Hathaway Brown School’s Education Innovation Summit – Day One Opening Remarks

November 4, 2010

I can’t tell you what a feeling it is to look out at this room. I’m extraordinarily glad that you’re here. You wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for the Edward E Ford Foundation or for our own Ann Rittinger Petersen, Hathaway Brown Class of 1946, whose generosity and steadfast commitment to our school and our cause is a constant source of amazement. She possesses the spirit and optimism that we would all be wise to adopt. So thank you, Ann.

There are many others to thank, and over the next days, we’ll make sure to express our gratitude, but first we need to get to work.

Make no mistake, what we’re witnessing now in our culture are the signs of trauma in our education system. From “Waiting for Superman” to “Race to Nowhere,” the educational corpus is signaling to us that it needs our help.

The problems are many, but there’s a thread in the critique of schools that we need to face: by and large, taken as a whole, we haven’t figured out how to marry creativity to rigor, the joy of discovery to accountability, the profundity of independent thought to a measurement of competence and success.

These are not easy tasks, and there is no one solution, no simple fix for an educational system exhibiting signs of shock. We at Hathaway Brown are not proposing to have all the answers. But what we are proposing is that educators need new ways of thinking about these problems and that there is much to be gleaned from fields and industries that, at first glance, seem unrelated to our profession.

That’s the trick we’re hoping to master over the next days: how to bring our creative, imaginative, innovative powers to bear so we can create new solutions that respond to the evolving and knotted nature of our world.
The stakes are high. We’re in danger of losing ground to other nations who are intent on producing more capable workers than we produce. More importantly, we’re in danger of losing touch with our mission as educators, which is to produce not a qualified labor force but thinking, questioning, contributing human beings.

We at Hathaway Brown designed this Summit as a natural outgrowth of our commitment to educational innovation. Over the last decade, we’ve focused on reinvention not because we anticipated a fad but because we see innovation as the truest expression of education’s moral imperative. The best teachers are architects of intellects, and the best schools are those designed to support that creativity and lean into the complexities of our time.

For this Summit, we’ve brought together great minds in a wide swath and disciplines and fields because we’ve learned that the spark of invention often lights when unfamiliar forces collide into each other. That’s why we’ll hear from architects and chefs, college presidents and entrepreneurs. These days will be filled with the unexpected but magical moments of collision.

These should be invigorating days. But don’t lose track of our larger charge: To be forces of good in our complex world. In order to become those forces, we need to invent, lead, and share. That’s our job over the next days and for all the days we spend amongst the students whose lives we hope to help transform.

To begin our journey into the nature of innovation, I’m thrilled to present Daniel Pink who is the author of four provocative, bestselling books on the changing world of work including his latest book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. You’ve likely seen Daniel Pink’s articles in the New York Times, Harvard Business Review, Fast Company and Wired or seen him on your screens when he’s on CNN, CNBC, ABC, or heard his voice on your radio when he’s on NPR and other networks in the U.S. and abroad. Mr. Pink held his last real job in the White House, where he served from 1995 to 1997 as chief speechwriter to Vice President Al Gore. He also worked as an aide to U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich and in other positions in politics and government. He received a BA, with honors, from Northwestern University, and a JD from Yale Law School. He’s an impressive thinker, eloquent writer and the perfect person to launch Hathaway Brown’s Education Innovation Summit. Please welcome, Daniel Pink.