Preparing Students for the Future by Actually Teaching Them about the Future

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Futures Studies Facing Wicked Problems
Turku FI
June 2015
Agenda

1. Why teach the future?
2. Why teach the future at this time in history?
3. Why don’t we teach the future today?
4. What we have done to date?
5. What is to be done next?
6. Discussion -- Questions, objections, suggestions
We teach the future as we do the past.

Do they know where they are going?

Do they?
Teach the Future encourages and supports teachers and administrators to include the future in their classes and schools in order to achieve the following benefits –

• **Engage** students in interesting and exciting projects that motivate them to learn

• **Prepare** students to be successful in a career and in life, specifically how to deal with the increasing rate and complexity of change.

• Teach **higher order thinking** skills, such as research, analysis, creativity, critical thinking, evaluation, synthesis and communication.

• **Differentiate** instruction by providing the better students with open-ended projects that they can do largely on their own.

• Be a part of an **innovative, educational movement** while working with other interesting and creative educators.
Herodotus  
*The Histories*  
450s – 420s B.C.  

Thucydides  
*The History of the Peloponnesian War*  
431 B.C.
Three objections

1. We do not have time to teach the future because it is not required by any organization or curriculum standard, including AP and IB.

2. The future is unpredictable so we cannot know, much less teach, something that has not happened yet.

3. We were not taught the future so we do not know how to teach it.
The future does not take any more time than anything else!

- **History** – flow, change over time, time series, patterns, uncertainties, contingencies, alternative histories, historical images of the future, historical analogy
- **Literature**, language – future tense, subjunctive mood, science fiction, the three questions for fictional conditions and characters
- **Mathematics** – time series, extrapolation, probability, preference ranking, criteria weighting
- **Physical science** – time series, extrapolation, technological applications, social consequences, public issues
- **Social science** – social change, time series, cultural concepts of time, national and global awareness
The Future is many, not one.

Vision

Implications

Alternative Futures

Limit of Plausibility

Baseline

Present

Past

Vision is the preferred future

Source: Charles Taylor, Army War College

We teach the future as we do the past.
Foresight in the Classroom

Simple questions

What is happening today? – Present
What happened to make it that way? – Past
What do you expect to happen? – Expected future
What might happen instead? – Alternative futures
What do you want to happen? – Preferred future(s)

We teach the future as we do the past.
3. But we were not taught

• *Teaching about the Future*, Bishop & Hines
• *Anticipate the School You Want*, Shostak
• World Futures Society -- *The Futurist*, Annual Conference
• World Futures Studies Federation – Pedagogical Resources
• *Global Foresight Books, Shaping Tomorrow*
• Organizations -- Future Problem Solving, Global Issues Network, Future Friendly Schools, Facing the Future, Foresight Education, Big History Project’s Futures Module
• In-service, professional development

*We teach the future as we do the past.*
What we have done already

• **Teacher in-services** for school districts in Houston and for American schools around the world

• **Certificate courses** for professionals in Houston and Brussels each year, some of whom are teachers.

• **Articles** about teaching the future.

• *Teaching about the Future* (Bishop & Hines) that describes the curriculum at the University of Houston.

• A **high school course** Fall 2013 on the Future of Houston.

• A non-profit **corporation** (Teach the Future) with an international Board of Directors.

• A new **website** with videos and curriculum materials as a starter kit.

• Presence on all major **social media** platforms.

• A successful **crowdfunding campaign**.

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What’s Next?

- **Summer** – teachers developing foresight teaching material for modest stipends
  - Core management teams formed for secondary schools and colleges
  - 20 teachers signed up

- **August, September** – design and produce finished materials

- **Fall** – distribute materials as free download or hardcopy for cost

**Goal**

1,000 teachers teaching the future by 2020.
Potential Collaborators

- WFSF Pedagogical Resources
- World Future Society
- Association of Professional Futurists
- Millennium Project, particularly new Dutch node
- LEALA, Erasmus University
- UNESCO
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Your Turn

after the next two presentations

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