

Principal Thoughts February 2006

I've been spending a relatively large amount of time watching the original *Star Wars* movie directed by George Lucas and listening to the 30th anniversary CD of *Born to Run* by Bruce Springsteen. I have the boxed set of both. My wife thinks that I've slipped into a time warp – interestingly both were released within a few months of each other in 1976 & 1977. But, it's not escapism that I'm attracted to. I've never owned a light saber and I don't usually go around wearing my "Boss" T-shirt. I am actually drawn to the documentary bonus tracks in the two boxed sets. My wife thinks that I'm a geek. Who buys these sets for the documentaries? But I've learned that what I love most about these artists is that they are two individuals, who had a vision, gathered together talented people, and revolutionized their industry as well as popular culture.

Why haven't we had a similar revolution in education? Why are the primary educational structures designed for 19th century industrial society still serving a very different 21st century population? How can our educational leaders say that we are going to, "Leave No Child Behind," and test in an assembly line model at equal spaces down the assembly line of the educational grade progression? Why does the most common mode of instruction across the country continue to be all class lecture followed with practice work – when we know that any given class of students represents a wide scatter of understanding and mastery?

Jon Landau, The Rolling Stone music critic, turned music producer, wrote, "I have seen the future of Rock & Roll and its name is Bruce Springsteen." Well, I have seen the future of education and it lies within Douglas School.

Last month I presented work that our teachers are doing as they analyze student writing. Educators from across the country described this work as brilliant and revolutionary. It is based on the idea that teachers use student writing, watch students write, and have conversations with students to identify the skills and concepts that individuals are working on in order to teach directly to those skills. We already do this guided reading at Douglas. Why not guided writing, guided math, guided etc...

This work is very exciting. It is very hard. It also takes a great deal of time. But,

we have talented people, we have the vision, and to do something never before attempted...in the words of both Bruce Springsteen AND Obi Wan Kenobi ...“We got one last chance to make it real...Many of the truths that we cling to depend [only] on our point of view.”

Sincerely,
Dr. Whitbeck