



ARC EDUCATION PROJECT

6TH

ARC ThoughtMeet

A FOCUS ON TEACHERS

JUNE 8, 2021

Thought Leaders: Lily Eskelsen García & Peter Kent

Teacher Representatives: Ciara O'Donnell, Whitney Paul-Joseph, Mark Ford, Nuzhat Uthmani, Flavia Pereira, Sally Steeves, Brynja Stefánsdóttir.

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Teacher Representatives:

WHAT DO TEACHERS NEED TO FLOURISH?

Teachers need to be at the center of the pedagogical knowledge creation process:

"Our teachers flourish when they stop, breathe, and privilege their own learning and when they are the central actors in shaping that learning space and learning needs are identified in what they want to learn."



**Ciara O'Donnell,
Ireland**



**Whitney Paul-Joseph,
Saskatchewan**

Communication channels need to be established so teachers have the opportunity to express concerns, ask questions, and be heard in their schools, community, and province:

"Educators need the opportunity to be heard. Feeling like you're valued and that your needs are being listened to is so critical to our profession."



Time and space are needed for teachers to collaboratively network, problem-solve, and develop confidence and agency:

"Perhaps one of the biggest barriers to helping teachers flourish that remains across the system is the uncertainty regarding accountability and qualifications."



Mark Ford,
Wales



Nuzhat Uthmani,
Scotland



There is a need to create networking spaces where teachers can learn with and from one another and develop their confidence in addressing difficult knowledge without fear of repercussions:

"What I have done is put together a practitioners' network that specializes in the values of global citizenship education, the values of anti-racist education. Of course, there are a lot of challenges in this since many of our colleagues feel that they are not fully equipped to talk about these topics or teach them in the classroom."

Collaborative work is needed to support teachers in the adoption of a holistic teaching and learning practice focused on all students:

"We are moving towards a new teaching paradigm and this change requires teachers to leave behind the idea of 'teaching a subject'. Instead, we are starting to teach as a team and address the student as a whole individual."



Flavia Pereira,
Uruguay



Sally Steeves,
Nova Scotia



Teachers need the opportunity to provide input into the curriculum documents and shift the focus beyond knowledge and content:

"What do we want students to be able to do? When we talk to teachers, their frustrations are always in getting students to do things and then we have these documents that are not about doing things, they are about content."

Colleague support is needed to help teachers to transition from a comfort zone into a learning zone, to embody resilience and to embrace change(s) in schools:

"The job we as teachers have been doing for the past many years has developed slowly. Schools have not taken such a vast change in such a short period, ever."



Bryna Stefánsdóttir,
Iceland

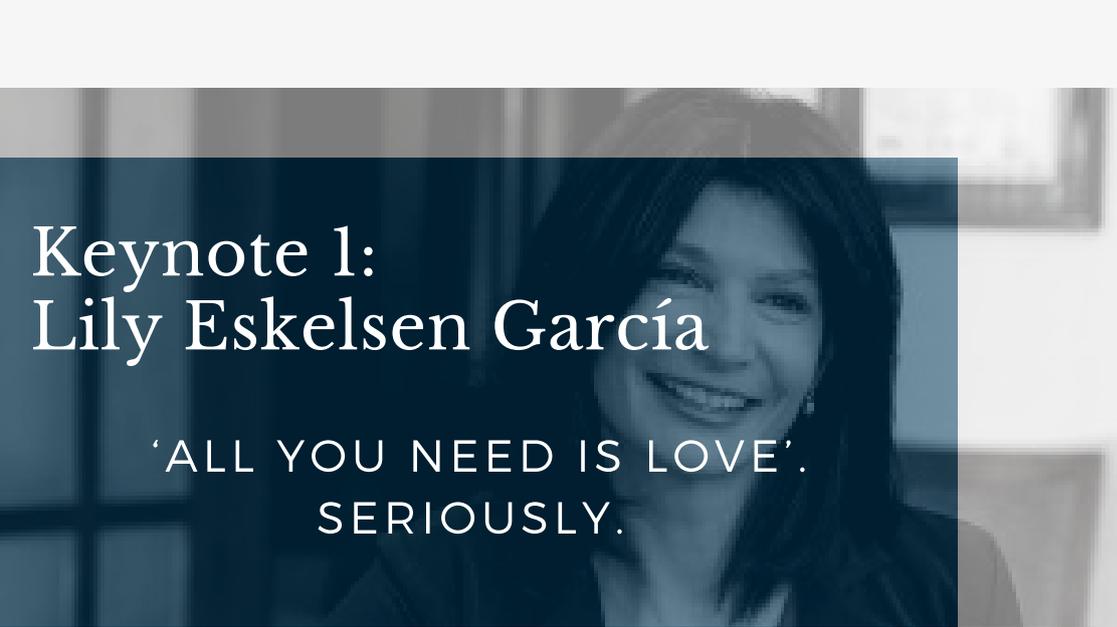


WHAT STANDS OUT FOR YOU FROM WHAT YOU ARE HEARING?

- It is important for teachers to be heard.
- Teachers need professional freedom to be respected as the experts in the best position to support students and create the environment students need to thrive.
- How do we give teachers the opportunity to stop and breathe and reflect on practice? We need to give teachers a sense of agency and time to think collaboratively.
- Does our performance management system allow and encourage teachers to take risks and make mistakes? It is important to trust teachers and let them lead school development and change.
- Collaboration must be viewed as a professional value in a new paradigm, and as a cultural norm.
- There must be a balance between autonomy and responsibility, as well as between teachers and systems.
- It is important to listen to colleagues' shared concerns regarding teachers' needs.

WHAT HAS CHALLENGED YOU IN YOUR SYSTEM FROM WHAT YOU HEARD?

- There is a need for time and space for teachers to collaborate with each other as well as with students, parents, and administrators.
- A balance between accountability and autonomy is important in order to separate the freedom of teaching from educational responsibility.
- Change is vital in order to have a system that is fluid, innovative, and educationally explorative for teachers.
- The empowerment and support of teachers, as well as listening to their voices is necessary in order to shape a system that encourages teacher well-being.
- There is tension for teachers around covering curricular content yet also wanting to slow down to connect meaningfully with students.
- There is a need to embed caring for students and the development of meaningful relationships as a component of the curriculum.
- Systems need to consider how data is gathered and whether this helps us to provide equitable learning opportunities for students.

A portrait of Lily Eskelsen García, a woman with long dark hair, smiling. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Keynote 1: Lily Eskelsen García

‘ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE’.
SERIOUSLY.

“I don’t defend and I don’t attack: I teach.”

- The foundation of all teaching is love: love for our students, love for our future as professionals, love for our families, love for our communities, love for what we are teaching.
- Professional teachers believe in their students and help them to believe in themselves; they inspire them, comfort them, challenge them, celebrate them, and demand learning.
- The mindset and institutionalization of standardized testing in education is a global problem.
- Time and resources are essential for teachers to build trusting relationships and opportunities with students, their families, and school communities.
- Teachers need support and funding to meet established curricular requirements, expand education into the arts, technology, and vocational learning, as well as care for students' mental, physical, and socio-emotional health.
- Teachers need unionists, administrators, researchers, advocates, and colleagues to remove barriers and support their love for the whole child, and to embrace fierce love as the foundation of everything.

“Hope, love, and trust are essential elements but they are not the plan. You have to trust that you have the right people making the plan.”





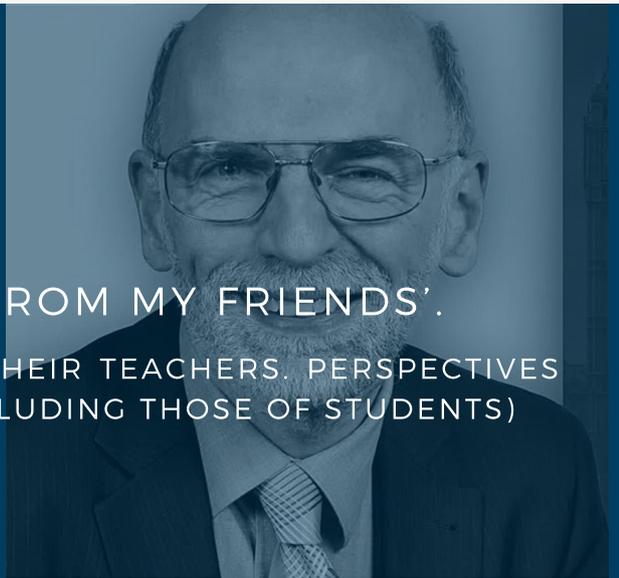
WHAT RESONATED WITH WHAT YOU HEARD?

- Happiness, love, and care are the elements of meaningful teaching and learning.
- There are bureaucratic tensions in terms of how educators are listened to and heard by politicians and policymakers.
- The professional support of teachers can likely open a wide range of opportunities whereby they gain experience with hybrid learning, explore a holistic learner-centred approach to teaching, and increase equity.
- Systems must find ways to support teachers to teach with a fierce love for their students and their profession.

Keynote 2: Peter Kent

‘WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS’.

HELPING LEADERS TO HELP THEIR TEACHERS. PERSPECTIVES
FROM THE ICP NETWORK (INCLUDING THOSE OF STUDENTS)



“Having happy schools means encouraging teaching and caring instincts, first and above all.” (17-year-old pupil)

- Systems need to increase a sense of gain and happiness in teachers, and a sense of looking after the whole person.
- Systems need to support leaders so that they can support teachers.

“Trust the judgement of teachers and leaders rather than having to deal with excessive compliance/accountability.” (Australian Principal)

- Consistency matters, as well as a focus on the teaching of quality.
- There needs greater trust from the government to teachers and the other way around.
- In order for leaders to support teachers and enable them to flourish, there has to be support for equity.
- Systems need to provide the key resources for schools to recruit and retain teachers.

“Governments must ensure that schools have the resources that they need. This is a huge equity issue that continues to impact the delivery of education in many communities.” (African Principal)

- Systems need to provide time for educators’ ongoing professional development so they are prepared for different career stages, remain up-to-date and empowered.
- Systems need to provide educators with appropriate salaries

“Health and wellbeing needs to be uppermost in decisions that are taken. In our context class size, resources, remuneration, etc. all impact teacher health and well being.” (African Principal)



NEXT STEPS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SYSTEMS

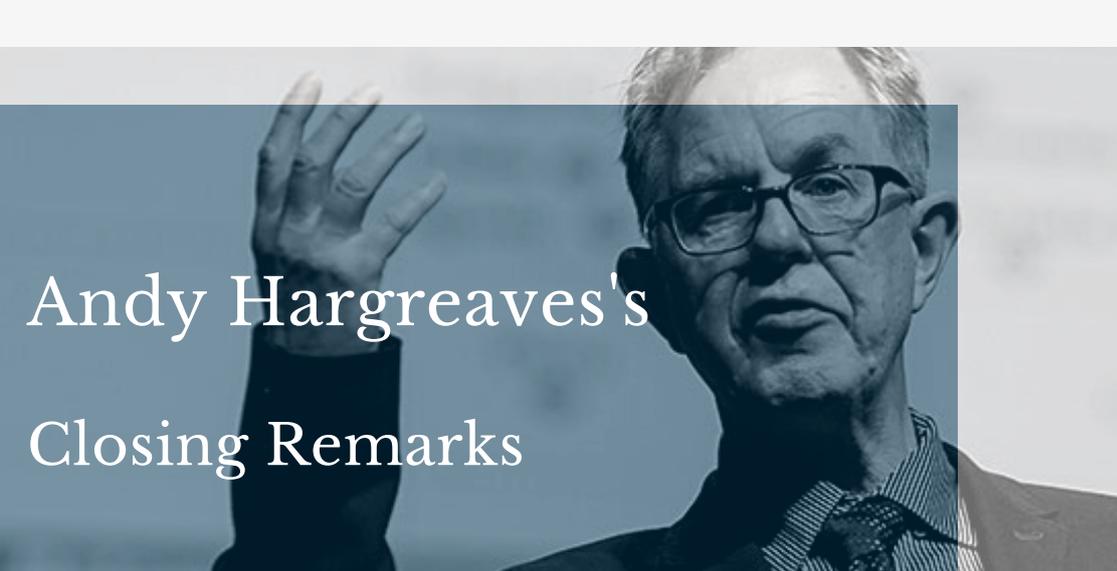
WHAT DO WE AS ARC SYSTEMS NEED TO FOCUS ON NOW?

System change

- How can systems build relationships and capacity across all educational levels and stakeholders in order to mobilize collective action?
- How can we develop responsive, effective and inclusive systems?
- What strategies were necessary during the pandemic that have led to benefits in systems and schools that we can build on moving forward?

An open space for collaboration: Policy, curriculum, and teacher Voices

- How can systems effectively and openly communicate about how policies are implemented?
- How can we create professional and accessible platforms for teachers to take leadership in schools and curriculum development that will help us find a balance between well-being and learning?
- How can we provide the time and space for teachers and leaders to engage in professional dialogue, collaborative inquiry and co-construct curriculum?
- How can we ensure that systems take teachers' voices regarding the challenges of their professional practice into consideration?



Andy Hargreaves's Closing Remarks

"Hope is not a strategy"

- We need to have hope, vigilance, determination, direction, goals, and a plan.
- Teacher-student and teacher-teacher relationships should be at the heart of policy; teachers have to be heard and they have to be trusted.
- To respond to teachers' needs, we must set the system goals; they cannot be set by someone else.
- Unless we develop our teachers as whole teachers, how can we develop our children as whole learners?



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