



John Hunter Inspire Great Thinkers *Building a Generation of Leaders*

With humility and great passion, visionary educator John Hunter inspired parents, teachers, and administrators in the Great Hall during the first in an all-star lineup brought to our community by the Common Ground Speaker Series.

From a small town in Virginia, Hunter and his “World Peace Game” experienced a meteoric rise to fame (and a trip to the Pentagon) with a TED Talk that captures the powerful energy, passion, and maturity of his 4th graders while gaming scenarios of global conflict, economic pressure, and even war.

Hunter spoke with a disarming tone that is the perfect complement to a highly complex, chaotic system that he designed to “massively fail every time.” Hunter framed each of his main points with a touching story about a character in his game—giving us all a way to remember his messages years from now.

On partnership, young Katie was reduced to tears when her subordinates threatened her position as President of the World Bank. Rather than fix it for her with instruction, Hunter gave her the space to solve her own problem and the support she needed when she decided to fire them on the spot.

On hope, 4th grader Pablo frustrated his whole class with the slow pace of his speech, idea formation, and overall plan as Prime Minister—the largest leadership role in the game. Hunter had to be patient and remain optimistic that Pablo would emerge from being overwhelmed to lead the class. In the tale of Pablo’s eventual rise to leadership, Hunter instructed that, “learning torques with the mismatch of hope and fear.”

In addition to the World Peace Game, Mr. Hunter described other dynamic approaches he takes in the classroom to foster flexible thinking in his students. One tool he uses with students is a “Perspective Wheel.” To explore a topic or story, he draws a large circle, divided into quadrants. In the center of the circle he writes the topic being discussed (for example, a short story about a hunter). The students are then asked to identify four perspectives that could be taken toward the topic and explain how each perspective differs (so the students might identify the hunter, the deer, the forest, and the hunter’s wife as four perspectives on the story). Each perspective is noted and elaborated on in a quadrant.

Students who become practiced in this technique learn that a variety of approaches and differing viewpoints can illuminate all situations, hypothetical and real world. It becomes second nature for them to see things through another’s eyes—an essential problem-solving skill.

Hunter’s mission is “to create the next generation of leaders, one child at a time.” Though his stories are from his time in the classroom—Hunter is also a parent. It was refreshing not to hear of a “John Hunter Method” or some list of things as parents we should have been doing all along. Rather, he encouraged parents to be more comfortable with not having all the answers, making mistakes, and the reality of limits to our control. Further, he has learned to “take the pressure off the moment—look at the long view and let yourself off the hook.”

Common Ground Speaker Series

www.commongroundspeakerseries.org

John Hunter Ted Talk

http://www.ted.com/talks/john_hunter_on_the_world_peace_game.html

More about the World Peace Game

<http://worldpeacegame.org>