

Text a Little Less, Think a Little More

Stephen L Carter writes about the texting among the young, pointing to what we already suspected, that it has become almost an addiction with some young people and explaining how it has become an accepted way of communication.

Carter goes on however to what he sees as a much larger problem : that texting crowds out thinking.

“As young people increasingly fill their free hours with texting and other similarly fast-paced, attention-absorbing activities, the opportunities for sustained reflective thought will continue to fade.”

That started me thinking (pun intended) along two lines :

1. If our students don't think, some of it may well lie with the ubiquitous use of texting and downloading of information. But I wonder if it also lies in the structure of our classes and school schedule. Do we give them time to think, to allow ideas and concepts to percolate? Or have we crowded it out with remedials and frequent tests all to prepare them for the big test (ie the exam). I hurry to say, remembering my students well, that just leaving them free does not mean that thinking comes in automatically; in fact sadly it is more likely that mischief will arise rather than a thought-full process.

But perhaps we need to start with a supervised reflection time. Some teachers have started doing this when they make time for students at the end of a lesson to think about

“3 things I have learnt in this lesson, 2 things I still don't understand and 1 thing I never knew till this lesson”

2. What about ourselves as school leaders? Have we given ourselves time to think? I can hear you exclaiming

“Are you kidding? With a parent complaint coming over the line, two students fighting, a teacher with a domestic problem, where is there time to think?”

I was in exactly that same situation with that same thought. As the Academy Dean with a significantly less frenetic schedule, I have time to think a lot more and to say to myself

“I should have made time to do this while I was still working. It would have benefitted my school much more.”

On the other hand, you might well retort,

“Of course I think. In fact with each crisis, I have to think furiously.”

Ironically, I think crisis time gives you little time to think and just when you need it. Crisis time is when you are greatly helped by your belief system, whatever it may be, to do what is needed. If you believe life is survival, when a crisis comes, you look for whom to blame. If you believe that 'truth will out', you would avoid covering up and look instead for the best way to come clean. If you believe every person is valuable, you will think of his plight and not only of culpability when an accident occurs in your school.

But you can only strengthen that belief system by giving yourself a time of reflection.

For the full article, please go to <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-03-01/text-a-little-less-and-think-a-little-more-carter#p1>