Wayland Public Schools
January 30, 2017 School Committee Meeting
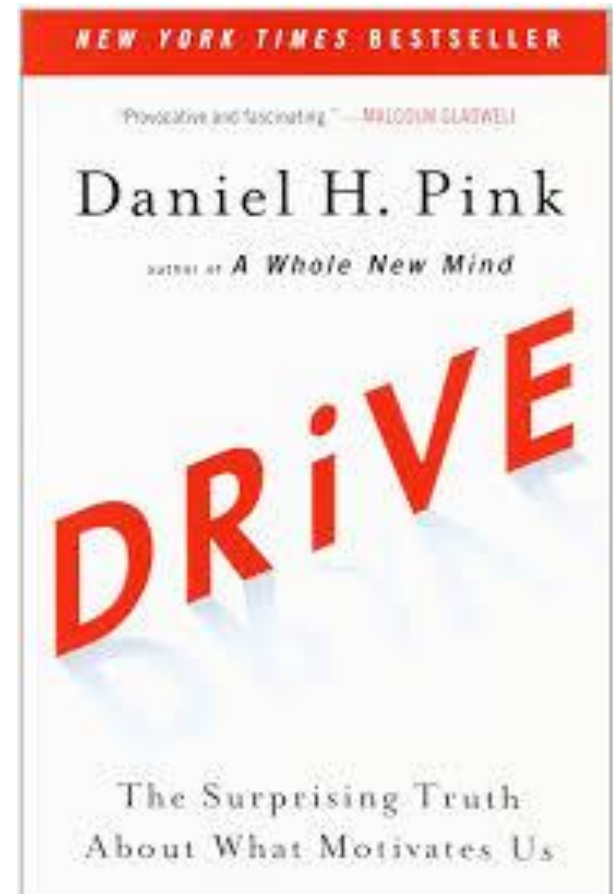
Curriculum Spotlight #7
DEC Days:
Drop Everything and Create

Origins

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Five years ago, Michael O'Conner led a staff book group for his colleagues which centered around Daniel Pink's *Drive*. He challenged the group to consider how the ideas from this book could apply to the field of education.

DEC days emerged from this experience.

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"Provocative and fascinating" — MALCOLM GLADWELL

Daniel H. Pink

author of *A Whole New Mind*

DRIVE

The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us

Motivation (from *Drive*)

Motivation 1.0: **Survival** (basic biological needs)

This motivation often didn't work; in fact there's sometimes a need to *restrain* this motivation.

Motivation 2.0: **Rewards and Punishments**

This works for some (mostly routine) tasks, and is counterproductive in addressing many tasks.

Motivation 3.0: **Intrinsic drive to learn, create, and better the world**.

Solving novel problems depends heavily on this type of motivation.

> Pillars of Motivation: Autonomy, Mastery, Purpose

[Summary source: http://www.marshallcf.com/assets/book_reviews/drive.pdf]

Autonomy

People need autonomy over:
- Task – What they do,
- Time – When they do it,
- Team – Who they do it with and
- Technique – How they do it.

Autonomy is different from independence. It means acting with choice – which means we can be both autonomous and happily interdependent with others.

[Summary source: http://www.marshallcf.com/assets/book_reviews/drive.pdf]

DEC Days
Drop Everything and Create

FedEx Days

FedEx Days were invented by an Australian software company, Atlassian.

A FedEx Day is a 24-hour event in which employees deliver innovation to the company they work for. It is called FedEx Day because you have to deliver overnight, like the parcel delivery company.

A FedEx Day is a fixed time period in which people are not disturbed for regular work. Within this period, employees have total autonomy over the project they are enthusiastic about.

Employees decide for themselves what they will be working on, with whom they are going to work, and how they are going to do it.

[Source: https://www.scrum.org/Portals/0/Documents/Community%20Work/Scrum.org-Whitepaper_FedEx%20Day%20-%20Lighting%20Corporate%20Passion.pdf]

DEC Days
Drop Everything and Create

Daniel Pink promoted FedEx days, advancing the idea that people will work more persistently to master a task that is intrinsically interesting rather than one that is materially rewarding.

Goals of a FedEx Day include:

- to foster creativity
- to scratch itches
- to test out temporary or novel ideas
- to have fun unfettered by the usual, even hum-drum restrictions of work

[Source: https://blog.ambientia.fi/2011/08/12/fedex-day-whats-it-all-about/]

What's Needed in the Classsroom

- To be able to create and to improvise are life skills. Students need hands-on experiences that enable them to develop these skills.

- So much of each student's day is structured according to a set plan, and what choices he or she has are often determined by the teacher. Students need more opportunities to do something of their own choosing and to nurture that side of themselves they most want to develop.

- We want to achieve a good balance between creativity and consumption. There needs to be more emphasis on creativity.

DEC Days
Drop Everything and Create

FedEx Days in the classroom, renamed DEC Days, became Mr. O'Connor's invention – first at Happy Hollow and now at Loker with Grade 3 colleague, Pam Pingeton.
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Students are told the following:

We are having a "Drop Everything & Create" project day! You will have **3 hours of class time to create.** This project is **WIDE** open when it comes to what you want to work on. The key is that you create something that you are ready to present when it is your time.

We will work on the presentation schedule soon, for now get your ideas down on paper…

DEC Days
Drop Everything and Create

Students can do whatever they want. The project does not need to be tied to the curriculum. The only criteria are:

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- Students first must independently come up with ideas of their own, then they can choose to work in pairs or singles.
- They must only use materials available at school.
- The project must be manageable given the time and materials available to them.
- Teachers must sign off on the project.
- They must make a presentation at the end of the day, whether they are finished or not.   (They will describe where they started, where they ended up, and where they would go with more time.)

DEC Days are usually held twice yearly. In addition, all of Loker held a DEC day last year.

DEC Days
Drop Everything and Create

Adaptations

Teachers have varied the DEC day guidelines to enhance the experience.

- Students have an initial reaction which may leave them a bit dumbfounded – not knowing what to do but at the same time feeling excited about the day. Teachers, in response, began asking students to plan their project the night before. As a result, they come better prepared to meet the challenge during the next day.

- Teachers tried to coax students to think beyond making physical products – such as suggesting writing a story or composing a song.

- Teachers experimented with the use of rubrics, which were met with mixed success. This led them to create planning sheets which help guide students through the project.

- In the most recent DEC days, students were told that their projects could not employ the use of any electronic technology.

DEC Days
Drop Everything and Create

Added Benefits

- Although not conceived as a STEAM project, DEC day projects align well with the design process. Students brainstorm ideas, design a plan, test it out, and make needed modifications.

- Students who may otherwise be easily distracted or in need of direction sometimes shine during DEC days. They serve as opportunities for such students to show another side of themselves.

- DEC days foster pairings that have surprised the teachers, leading to unexpected and highly productive collaborations.

- In all, students enjoy a memorable and fruitful learning experience.

DEC Days
Drop Everything and Create

Double Tipped Trick Skis

Disco

Dream Room

DEC Days
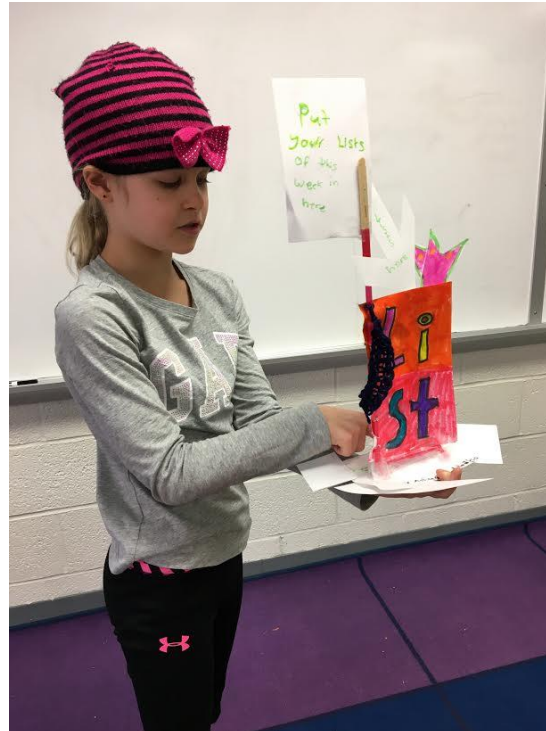# Drop Everything and Create
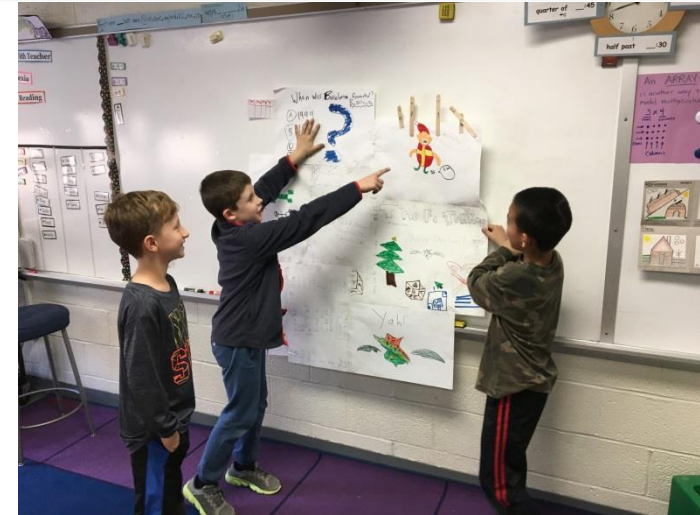

Art Store

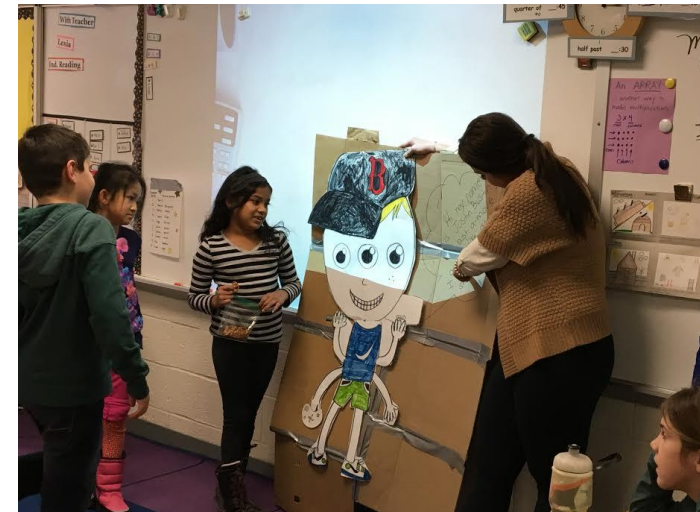Solar Powered Sailboat

DEC Days
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Life Size Teacher

Soccer Poster

List Maker Machine

Life size boy playing video games

DEC Days
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