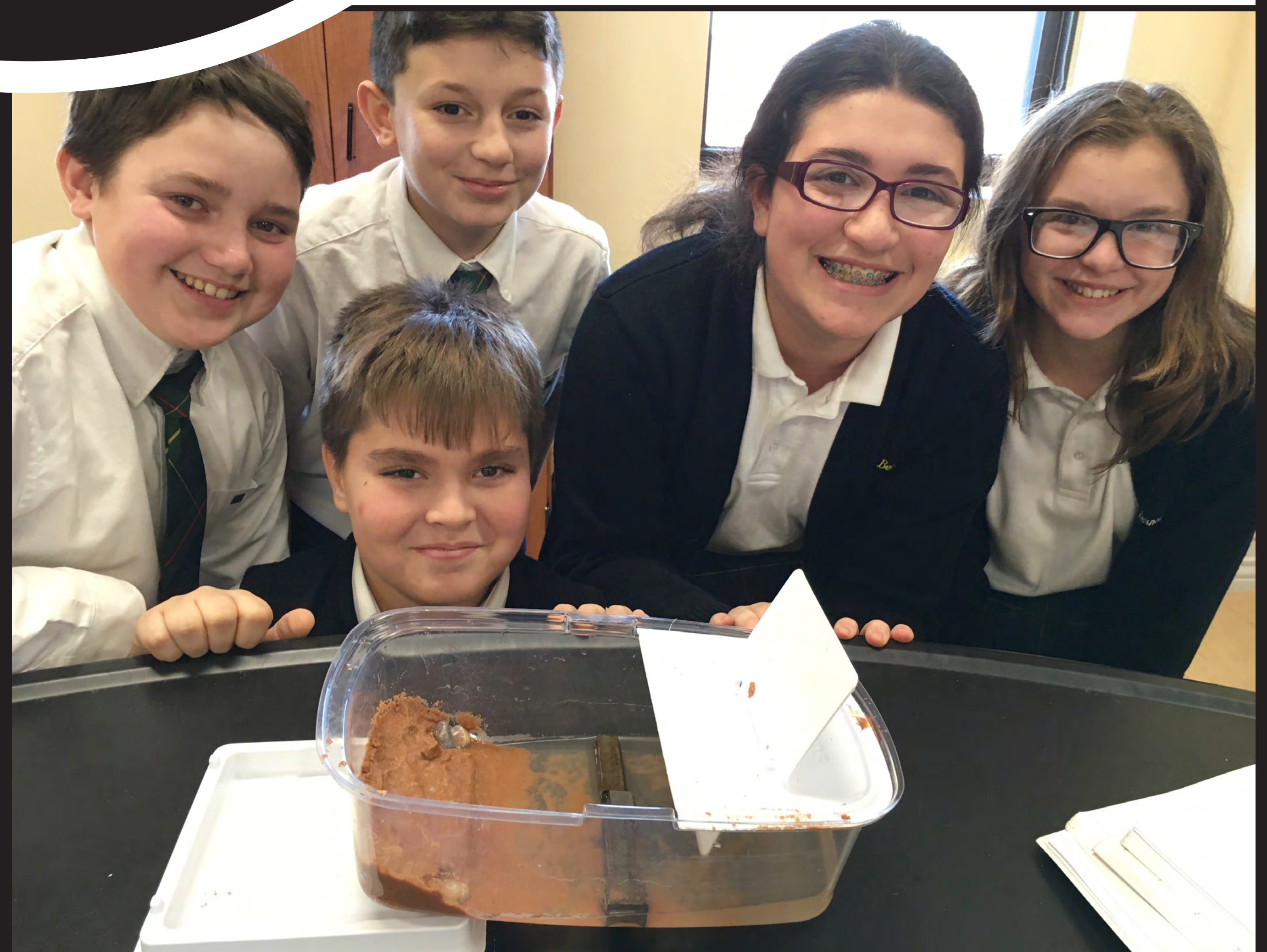
Thank you  
for helping to make  
everything more clear to  
me. Thank you for taking  
the time to get to know me  
and to listen to what I think.  
No other teacher treats  
me like you do.

*I learned from you that school isn't just for getting through to live life. School is about learning the material for our own good. I also learned that to learn something you need to hunger and desire it.*

*I appreciate the great care you have for my thinking and writing . . . I must say that you had a great part in influencing me with it. I want you to know that I have started praying again.*

*I would like to start off by saying thank you. For a long time I didn't believe in anything, but while being in your class I was able to put into perspective how much I have to be grateful for. Thank you for making me believe again.*

*You teach me more than just science. Every day you teach with the same thing: love for science and love for us. You mean more to me than just a science teacher. You made me love science. You made me want to be kinder to others (continuously). You helped me realize that I shouldn't be defined by a grade, but as the person I am and am trying to be. Your kind words and your love for everyone in the classroom rock climbed into my heart.*



*Students at St. Bernadette Catholic Academy in Brooklyn, NY.*

*I think that the reason why God didn't give you children is because you have all of us in the classroom. Maybe we can pray that you could have children but not now, when you are older like Elizabeth of the Bible*

*You are an extraordinary teacher. Sadly, up to that point in my life, my education was overwhelmingly just regurgitating what the textbook or what the teacher had said. You were the first teacher that taught me to think on my own.*

*I've had a wonderful four years with you in science. You've instilled a love for science in me that will never go away.*

# ADVICE TO EDUCATORS of the 21st century



*Be seriously involved with your lives. The one who seeks daily the answer to his own human need, with truth and passion, verifying the value or lack of value of his conception of life, cannot but communicate to others, and almost naturally he is an authority for them. This involvement is also translated into an involvement with one's tradition, with the richness that each one has been launched into reality*

*with, and that is communicated with newness. Nothing of the past can interest us again if not lived in the present, in some way and by someone. This is the great temporal category of education.*

*In addition, one must always be educated. Everything that I have said and written has been born completely of an experience, born out of dialogue with others.*

*Finally, one must be certain, that is, be honest with themselves and truthful with others. It is not possible to build anything if not on something that is certain; it is not possible to educate if not communicating the depth of truth that has already become experience in our own lives.*

Luigi Giussani

I love school because it is synonymous with openness to reality. At least it should be! Yet it does not always manage to be so, and so that means that the structure needs to



be adapted a little. Going to school means opening one's mind and heart to reality, in the wealth of its aspects, of its dimensions. And we do not have the right to be afraid of reality! School teaches us to understand reality. Going to school means opening one's mind and heart to reality, in the wealth of its aspects, of its dimensions. And this is so very beautiful!

In the first years we learn a wide range of subjects, then little by little one delves more deeply into one subject and then ultimately specializes in it. But if one has learned how to learn — this is the secret, to learn how to learn! — one retains this always, a person remains open to reality!

Teachers are the first ones who must remain open to reality. For if a teacher is not open to learning, he or she is not a good teacher and isn't even interesting; young people understand that, they have a "nose" for it, and they are attracted by professors whose thoughts are open, "unfinished", who are seeking something "more", and thus they infect students with this attitude.

Pope Francis

# FROM CRISIS TO OPPORTUNITY



Winslow Homer, "Boys on a Hillside," 1879

*A crisis forces us back to the questions themselves and requires from us either new or old answers, but in any case direct judgments. A crisis becomes a disaster only when we respond to it with preformed judgments, that is, with prejudices. Such an attitude not only sharpens the crisis but makes us forfeit the experience of reality and the opportunity for reflection it provides.*

- Hannah Arendt  
"The Crisis in Education," 1954

Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.  
- Pope Francis, "A Big Heart Open to God"

Is there any concept more ambiguous in our postmodern world than education? To approach it is to grapple with the intersection of the vastness of human history and the fleeting moment of an individual's existence. Yet, as a society, we seem to agree that the educational endeavor is in crisis; it falls short of what we would hope for our children and casts gloom on our vision of the future.

Positing that there exists an educational crisis begs the question of what we mean by education. Focusing on the search for solutions puts the cart before the horse, provoking cries of woe when the cart doesn't budge, despite all of our data driven theories and scientific techniques.

In developing this exhibit we have explored the question of education starting from where we recognize it occurring in ourselves, and in our students. In doing so, we find evidence of the educational event happening in all of our lives, notwithstanding the diversity of environments in which we work. The more we reflect on what education is, the more we find it intertwined with the questions, "what does it mean to be human" or "what is the meaning of life?"

In examining the educational crisis we have become more aware of a fact in our lives that gives rise to hope. Each one of us teachers, young and old, from different backgrounds and regions of the US, has been the recipient of an ingenious pedagogy, one that reached us through the presence of an unlooked for "teacher." Through the witness of these people we too have become sure of a loving Presence at the heart of reality that desires our good. More than a static fact, our own education is a continuing journey that expands our capacity to reason and opens our hearts to the possibility of a ceaseless fascination with the world around us.

Facing the educational crisis through work on this exhibit has been the opportunity to ask fundamental questions about education together and to critically reflect on our experiences as teachers. Through this common task we have rediscovered a promise within reality that became tangible in the form of a friendship born among us, generating an energy capable of launching us back into our work as educators with a renewed hope for our students and joy in our labor.

# CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

religious education rooted in the Montessori method



If you place confidence in children, you will give them a start in dealing by themselves with God. In silence and recollection they will not delay in finding their way to Him, and they will arrive at religious experiences which would astound even those who are proficient in the spiritual life.  
- Sofia Cavalletti

Sofia Cavalletti (1917 - 2011) developed the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, along with her colleague Gianna Gobbi. Cavalletti was a native of Rome, Italy, and a Hebrew scholar. Her approach to religious education relies heavily on the Montessori Method. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd aims to help children have "an encounter with the living God."

Cavalletti taught that the child's first exposure to the faith should be centered in the person of Jesus. From her research she found that the aspect of Christ that most speaks to the young child is Jesus the Good Shepherd, who calls his sheep by name creating a personal relationship with him, who lays down his life for the sheep, nurtures and protects them. Because of this emphasis on Jesus the Good Shepherd, through this method, children soon realize that he is the center of the Christian faith.



*The atrium of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a specially prepared environment in which the furnishings are scaled to the size of the child. In this space children and adults live together a*

*religious experience which facilitates participation in the wider community of the family, the church and other social spheres. The atrium is a place of*

*prayer, in which work and study spontaneously become meditation, contemplation and prayer. The atrium is a place in which the only Teacher is Christ; both children and adults place themselves in a listening stance before his Word and seek to penetrate the mystery of the liturgical celebration.*

- From the National Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

In the atrium, we work with Jesus  
- Michele, age six



Top: Sophia Cavalletti with students.  
Right: Students on their way to Atrium at St. Patrick Parish, Brooklyn, NY  
Above: Atrium at St. Patrick Parish, Brooklyn, NY