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# Chalk Talk

## Solar Eclipse Invites Learning

By Ed Dalton

On Monday, August 21, 2017 a remarkable solar eclipse worked its way across America. As it did so, it left behind in its shadow thousands of viewers filled with a sense of awe and wonder. These two emotions form the foundation for learning. Wonder is what every student needs and should be cultivated by every teacher. Out of wonder comes inquiry – the desire to know more and to ask. That means observing, thinking, asking questions, reading and communicating. When one learns in this manner, the content is long remembered and the learning deep rather than shallow and quickly forgotten.

According to Victor Weisskopf, “People cannot learn by having information pressed into their brains. Knowledge has to be sucked into the brain, not pushed in. First, one must create a state of mind that craves knowledge, interest and wonder. You can teach only by creating an urge to know.”



Kids observe and wonder as they view the solar eclipse.

We instinctively have a sense of curiosity and wonder. We want to know “why” to so many things and should frequently ask the question – have you ever wondered...?

The science of the eclipse is a remarkable thing. How come? What if? Why did? How can it all be perfectly so? With learning tools and technology these days, the answers are as close as the touch on the phone.

This concept was further illustrated and reinforced with the TCSD Opening Institute

Speaker the following day. The guest was Erin Gruwell – famous author of Freedom Writers - the book that inspired the movie of the same name. Ms. Gruwell, a remarkable teacher in an extremely challenging school in Long Beach,

California, needed desperately to engage her students. They felt imprisoned by school, their community, the past and no hope for the future.

Then one day a miracle occurred in her classroom. Out of frustration and despair came the question – what was the Holocaust? No student knew. With the guidance of a caring teacher, they wanted to know more. The students found and fell in love with the Diary of Anne Frank. In an instant, reading, wondering, asking and relating mattered. Lives began to change. Learning became relevant and came to life. It was the beginning of a new life for many students. The Freedom Writers story continues to evolve and change in a remarkable way. You see, education can change lives and it starts with “points of wonder”. Have you ever wondered?



Erin Gruwell, famous author of Freedom Writers with Ed Dalton



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