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***Rigorous, Arduous and Powerful are NOT synonymous when it comes to learning.***

Appropriate Rigor emphasizes:

- Critical thinking
- Empowerment
- Learning for understanding
- Application

Teaching for Powerful Learning means . . .

- Empowering students to share responsibility for and control of their learning
- Engaging students in active and collaborative inquiry
- Never telling students something they can tell you; never doing for them what they can do for themselves
- Connecting and presenting content in meaningful contexts
- Focusing on students' questions about themselves and the world
- Helping students know what to do when they don't know what to do
- Insisting that students put learning to positive, meaningful use
- Building and maintaining a truly supportive community of learners
- Emphasizing equity and high expectations for all students
- Assessing for growth
- Actively encouraging reflection and self-assessment by all learners

## **This type of rigorous learning is not really happening in many classrooms.**

“Almost everyone has had occasion to look back upon his school days and wonder what has become of the knowledge he was supposed to have amassed during his years of schooling...but it was so segregated when it was acquired and hence is so disconnected from the rest of experience that it is not available under the actual conditions of life.”

– Dewey (1938, 48)

Excerpts from “The Swift Kick” (Erica Goldson)

“Some of you may be thinking, “Well, if you pass a test, or become valedictorian, didn't you learn something? Well, yes, you learned something, but not all that you could have.”...

“I saw every subject of study as work, and I excelled at every subject just for the purpose of excelling, not learning. And quite frankly, now I'm scared.”

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“Hard work does not turn students away, but busy work destroys them.”

– Anne Wheelock “All Students Learning,” *Conversations Turning Points Transforming Middle Schools* Vol. 1, No. 2, Spring 2001

*“The academic challenge in a middle school curriculum lies not in painful abstraction, but rather in its capacity to engage the intellectual imagination and curiosity of young people.”* (adapted from Beane, 2005)

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Rigorous learning occurs when students participate in a curriculum that is ***relevant, engaging, challenging, coherent and, empowering.***

We call this “Powerful Learning.”

*In Powerful Learning Experiences* students:

- own the reason for learning
- collaborate and share control of their learning
- utilize multiple senses and abilities
- experience a sense of accomplishment and enjoyment
- put their learning to meaningful use

*Powerful Learning Units*

- Have context, connection, and continuity with clearly aligned goals and activities
- Focus on significant questions and real issues
- Allow student self-motivation and control
- Require students to use varied skills and resources
- Emphasize inquiry, authentic research, and collaborative learning
- Result in tangible student products that
  - ~ *show synthesis of skills and knowledge*
  - ~ *have real world application*
  - ~ *are shared with an appropriate audience*
- Ask students to reflect and self-assess
- Provide enjoyment and celebrate learning



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## Powerful Learning . . .

- improves your ability to do something
- allows you to create something new
- changes the way you see yourself, your life, or the world in a profound manner
- allows you to improve the ways you interact with others

**Powerful Learning will require change!**