



Springfield Middle School Robertson County Innovation Academy



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Dr. Grant Bell, Principal ♦ Ms. Amanda Mounts, Asst. Principal ♦ Mr. Patrick Carneal, Asst. Principal

“We are EPIC!” *The Jacket's Buzz*

December 10, 2018

“Providing a well-lit path in the pursuit of purpose and happiness.”

“Every single day, we will strive to ensure that everyone is safe and respected; and that ALL scholars are responsible for working to master ALL standards.”



“Education is the foundation upon which we build our future.”

Christine Gregoire

Monday:	Elf Jr. 1:45 Wrestling @ Greenbrier/Cheatham 5:00 GEAR-Up 8 th grade Night 6:00
Tuesday:	Wrestling @ Richview/Fairview 5:00 TED Talks 6:00
Wednesday:	Wonderful Wednesday
Thursday:	Basketball @ Coopertown 4:30
Friday:	Elf Jr. for Elementary Students 9:30 & 12:30 Elf Jr. 7:00
Saturday:	Elf Jr. 2:00 & 7:00 Wrestling MCAC Individual Championship @ Fairview 12:00

Bus Duty:

<u>Monday</u> Language Arts	<u>Tuesday</u> Related Arts	<u>Wednesday</u> Math	<u>Thursday</u> Social Studies	<u>Friday</u> Science
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EPIC Players **production of**



The Musical JR.

Book by
Thomas Meehan and Bob Martin

ELF JR. - THE MUSICAL
Music by
Matthew Sklar

Lyrics by
Chad Beguelin

Based upon the New Line Cinema film written by David Berenbaum

Originally produced by
Warner Bros. Theatre Ventures
In association with Unique Features

Historic Springfield Middle School Auditorium

December 14 at 7 PM

December 15 at 2 PM & 7 PM

K-12 Scholar Tickets \$3 * Adult Tickets \$5



Yellow Jacket Basketball



The Yellow Jackets remained undefeated for the year with victories over Kenwood and Greenbrier. The Lady Jackets won a thriller at Greenbrier to move into a tie for first place in Robertson County. Coach Frank "Summit" Matherley has the ladies playing at a high level heading into Christmas.



Christmas Concert



Photo courtesy of Dr. Chris Causey

The SMS band under the direction of Mr. Jonathon Wiggins provided an extraordinary evening for a packed theatre on Tuesday evening. The scholars were amazing and the music was beautiful!



Most Improved Awards
Anna Ignatz, Anthony Pilcher, Britney Villeda and Alisa Young



Bruise Brothers Wrestling



Lost to Fairview and Harpeth last week.

Mon., Dec. 10- wrestle at Greenbrier

Tues., Dec. 11-wrestle at Richview

Sat., Dec. 15-MCAC conference championships at Fairview

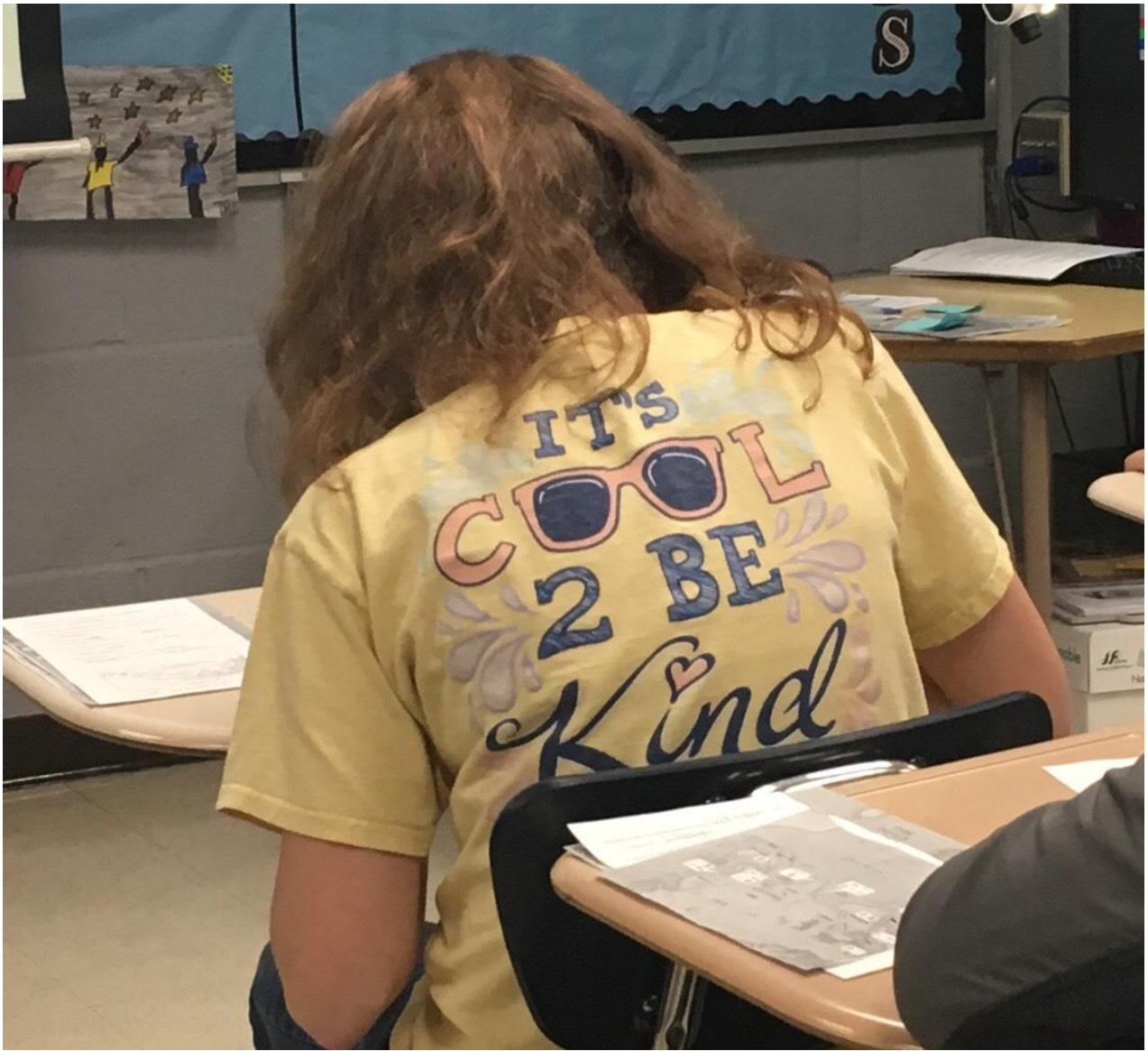
Last picture-Jabin bought his own singlet and added a scotch tape J!!!



Happening Around SMS



Innovation Academy scholar Emily Richardson's family is relocating to Washington and her classmates made this gift for her, outlining her journey west. They all signed the back! What a kind act.
Emily, we will miss you...stay EPIC!



“That’s what we say at SMS!”

Springfield Middle School

and the



presents



TED Night

Tuesday, December 11, 2018

Springfield Middle School

6:00 PM

Kenley Coleman *Negative peer pressure*

Mason Dorris *Manners in our society*

Briana Dunbar *Keeping your grades up*

Katy Fisher *Gun control*

Emma Leath *Never let your mountain beat you*

Brooklyn Phillips *Teenage Happiness*

Presley Richards *Is the public school system outdated*

Holley Shannon *Bullying*

Maggie Suggs *God in school*

Garrett Reeves *Autism in the workforce*



4 Common Types of Tests Teachers Give (and Why)

March 21, 2018

Amy Reilly is a proud mom of three, former teacher, and an assessment expert at Pearson. She specializes in finding new ways to measure what students know and can do – and translating that data into actionable and interpretable information for students, parents, and teachers.

As a former teacher and self-proclaimed assessment nerd, the word “testing” can raise my heart rate.

It immediately brings to mind passing or failing, when what we’re really trying to do as educators is learn—learn what students know so we can celebrate that while also learning where they need extra support.

“What we’re really trying to do as educators is learn—learn what students know so we can celebrate that while also learning where they need extra support.”

LearnED
News About Learning

While some tests are, in fact, pass/fail, many others provide various types of results based on their purpose or goal.

Regardless of their objective, all tests are measurement tools.

As parents, when we hear the word “testing,” we think to ourselves *this is that time of year when under no circumstances can I allow my child to not get a good night’s sleep and a healthy breakfast.*

The pressure is real; I feel it with my own kids.

We often imagine testing to be what happens at the end of the year when students are faced with bubble sheets and forced to sit quietly until their class finishes.

But in reality, measuring students occurs throughout the year, both formally and informally, for different purposes, audiences, and uses of the information they provide.

As parents, it is helpful to understand these different types of assessments as we engage in discussions with both our children and their teachers.

This is particularly true when trying to make *decisions* on how to best support our children in their learning, which can be challenging when the assessments may vary in terms of the scores they provide, their timing, and their relevance.

Different Types of Measurement

There are four common types of testing in schools today—diagnostic, formative, benchmark (or interim), and summative.

They all serve distinct purposes and should work together in order to make up a comprehensive or balanced assessment program.

1. Diagnostic Testing

This testing is used to “diagnose” what skills a student has demonstrated proficiency on. Diagnostic testing often measures for student misconceptions or where students are in stages along a progression, such as by grade level, of concepts, or skills. For example, diagnostic reading assessments can measure what grade level students are fluent at reading, or based on their comprehension of the text.

Teachers use diagnostic testing information to guide what and how they teach. They'll spend more time teaching skills students struggled with most on the diagnostic test.

Diagnostic assessments can be a very helpful tool for parents. The feedback my kids receive on these tests lets me know the specific areas where they may need extra help at home.

2. Formative Assessments

Formative assessment is often viewed as more of a natural part of the teaching and learning process. It can include strategies such as observations, having students read out loud, and asking students questions in class, as well as the use of different types of tools, like digital games.

This type of testing is used to gauge student learning during the lesson. Often, teachers are evaluating student learning without even knowing it. It is informal and low-stakes, meaning that the kind of decisions that are made from these types of assessments should be limited to informing and adjusting instructional practices, such as reteaching a lesson or grouping students for extra help. They are designed to give students the opportunity to demonstrate they understand the material.

Schools normally do not send home formal reports on formative testing, but it is an important part of the teaching and learning process. If you help your children with their homework, you are likely using a version of formative testing as you work together.

3. Benchmark Testing

This testing is used throughout the school year often to check whether students have mastered a unit of instruction. There are other types of benchmark assessments that mirror the state summative test as a way to view progress and see if students are on track.

When designed for this particular use, benchmark or interim tests may even provide a predictor of how students may perform on the end of year summative test. These tests are typically longer than formative assessments and are often used for a grade.

Unlike diagnostic testing, students are expected to have mastered material on benchmark tests. Parents will often receive feedback from these tests, which is important to me as a parent, as it gives me insight into which

concepts my kids did not master. If I want to further review a concept with them, I can find lessons, videos, or games online, or ask their teachers for resources.

4. Summative Assessments

Summative assessments are used as a checkpoint at the end of the year or course to assess how much content students learned overall.

These tests are given to all students in a classroom, school, or state, so everyone has an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know. Students demonstrate their ability to perform at the level prescribed as the proficiency standard for the test. Results are often aggregated to also understand school and district performance for the purpose of accountability.

In my opinion, the most important function of summative assessments is student equity. It's our way of making sure that populations of students are not being left behind. In order to do so, we need to evaluate not just the total population of students but a breakdown by subgroup so we can identify any potential underserved populations of students and put interventions in place for their success.

Since summative tests cover the full range of concepts for a given grade level, they are not able to assess any one concept deeply. As a parent, I consider summative testing a confirmation of what I should already know about my sons' performance. I don't expect to be surprised by the results, given the feedback I have received from diagnostic, formative, and benchmark testing.

Combining Test Results

We need a balance of the four different types of testing in order to gain a holistic view of our children's academic performance. What testing offers me, as a parent, is an understanding of how my children are doing academically. Test results are a way for me to have eyes on my kids' classrooms even though I am not there. This information guides what we focus on when we do homework at the kitchen table.

Understanding the different types of testing, the kinds of results they provide, and how they complement one another can help parents help their children learn.

Hopefully, the next time parents hear the word “testing,” they won’t just think of summative testing. Instead, they’ll think of all four types and the value of each in realizing a richer, more thorough understanding of their child’s progress.

Lagniappe



EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP



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Taking Beautiful Risks in Education

Ronald A. Beghetto

To support students' creativity, educators must question assumptions and instill a sense of possibility.

Creativity is risky. It takes courage. Revolutionary artists such as Henri Matisse recognized this about creativity. But you don't have to be a famous artist to understand that creative expression, while often beneficial to oneself and others, comes with its share of hazards. Creativity is risky because it requires doing things differently. And

whenever we try to do something new or different, we make ourselves vulnerable to making mistakes, appearing foolish, and even being ridiculed. Put simply, creative endeavors don't always work out.

Creative expression, like all risks, has costs and benefits. But not all risks are the same. Some are good, some bad, and some are *beautiful* (Beghetto, in press). Students who ask for help in front of their peers are taking a *good* risk, because even though there's the potential hazard of appearing less competent, the long-term benefits of seeking instructional help when it's needed outweigh the immediate costs. Conversely, taking your students on an impromptu field trip without notifying families or following established protocols is a *bad* risk. No matter how beneficial the field trip may seem in the moment, the potential hazards far outweigh the benefits.

A *beautiful* risk is different from both good and bad risks. A beautiful risk involves taking actions that have the potential to make a positive and lasting contribution to the learning and lives of *others* (Beghetto, in press). There are numerous, iconic examples of beautiful risk-takers, such as Rosa Parks or the "Tank Man" protester in Tiananmen Square. There are also everyday examples. A child who leaves the safety of a popular peer group to stand with a kid who is isolated or being picked on is taking a beautiful risk.

Establishing openings in our curriculum to foster creative expression is also a beautiful risk. Although doing so requires us to let go of some of the certainty of more defined and structured approaches, the potential benefits to our students include deepening their engagement, developing their creative confidence, and providing them with opportunities to contribute to their own and others' learning. The following three beautiful risks will help you foster student creativity in and beyond your classroom.

1. Rethink the Formula for School Success

If we want to support creative expression in the everyday classroom, we need to risk rethinking the typical way we define success in schools. Creativity researchers define creativity as a situationally determined blend of originality *and* effectiveness (Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow, 2004; Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Classroom creativity, therefore, involves providing students with an opportunity to meet predetermined criteria in different and unexpected ways. It also requires openness to difference (Glaveanu & Beghetto, 2016).

Classroom creativity poses a challenge to the prototypical model of school success, which involves students being able to meet a pre-established set of criteria in the same way and at the same time as everyone else. This can be represented in the following formulation:

School success = doing what is expected × how it is expected

Although this formulation makes sense in some situations and helps us quickly check whether students have met the established criteria, it becomes problematic when we consider it in light of fostering creative expression. Indeed, when this formula becomes the predominate way we define success, it effectively eliminates different ways of meeting criteria, thereby stifling opportunities for creative expression.

Fortunately, by making small modifications to the prototypical recipe for success, we can open up our definition of school success to include creative expression. Consider this tweaked formulation:

Creative expression in education = meet predetermined criteria × using an unexpected approach

As this formulation illustrates, creative expression isn't about getting rid of predetermined criteria. Rather, it's about providing opportunities for students to meet those criteria in new and different ways. A student who shares a surprising yet mathematically accurate way of solving a math problem has responded creatively and still meets the pre-established academic criteria. A student demonstrating her understanding of principles of

persuasive speech by developing a video that encourages her peers to reach out to others and address social isolation is another example.

When we encourage students to come up with a unique way of demonstrating their understanding of previously taught concepts or skills, we're daring to open up our curriculum for creative expression. Of course, this doesn't mean that students will always respond in innovative ways—or ways that are also accurate. Some students may need more guidance on how to connect their unique approach to the existing criteria. Others will need encouragement to go beyond replicating previous examples and come up with their own way of meeting academic expectations. Still, by giving students an opportunity to meet criteria in different ways, we can help them learn how to move between what Michele and Robert Root-Bernstein (2017) call *copying-to-learn* and *learning-to-create*.

This is not to say that students need to be creative at all times (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2013). Indeed, there are times when doing what is expected and how it is expected is the best option. Carefully following the safety procedures when using a hot-glue gun in a makerspace is an example of when doing what is expected makes the most sense. Part of taking the beautiful risk of classroom creativity, therefore, involves knowing when and when not to do things differently.

2. Share "Favorite Failures"

To prepare students for—and support them through—setbacks that come with creative expression, we need to take the beautiful risk of encouraging stories about failures along the creative path, including sharing our own favorite flops. Whenever our students engage in an innovative endeavor, they'll face unexpected twists, turns, and setbacks. This is because creative work is uncertain work. Multiple failed attempts are to be expected (von Thienen, Meinel, & Corazza, 2017). In recent years, there's been increased recognition of the importance of reframing failure in schools and classrooms, often reflected in catchphrases such as "don't be afraid to fail," "learn from (rather than avoid) mistakes," and "fail forward."

Although many of these catchphrases have a basis in research (Midgley, 2002; Duckworth, 2016), uncritical use of slogans can quickly fall flat for our students. Catchphrases cannot adequately represent what failure *looks like* or *feels like* in practice, particularly when students run up against difficult, emotionally painful setbacks. Slogans also fail to describe the particular context and whether and how people have managed to navigate that context. Emotion permeates both creativity and learning. So our students benefit from both instructional and emotional supports when encountering the frustrating, often public setbacks that come from taking risks in learning (Rosiek & Beghetto, 2009). One way to provide this kind of support is to share biographies of well-known people who experienced failure. Books that highlight how accomplished creators faced and overcame setbacks include *They All Laughed ... From Light Bulbs to Lasers* by Ira Flatow (Harper Perennial, 1993) and *Women in Science: 50 Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World* by Rachel Ignatofsky (Ten Speed Press, 2016).

In addition to drawing on outside resources, it's important to jump-start students in reconstructing their attitude toward failure by having them share their own favorite failures, using these five simple but powerful questions:

- What happened when you failed?
- How did you feel when it happened?
- What did you learn from that situation?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- Why is this failure your favorite?

Keep a few considerations in mind as you try this. It's important to recognize that these questions focus on both emotions and thoughts, so they can draw out surprising, candid responses from our students. We need to be

ready to listen to our students' stories, provide necessary supports, and help them learn from all the different things they and others feel and think when success doesn't happen. The aim of focusing on "my favorite failure" is to help students exchange ideas about how even situations that involve feeling miserable can result in positive learning.

Although we may believe that we can't take risks until we first build trust among those in a group, trust is actually built by taking risks together (Grant & Coyle, 2018). Consequently, it's important to use these questions early and often to establish a classroom environment conducive to taking the risks necessary for creative expression. Educators can lead the way. If we aren't willing to make ourselves vulnerable in this way, how can we expect our students to do so?

Continually tailor these questions to use in any subject area or creative endeavor (such as "my favorite failure" in math or in dance) and whenever your students face a new or challenging experience, like writing a poem or giving a public speech. By frequently revisiting these questions with students, you can go beyond empty slogans and signal that your classroom is a place to think, act, and experience mistakes differently.

3. Building an Unshakeable Sense of Possibility Thinking

To infuse creativity into our everyday teaching and learning practices, we need to take the risk of encouraging and engaging in *possibility thinking* (Craft, 2010). Possibility thinking—a necessary aspect of creative thought and action—helps people imagine how they can move from the way things currently are to how they *could and should be different* (Beghetto, 2016). But it's more than just a way of generating ideas. It comes with the responsibility of acting on the ideas that we generate, which includes anticipating and persisting through setbacks.

Possibility thinking is thereby a call to creative action. Suppose you envisioned a way to provide a beneficial learning experience—the kind traditionally reserved for "advanced" students—to *all* students. You'd then have a responsibility to resolve this inequity by acting on this possibility. Similarly, if a group of students imagine an original way to address a pattern of mean-spirited interactions occurring among their peers, they too have a responsibility to find ways to put that new strategy into action.

A firm sense of possibility thinking, like any habit or mindset, is cultivated through practice. We should give our students (and ourselves) practice in generating and acting on possibilities. So, how to start?

The first step is to recognize that many places in your everyday curriculum provide openings for possibility thinking. Opportunities are present any time you ask your students to develop different ways of solving a problem, come up with ideas for applying what they learned, or find a way to solve a complex challenge facing them, their school, or community (Beghetto, 2018).

Once you've identified an opportunity for possibility thinking, the next step is to try it out. Figure 1 describes a possibility-thinking protocol you can use with your students to both generate possibilities and proactively address potential problems before you take action. A facilitator should guide the protocol. Anyone, including students, can take this role.

Part 1—Generating Possibilities

Step 1. Facilitator introduces the protocol: The facilitator quickly provides an overview of how and why the protocol is being used.

Part 2—Anticipating and Proactively Addressing Setbacks

Part 2 is best used *before* launching a new project or initiative, either immediately following Part 1 or at a

Step 2. Presenter shares a challenge (1 minute): The presenter (an individual or representative of a team) later date.

concisely describes a challenge, problem, or impasse they are facing—such as "Our team can't find an original idea for the science fair that we're all interested in" or "We're stuck on this tricky math problem."

Step 3. Feedback partners ask clarifying questions

(2–3 minutes): The feedback partners (in pairs or small or large groups) ask any clarifying questions they have about the challenge, problem, or issue presented. The presenter provides clarification.

Step 4. Feedback partners pose "What if?"

possibilities (5–15 minutes): Participants in the exercise provide as many new and different ways of thinking about the problem, or potential ways to respond, as they can. Preface all suggestions with "What if?" to signal that this is just a possibility to be considered. "What if?" possibilities should encourage the presenter and everyone to challenge and flip their assumptions about the problem or issue. For instance, if the problem statement is, "Kids aren't eating everything we serve for lunch, so food is wasted," an assumption-flipping question might be, "*What if* the leftover food could be put to another use?" and an action idea might be "*What if* we turned the discarded food into compost?" During this step, the presenter listens quietly without interrupting or clarifying, perhaps taking notes. The goal is for the presenter to take in as many different perspectives as possible without short-circuiting the process with interruptions.

Step 5. Presenter identifies and describes the most promising possibility (2–3 minutes): The presenter reflects on all the possibilities presented and selects the most promising or provocative one that offers a new and different way of thinking about and acting on the issue. The presenter then briefly shares with the group the possibility selected and initial steps that can be taken to put this possibility into action. Depending on how this protocol is being used, the facilitator might go through Part 1 again with a new presenter, until all have had a chance to share their challenges.

Step 1. Facilitator introduces the protocol (1–2

minutes): The goal of this protocol is to anticipate and proactively address potential hazards of implementing a project idea or action, or problems likely to arise. If, for instance, a group of students and teachers are implementing a restorative justice program, they can use this part of the protocol to anticipate, prepare for, and address any setbacks or challenges they might face. The facilitator asks the group to imagine that implementing the idea has resulted in a spectacular failure.

Step 2. Imagine and explain the reasons why the

initiative failed (5 minutes): Everyone in the group individually (and anonymously) writes on a sticky note one reason why the action or project might have failed.

Step 3. Consider and address each imagined reason for failure (20 minutes): The facilitator reads aloud each imagined reason for why the action or project failed. (For instance, a restorative justice program might fail because some parents object strongly to this alternative kind of discipline.) Then the group uses "What if?" questions to explore possibilities for proactively addressing these anticipated challenges (such as offering an information session for parents before launching the restorative justice initiative). This process continues until each reason has been read aloud and participants have shared ideas for addressing it. The facilitator can note similarities between concerns (and unique concerns) and challenges brought up frequently.

Step 4. Summarizing statements and next steps (5 minutes): The facilitator guides a discussion of what the group learned from this process, summarizes what was learned, and outlines next steps for the group (such as planning concrete actions to address one or two of the setbacks or even engaging in another round of possibility thinking to address a new challenge that emerged during discussion).

Note: This protocol is based on principles and ideas adapted from Beghetto, 2016, 2018; Klein, 2007.

Once you and your students get familiar with the basic structure of these possibility-thinking protocols, you can make any necessary modifications to fit a particular situation. The key is to use the protocols frequently—and

encourage others to use them, including colleagues, students and their families, members of the community, or anyone who is interested in generating and preparing to take action on new possibilities.

Courage in the Classroom

Although educators face many constraints when it comes to fostering student creativity in the classroom, the greatest barrier to creativity isn't the constraints. There will always be constraints. The greatest barrier is often ourselves and our timidity about exploring new territory. The key is to have the courage to take the beautiful risks necessary for supporting our students' (and our own) creativity.

Taking beautiful risks in education is a principled approach to supporting classroom creativity and innovation. It's not about changing our practices simply to try something different, but rather taking the beautiful risks that will make a big difference in our students' learning, creativity, and lives.

Guiding Questions

- › Consider Beghetto's definition of a "beautiful risk" and think of a time when you took such a risk. What were the results? How might this apply to curriculum and instruction?
- › Recall a time when a student met established criteria using an unexpected approach (Beghetto's formulation for creative expression). What happened? How did you respond?
- › How might teaching and learning in your school or classroom change if you encouraged more "possibility thinking"? Can you identify places in your curriculum or class routines where this could be incorporated?

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