

Friday Keynote Speaker – Book Review

World Class Learners: Educating Creative and Entrepreneurial Students

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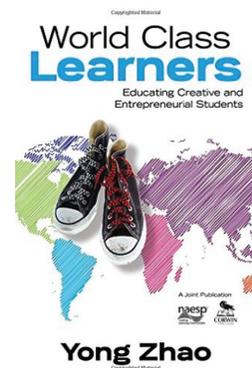
In this book, prolific author *Yong Zhao* challenges current education policies and practices. With a focus on college and career readiness in education reform, Yong Zhao questions what college and career readiness means when most of the careers for today’s students have not yet been invented.

Dr. Zhao grew up in China and now lives in the United States, so he has personal experience with the education system in both countries. While Yong Zhao observes that there is not definitive research to show to what degree school experiences increase or decrease creativity in entrepreneurial capacities, he does point to a longitudinal study that indicates a decline in creativity as children become older. (Land and Jarman, 1992). He points to the value of learning from failure, in the words of Henry Ford, “failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently.” In analyzing the Chinese education system, he finds that students are working to complete the prescribed task in the prescribed manner without the opportunity to make their own mistakes or undertake tasks based on their own interests.

Yong Zhao advocates for education to be designed to be child centered and meet a child’s unique needs, capitalize on their strengths, and grant autonomy so the child can take responsibility for learning. These concepts are embodied in the personalized learning initiative that CABE, CAPSS and CAS have worked on for several years.

Zhao expresses the concern that the current educational reform efforts focused on providing a homogenous and standardized educational experience in the United States does not serve to educate students for the future.

He advocates for the physical environment in schools to be flexible, in order to allow for group as well as individual work, large meetings, instructor led activities and student initiated activities. He also advocates for a variation of class time and formats, with some traditional 45 or 50 minute classes, but also short lectures, field trips or long workshops. This environment enables personalization.



He also advocates for project based learning, with the goal of making things for real audiences. The project can be assessed based on three guiding questions:

- Does the product meet or exceed the criteria set at the time of the project?
- Has the student developed the skills required for the execution of the project?
- Has the student learned the curriculum content required for the project?

The importance of developing students with “global competence” is also emphasized. One definition of competence is “having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside one’s environment.” (Hunter et al, 2006) Zhao provides a global perspective on what it means to be well educated and addresses many issues already under discussion in Connecticut.

Attend the CABE/CAPSS Convention on November 20, 2015 to hear Yong Zhao in person. He is the Friday morning (8:30) keynote speaker.

