



Bringing Back the Joy

At De Parelhof Child Centre in Prumerend, Netherlands, the team has a clear vision: to bring back the joy to learning. Using the principles of deep learning and a focus on the Global Competencies, the team encourages young learners to grow through play, choice, and collaboration. Helen Parkhurst, the school's principal gets it. She says, "In the old days, the student went to school to get what the school had to offer him. Now he goes to school to satisfy a need for self-development." She and her team know that when students are given voice, choice and an opportunity to interact, their curiosity is intrinsic. Learning is no longer about attainment, it's about fulfillment.

It may contradict conventional thought but this school knows that very young students can take responsibility for their own learning. Parkhurst sets high expectations and the students deliver. She says, "We would like our students to flourish in a complex society by living and working together." So, by creating explicit conditions, students learn to be self-directed. Here, students choose with whom to partner. They collaborate across age groupings. They choose where they would like to learn. They complete tasks. They assess their own learning. And, they reflect on their own thinking processes. In short, they embrace the "messy-ness" of learning because they own it. One student remarks, "I really like that we are able to learn, reflect and constantly collaborate together with older students and adults." She continues, "On a daily basis, we look forward and backwards on what we have learned, what we can do better and what we want to learn in the future." That is the voice of a joyful learner.

When learners experience joy, that feeling spreads to the adults. The professionals in the building assume collective ownership and care for all the students in the Child Centre. They collaborate, share knowledge and help each other to grow professionally. They reflect on the connections between their current practice and the Deep Learning tools. These tools simplify the pathway forward and help to generate meaningful professional discourse. The focus on deep learning is engaging, rewarding and optimistic. De Parelhof Child Centre is showing us that a commitment to deep learning can not only make an ambiguous future manageable, it can make it joyful.

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“ ...Deep Learning can not only make ambiguous future manageable, it can make it joyful. ”