THE NEW ANXIETY:
CHALLENGES FOR 21ST CENTURY KIDS, PARENTS, EDUCATORS AND CLINICIANS

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TEACHER'S OBSERVATIONS ABOUT CHILDREN'S ANXIETY
- Impulsivity
- Self-regulation
- Need for a more “traditional” approach to discipline
- Conversations about their behavior often don’t “stick”
- Percentage in the grade of disruptive kids is unusually high
- Relationships with teachers are complex and demanding
- Kids’ impulsivity can be scary in terms of safety
- Kids, like adults can have a “mob mentality,” and seem almost proud of it!

DEFINITION OF CHILDHOOD - HAS IT REALLY CHANGED?
- UNSSELFCONSCIOUS ENTHUSIASM
- REVELATION
- PLAY
- WONDER
- IMAGINATION
- IDEALIZATION OF ADULTS
- LEARNING RIGHT FROM WRONG
- FEELING PROTECTED BY ADULTS

BUT EXTERNAL EVENTS SEEP INTO KIDS’ SECURITY AND SENSE OF SELF – FIRST THE OBVIOUS:
- Examples among many: COLUMBINE, 911, GREAT RECESSION, HURRICANE
- Can’t protect a child even in one’s own home
- Information is viral, into kids’ physiology

THIS OBVIOUSLY LEADS TO WORRY AND ANXIETY EVEN IN YOUNGER CHILDREN
BUT LESS OBVIOUS AND ON A PERVERSIVE, EVERYDAY LEVEL ARE FORCES THAT CREATE:
- A new developmental process – kids living in several developmental eras at once
- A different anxiety in and between parents
- The breaking of the social contract – that hard work will make my child’s life better

THIS LEADS TO NEW EXPERIENCES FOR KIDS THAT INTENSIFY CHILDHOOD ANXIETY
- Early Awkwardness
- Premature Self-consciousness
- “Kindergarten cool” - awareness of group dynamics and peer judgments
- Kid sense of entitlement and then disappointment
- Children viewing themselves as commodities

ADULT CONFUSION HAS LED TO INCREASED DERISION OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS
- Aggressive parents
- Parental fear - being “held hostage” by their kids and their own fears of the future
- The misuse of praise
WHAT HAPPENED THAT SO WEAKENED PARENTS AND TEACHERS?
- Whiplash in childrearing and educational theories
- The medicalization of differences
- Changing Demographics
- The Post Boomer Era – parents want to be in charge but lack the “certainty” of previous generations

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS I’VE WRITTEN ABOUT THE NEED FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO RECLAIM KIDS’ HAPPINESS AS CHILDREN - TO BECOME “FREEDOM FIGHTERS” FOR KIDS’ RIGHT TO AN UNSELFCONSCIOUS, JOYOUS CHILDHOOD, LIVING JUST AS CHILDREN AND NOT IN SEVERAL DEVELOPMENTAL ERAS AT ONCE

TO DO THIS– AS CHILD PROFESSIONALS, WE NEED TO STOP BLAMING PARENTS!
- TO LOWER KIDS ANXIETY WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER
- PARENTS AND TEACHERS MUST REIMAGINE THEIR RELATIONSHIPS AND HEAL THE DIVISIVE SCHISM THAT EXISTS

READY OR NOT - HERE’S THE WAY IT’S GOING TO BE:
- “PARTNERSHIPS”BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME
- CREATING “A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS” IN THE “TOWN SQUARE” OF SCHOOL ARE NECESSARY
- AND SCHOOLS ARE GOING TO BUILD THEM

MOST POWERFUL WAYS TO CREATE PARTNERHSIPS -WHAT I CALL “A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS”
1-NATURAL CHIT-CHAT BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS
2-RULES OF ENGAGEMENT – HOW AND WHEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS SHOULD COMMUNICATE
3-EXPANDING TEACHER AND PARENT REPERTOIRES OF AUTHORITY VIA:
   *Peer groups for parents
   *Small problem-solving groups for teachers throughout the year

LEARNING FROM SAME PAGE –WHAT WILL WE BE LEARNING TOGETHER?
1-TEMPERAMENT – HOW TO HANDLE IT AT HOME AND IN CLASSROOM
2-THE REGULATED SELF - LEARNING THE ART OF CO-REGULATION TO CALM EACH OTHER
3-THE IMMUTABLE LAWS OF BIOLOGY – THE BASIC RULES OF EATING, SLEEP, PACING, ETC.
4-CORRECT USE OF PRAISE – TEACHING ‘GRIT,’ NOT DEPENDENCE ON INAUTHENTIC PRAISE
5-WHAT GETS KIDS TO OPEN UP – SIDE-BY-SIDE ACTIVITIES, NOT ARTIFICIAL TECHNIQUE
6-HOW TO CREATE DOWNTIME - AT HOME AND IN THE CLASSROOM
7-LEARNING ABOUT THE RULES OF GROUP DYNAMICS -- IN CLASSROOM AND BETWEEN PARENTS

INTERACTIVE SURVEYS - WHAT WORKS – NOT JUST WHAT DOESN’T WORK
1-WHAT LOWERS KIDS’ STRESS – AT HOME AND IN THE CLASSROOM
2-WHICH RITUALS MATTER –WHAT KIDS SAY THEY NEED
3-HOW PARENTS GET THROUGH TO THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME
4- WHAT PARENTS SAY CALMS THEMSELVES AND LESSENS INEFFECTIVE INTERACTIONS

A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS SHARES INFORMATION– ADULTS TEACH EACH OTHER VIA:
- Newsletters
- e-blasts
- videos-youtubes
- parent-teacher-student panels
TEACHING TOLERANCE FOR DIFFERENCE LESSENS KIDS’ ANXIETY – INTOLERANCE OF DIFFERENCE IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST STRESSORS FOR YOUNG KIDS

THE TIME IS NOW FOR COMMUNITIES TO DEFINE “THIS IS WHAT WE STAND FOR” BY:

1-Identifying social cruelty
2-Re-defining ‘tattling’ for both parents and kids
3-Teaching kids to be UPSTANDERS not just bystanders
4-Sharing information about what parents, teachers and admin have tried - to lessen blame
5-Give parents the words so they can teach children how to stand up to social cruelty

PROGRAMS THAT STRENGTHEN ADULTS
- Intergenerational Events
- Child-created scenarios for parents and teachers to solve together
- Parent supported micro-grants for teachers to offer kids new learning experiences

***SCHOOL-HOME PARTNERSHIPS ARE POTENTIALLY GRANTWORTHY***

USE THE SUGGESTIONS THAT FIT YOUR COMMUNITY -
BUT NEVER FORGET TO ACKNOWLEDGE YOURSELVES AS EDUCATORS:
YOU TAKE CARE OF THIS COUNTRY – YOU ARE THERE FROM THE MOMENT KIDS ARE BORN TO WHEN THERE IS DEATH IN A FAMILY TO WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES A COMMUNITY

YOU ARE ‘FREEDOM FIGHTERS’
YOU CAN HELP KIDS BE FREER FROM ANXIETY, TO LEARN WITH THE SENSE OF SECURITY THEY ARE ASKING US TO PROVIDE FOR THEM, EDUCATORS AND PARENTS TOGETHER