

Every school has a soul. Or once did.

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In headaches and in worry,

Vaguely life leaks away.

from Auden's **As I Walked Out One Evening**, 1937

School is suffering. An ignoble truth. Too many children of the poor are shackled to charter chains, doing the time by rote. Too many children of the wealthy, canvas rucksacks sagging full, like strange fruit - for years they will drill with mercenary armies of tutors preparing them for an assault on ivy covered walls. Bullied by distant bureaucrats or local parental egos, many students, rich and poor, turn to smart phones for solace and diversion. And now opioids are the opiate of the masses, while a child with an assault rifle becomes the bump stocked canary in the mine. They tell me suicide is on the rise, from the hills and hollers of Appalachia to secondary schools in Silicon Valley. If every school has a soul, some of those souls go to the highest bidder - the guy who talks about somebody else's dark kid's bright future. A hope, a dream, a promise of success. Soulless schools are all about some future *becoming*. But this living in *later* is suffering. But like Lotto, you never know...Meanwhile, now, in the eternal moments, uptown bodies grow thick and sickly, and spirits are broken everywhere.

Our school, however, is about *being*. A human who is just being. A just human being. In El Norte, up here in Spanish Harlem, we have found an end to suffering. By living and working in the moment. In our process now lies all future promise. The method is the outcome. And the method and *Manifesto for the Mindful School Movement* - also known as *The Stillness Movement*, come down to these core values: **The 3 R's and some PB&J.**

- **Respiration**

In stillness, we give attention to the dynamics of breath and alignment. *In motion*, strong and balanced, we draw into play the full power of the cardiopulmonary system. Meditation, sports, yoga, and free play are central. Neurogenesis, courage, collaboration, and serenity flower perennially, here in the present moment.

- **Relationships**

Relationships are fostered based on awareness, courage, generosity, honor, and temperance. Lives of deep meaning are built and shared through all of our work together and with meals prepared and shared, in an expanse of time, with mindfulness and love.

- **Reason**

The liberal arts - the scientific method, the novel, mathematical reasoning - are the means to meet our innate drive and sacred end - to best understand and accept the dictates of the universe - and to work and move honorably amidst infinite possibilities.

Play

Allows all of the above to meet full expression. It is both means and end. Wrestling, poetry, and scientific exploration are embodiments here of the play spirit - a place where creative tension, challenge, surprise, uncertainty, revelation and questions abound. Much of the healing happens here.

Beauty

Inspires all of the above. We create it through the visual arts, and we seek it through exploration of the natural world. Our building's design is seen as a reflection of this value and an inspiration, as well. But in El Barrio we know beauty is merely the finger pointing at the moon.

Joy

We daily and actively and joyfully pursue joy, through all of the above. We are happily determined to be happy in a full Aristotelian mode first employed in the Great Rift Valley. Laughter, smiles, and deep and shallow humor are mandatory throughout all course offerings.

In the meantime, arete, human excellence, is also won. Our students win lacrosse and wrestling championships - and admission to fine high schools where they thrive as scholars, athletes, and friends to all. 92% of our families are of low income and 100% work with the highest of values. And they find healing and joy in our school. The happy struggle for something higher, a transcendent education, brings them somewhere over the suffering. Where every child should be. If we all take on the 3 R's and have a daily PB&J, we'll be right alongside of them. Maybe you are already...

Yours in stillness and in movement,

Ivan