

I am so excited! This new charter school can be just what we need, a chance to raise our test scores and re-establish a positive reputation for the quality of public education! It's all about tough standards and high test scores. Let's face it, we are competing in a global economy, against nations whose students outscore ours on the standardized tests that matter. It's embarrassing. I'd love to see a strict code of conduct, demanding maths, science, and humanities courses, and no silly electives. It's all about rigorous standards!

Jack, you and I both would like to teach in a more rigorous schools, but the truth is I am fed up with testing. I'll tell you a secret: I don't much care whether South Korean kids or those at the Country Day School score better than us on those silly multiple-choice tests. Kids thirst for meaningful ideas. The school I envision would focus on classic works of literature and art. How about a school where we discuss great books like *Moby Dick*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, Plato's *Republic*, and Homer's *Iliad*? I want to create students who know not only *how* to read but who *want* to read, and best of all, know how to *think*.

I agree with Elin that we need to move beyond today's tyranny of testing, but Hemingway and Homer are not the answers. Our job as teachers is to make certain that our students can do well in the real world. When I was in eighth grade, my class took a three-week train trip throughout the Midwest. We researched and planned where to go; figured out how to read train schedules; used maps; and ended up learning maths, history, geography, and writing. Talk about an integrated curriculum! I want students to learn how to solve real-world problems, not just answer test questions or discuss books.

At last, reality! But there are more pressing social needs than a train trip. I want students to do more than simply fit into society; I want them to leave the world a better place than they found it. One out of five U.S. children is born into poverty. I want to teach kids to make a difference. Rather than insulate them from real-world problems, we should help our kids develop a social conscience and the political skills needed to improve our society. Teaching in a socially responsible charter school would be my dream.

Everyone in this room has been trying to design a charter school backward. Let's set aside what we as teachers want and consider a revolutionary idea: building a school based on what students want. I would like our charter schools staffed by teachers who are skilled in facilitating and counselling children to reach their personal goals. Believe it or not, I trust students, and I would give every child (even the youngest or least-able) an equal voice in decision making. We have forgotten the purpose of schools: to help students find their way.