

**What does the future look like? What will our students need to thrive in work and life?  
What implications does that have for the MISD?  
For parents and students?**

***Continuing the Conversation about Educating for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

The mission of the Mercer Island School District is to prepare our students to thrive in work and life. But as the world becomes increasingly global, the pace of change continues to accelerate, technology permeates our lives and knowledge and information grows in both volume and accessibility, how do we ensure we're preparing our students for their future and not our past?

The Really Big Idea Committee, a committee of the MISD Board of Directors, is in the process of developing an ambitious vision that will help ensure Mercer Island students are prepared to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Over 50 administrators, principals, teachers, staff, parents, Foundation and School Board members and community participants are engaged in this collaborative process of thinking big.

But what will our kids' future look like and what does that mean for the skills and abilities they'll need to thrive? Absent a crystal ball, we've looked to a number of resources to help us better paint that picture. Many of us have read Tom Friedman's book *The World is Flat*. Ralph Young, a Microsoft executive, shared Microsoft's vision of education, including examples of technology-infused education from around the world. Dan Pink visited Mercer Island in November and described how the forces of Asia, Automation and Abundance will lead to the need for a whole new mind, one where the left brain skills we've historically rewarded in school are now joined by the need for right brain skills such as empathy, design, and story telling. Pink also reminded us that success in this new world will require a focus on strengths, passion, intrinsic motivation and perseverance, echoing Mel Levine's themes in 2005.

Three questions consistently emerge from these conversations and explorations:

- 1) How should we think about standardized tests and test scores in the context of preparing kids for this hypothetical future? Creativity, working in teams, global citizenship and thinking across disciplines may all be important but they aren't covered on either the WASL or the SAT.
- 2) What about math and science? Aren't we falling further behind all the Asian countries?
- 3) What about college admissions? How can we offer innovative programs if colleges require students to conform to a formulaic view of success?

To continue refining our picture of the future, and weigh in on at least the first two of these persistent questions, we've invited Professor Yong Zhao from Michigan State University to Mercer Island on May 12-13<sup>th</sup>. Like Dan Pink's visit, this is also a chance to bring our broader school community into the conversation about educating for the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

Monday, May 12<sup>th</sup>

**Event for Staff and Invited Guests**

Presentation from 2:30 to 3:30 pm

Q&A from 3:30 to 4:00 pm

MIHS Performing Arts Center

Tuesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>

**Event for Community/Parents**

7:00 to 9:00 pm

MIHS Performing Arts Center

Yong Zhao's current work focuses on the impact of globalization on education. He is a frequent traveler to Asia and is very familiar with practices and trends in Asian education systems. Zhao

has a unique perspective on the strengths inherent in our education system as well as the potential pitfalls as we, as a country, increasingly look to test scores as a proxy for current or future success.



Yong Zhao, Ph.D. is a University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education at the College of Education, Michigan State University. He also serves as the Founding Director of the Center for Teaching and Technology as well as the Director of the US-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence. Zhao is also Associate Director of the International Network for Educational Transformation, a U. K.-based organization that promotes global exchanges of educational innovations. He is a fellow of the International Academy for Education.

Dr. Zhao has consulted with numerous government and educational agencies He is currently leading the Education Research Group of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) education network (EDNET).

***These events are sponsored by:***

***Really Big Idea Visioning Sub-Committee  
Co-chaired by Superintendent Gary Plano and  
Mercer Island Education Association President Mike Radow***

***Mercer Island Schools Foundation***

***PTA Parent Ed Committee***