

Bridging Generations and Cultures

Ravi Hutheesing emphasizes the importance of engaging with people of all backgrounds and developing life-long learners



In 1997, Hutheesing toured the country as a guitarist with the band Hanson. They flew all over the country, playing their hit single “MMMBop” at sold-out shows in Madison Square Garden and on all of the late-night talk shows. For Hutheesing, it was a dream come true and also an education on the millennial generation.

While Hanson’s fame was short lived, Hutheesing’s love of music and interest in the millennial generation continued. Today, he travels the world, developing meaningful connections between young people, music and education across the world. At the State Education Convention, he emphasized how important it is for school leaders to understand and embrace this group of people.

“Millennials are the largest generation now,” Hutheesing said. “They’re your colleagues. They’re your incoming teachers. They’re going to be influencing everyone.”

He shared research and polling data that showed that millennials tend to be flexible, adaptable and more liberal than previous generations.

“They want to be defined by their passions,” Hutheesing said. “They want to be entrepreneurs and they want to make a difference. They value

people and purpose over profits.”

Promoting and developing entrepreneurship in young people is more important than ever. The workforce is changing and will continue to evolve in leaps and bounds. Many traditional jobs that exist today may not in the future.

“The future is going to be a freelance gig economy and it’s our job to make sure we are preparing our students for this future,” Hutheesing said.

While many millennials are natural entrepreneurs, the challenge can be that they are often disconnected from their passions. As Hutheesing said when millennials were growing up, “They were never allowed to be bored.” They didn’t have unstructured time where they could explore and develop interests in a variety of areas.

Hutheesing speaks from experience. From an early age, he dreamed of becoming a famous guitarist like Angus Young of the band AC/DC. He didn’t have much interest in school and had to force himself to attend class and graduate from high school. In college, he attended New York University so he would have opportunities to play and teach guitar. He struggled to attend his college courses but was very successful teaching guitar lessons so he asked his college profes-

sors to tutor him. This arrangement allowed him to focus on music while still graduating from college.

As for what all of this means for our schools, Hutheesing emphasized the importance of developing life-long learners. He said students need to have the critical thinking skills to find credible information. Assessments that test students on what they know are outdated. “It’s not about what students know but rather what they can do,” he said.

“The classroom plays a very critical role in developing entrepreneurs,” he added. “The classroom has to nurture talent and provoke critical thinking.”

In closing, Hutheesing said we need to connect people across all generations and backgrounds. He added that we have more in common than we think. “We’ve got to listen and learn from each other,” he said.

This culture of acceptance and collaboration starts with education. As Hutheesing said, he believes world peace can be obtained through an education grounded in critical thinking and character.

“Education is what remains after forgetting everything one has learned. Education is not about what you know. It’s about who you are.” ■

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