

AASSA Newsletter

Association of American Schools in South America

SEPTEMBER 2019 The Tri-Annual Newsletter of The Association of American Schools in South America

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From Your Executive Director

Greetings AASSA Friends and Colleagues!

Welcome to the start of another school year and our 1st AASSA Newsletter of 2019-2020. As we start another school, AASSA shares our most sincere “welcome” and “best wishes” to each of you. We send a special “welcome” to our new Member Schools and Heads of School new to our region – as well as celebrate the three Heads of School that have changed schools, but remained in our region (see enclosed sections).

An update regarding each of our current goals is included below.

Goal 1

AASSA will update its mission, vision, values, membership criteria and requirements.

We successfully updated our mission, vision, values and membership criteria and requirements. We now have a single set of membership criteria that all AASSA Member Schools must meet. The new membership criteria includes having a Child Protection Policy and commitment to engage in ongoing training. In addition, we have moved to all AASSA Member Schools being accredited and only AASSA Member Schools are eligible to participate in our Recruiting Services. We are continuing our Goal 1 work this year as we live our updated mission, vision and



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values, membership criteria and requirements.

Mission

AASSA's mission is to enhance the quality of education in American/international member schools.

Vision

We are a vibrant, membership-driven learning organization promoting visionary leadership, innovative programs, and fiscally sustainable services.

Values

We believe that: Progressive learning in a safe and collaborative environment is essential to bettering the world. Respect, trust, and compassion generate positive relationships within a learning community.

We are better when we work together!

Goal 2

AASSA will review its programs and services to ensure alignment to its mission/vision.

As part of our Goal 2 work, only AASSA Member Schools may participate in our Recruitment Services as well as our newly added Heads of School Retreat event. All

other AASSA Services may be purchased at non-member rates. An important aspect of our mission/vision is that our services need to be fiscally sustainable. We adjusted our fees and service structures as well as our staffing. We will continue to review all our

AASSA programs and services to ensure that they are aligned to our mission and vision.

Goal 3

AASSA will develop a forward-looking sustained professional development plan leveraging school leadership capacity to build its network of schools for future-ready students.

AASSA now has a collaboratively developed professional development plan. The Plan includes strands, sub-strands and levels. The Plan will guide the AASSA Professional Learning Services. We are grateful to our Professional Development Committee (PDC) members and all who contributed to the development of our Professional Learning Plan (see enclosed section). Our Goal 3 work going forward will be related to implementing our Plan and analyzing its results.

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The advertisement features a blue background with a yellow pencil pointing to a world map at the bottom. The text is centered and uses a mix of bold and regular fonts. The icons for insurance types are arranged in a row below the main text.

Goal 4

AASSA will assist member schools in attracting and retaining the best educators.

We have moved to a flat rate fee structure for our Recruiting Service is to ensure we have the needed resources to meet Goal 4. We have reduced our Candidate fee from \$110 to \$50, and we are refunding the \$50 to all 1st time AASSA Candidates that attend our Recruiting Fair in person. We have also increased our marketing efforts and established University Partnerships. Our Goal 4 work will be ongoing.

Thank you for taking time to read our Newsletter. As always, we encourage you to visit our blog -<http://www.aassa.net/blog> and consider contributing if you have not done so recently. You may find the search feature particularly helpful in researching what others in our region are doing related to areas of your current work.

A favorite quote or research summary will continue to be included in each Newsletter Welcome in a section called

One to think on...

“International schools are a powerful, dynamic force in our global society. Truly the melting pot of the next generation, international schools offer great potential to contribute to a peaceful and thriving world order.”

(Chojnacki and Detwiler, 2019, p. 14).

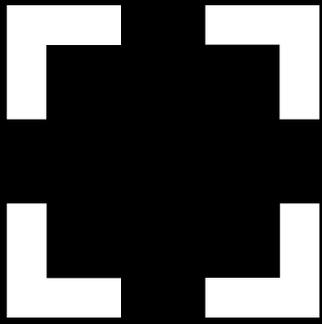
Wishing you an excellent 2019-2020 academic year!

Best regards,
Dereck H. Rhoads, Ed.D.
AASSA Executive Director

References:

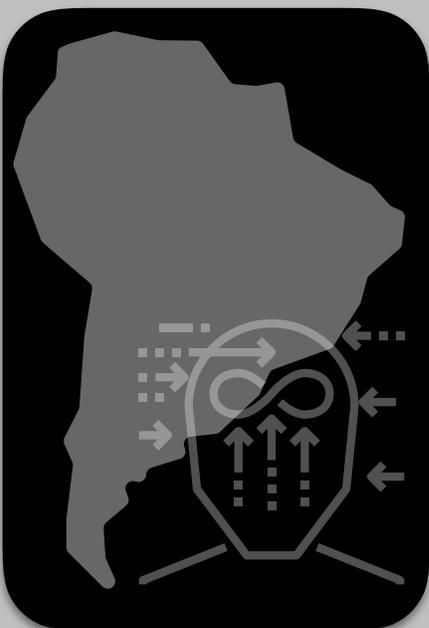
Chojnacki, D., & Detwiler, R. M. (2019). International trustee handbook: A guide to effective governance for international and independent school boards (2nd ed.). National Association of Independent Schools.





A Renewed Focus on Professional Learning

By: Adam Slaton,
AASSA Chief Learning Officer



AASSA is renewing its focus on professional learning. It's a focus that will begin to shape a collective regional commitment and understanding of learning throughout Latin America. In doing so, AASSA has been taking important steps to create forward momentum toward enhancing professional learning and its effect on our school communities.

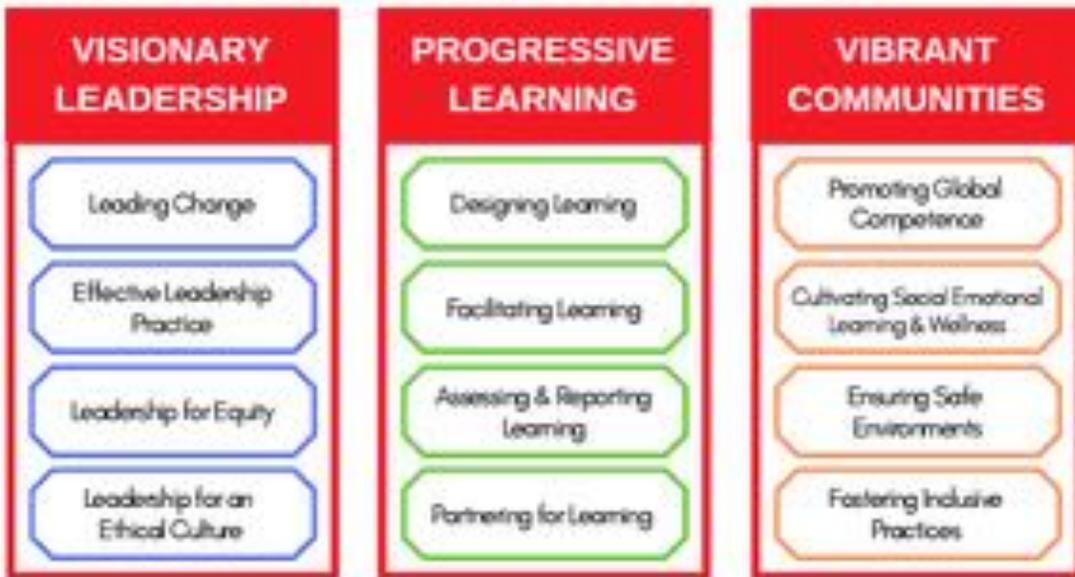
AASSA's New Professional Development Committees

Meeting the learning needs of the association relies heavily on receiving feedback from our membership. For this reason, AASSA developed a feedback response structure that revolves around three specific professional development committees: An Executive Committee, a Business Manager Committee, and a Governance Committee. Each of the committees is composed of a diverse representation of educators and leaders from member schools throughout the region. The work of the committees is focused on ensuring that AASSA is keenly aware of the professional learning needs in the region and addressing those needs through an array of opportunities. Providing strategic insight to the organization regarding future learning initiatives is vital in being able to provide meaningful, equitable, and sustainable learning for our member schools.

AASSA's New Professional Learning Strands

Professional learning must be relevant, meaningful, and focused. With this in mind, AASSA staff and the Executive Professional Development Committee worked collaboratively to redefine the focus for professional learning in the region. Using AASSA's mission, vision, and values, the committee worked hard to design a professional learning strategy that aligned to the core elements of the organization, while providing a clear and focused direction for relevant learning opportunities in the region. This work resulted in the creation of the AASSA Professional Learning Strands. This strand structure will drive AASSA's main priorities for professional learning: to provide meaningful professional learning opportunities, to ensure relevant practices, and to create a strong regional network of learners. The Strands and correlating sub-strands are designed to provide learning opportunities along a continuum in order to best meet the needs of learners. This structure will allow learning experiences to be more in-depth, relevant, and sustainable, in order to maximize the impact on professional growth and organizational effectiveness.

AASSA PROFESSIONAL LEARNING STRANDS



AASSA's Vision for Equitable and Sustainable Learning

Over the course of this next year, AASSA will be working with the Executive Committee on creating a strategic plan that hinges on designing a comprehensive professional learning platform that enhances access to high quality, sustainable learning for members schools. AASSA recognizes that our member schools vary in needs, composition, and structure. Providing schools a platform to engage in a wide array of sustainable learning opportunities that best meet their needs, as well as opportunities to connect with other professionals in the region to create a strong network of learners, will help provide a structure to help meet the challenge of our diverse . The future of professional learning at AASSA is exciting and we hope you will join us for the journey!

For more information on Professional Learning, or to express interest in serving on a committee, contact Adam Slaton, Chief Learning Officer, at aslaton@aassa.com.

AASSA's Professional Development Committee

Executive Committee

- Shannon Beckley, Brazil
- Ginger Carlson, Guatemala
- Jeanette Coffren, Peru
- Madeleine Heide, Argentina
- Kristen Moreland, Brazil
- Paola Pereira, Ecuador
- Laila Segurado, Panama
- Daniela Silva, Peru
- Lesley Tait, Brazil

Business Manager Committee

- Gonzalo Blanc, Chile
- Nataly Epps, Colombia
- Rebeca Heinerici, Brazil
- Mauricio Mera, Ecuador
- Francisco Rodriguez, Dom. Republic
- Leo Sano, Brazil
- Liz Sullivan, Brazil
- Patricia Zaldivar, El Salvador

Governance Committee

- Michael Boots, Brazil
- Don Francis, Ecuador
- Kerry Jacobson, Peru
- Robin Rugg, Brazil
- Gustavo Sever, Bolivia
- Dominic Straessle, Ecuador

New Heads of School

Joseph Levno | Colegio Karl C. Parrish, Colombia
Robert Van der Eyken | Academia Cotopaxi, Ecuador
Patrick Miller | Colegio Alberto Einstein, Ecuador
Cristina Cortez | Colegio Menor - Samborondon, Ecuador
Brad McClain | Georgetown International Academy, Guyana
Susan Canobie | American International School of Kingston, Jamaica
Rabbi Meir Fuksman | Magen David Academy, Panama
Helen Brocklesby | International School Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago
Brian Horvath | Colegio Internacional de Caracas, Venezuela
David Carlson | Colegio Internacional Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela

AASSA Heads of School Continuing in Our Region at New Schools

Madeleine M. Heide | Asociación Escuelas Lincoln, *Argentina*
Robert Werner | American School of Recife, *Brazil*
Mike Martell | Pan American School of Bahia, *Brazil*



Welcome to the

Welcome new AASSA Schools
and New Heads
of School!

AASSA Region



Welcome New Member Schools

We welcome and value your positive energy and dedication to excellence in education, and we look forward to working with you.

International School of Aruba | *Aruba*

Dennis Willeford, Head of School

Santa Cruz Cooperative School | *Bolivia*

Jessica Marie Gilway, Director

School of the Nations | *Brazil*

Lisa Perskie, Executive Director

Asociacion Colegio Granadino | *Colombia*

Brian Michael Kelly, General Director

Colegio Bolivar | *Colombia*

Joseph Nagy, Director

Colegio Jorge Washington | *Colombia*

Nicholas Glab, Director

Colegio Panamericano | *Colombia*

Dan Yamasaki, General Director

International School of Havana | *Cuba*

Michael Lees, Director

Carol Morgan School | *Dominican Republic*

Nicolaas Mostert, Head of School

American School of El Salvador | *El Salvador*

Polly Parker, General Director

Union School | *Haiti*

Marie Jean-Baptiste, Director

Escuela Internacional Sampedrana | *Honduras*

Ron Vair, Superintendent



Evaluating Support Services: A Systems Approach in Three Stages

By Renea Bartlett Pope & Will Randall
Support Services Coordinators at The
International School Nido de Aguilas

International schools around the globe grapple with questions of how best to serve their children with specific learning needs. At the recent AASSA Educators' Conference in Santiago, Chile, we engaged with many colleagues and shared some of our experiences with effectively growing our model to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Regardless of where your school is in the process of building supports for your students, we have found there are three crucial areas that teams need to consider when creating or refining

support services: articulating philosophy, building programs, and enhancing systems.

Know Your Goals: Philosophy



Very few of us have the benefit of articulating philosophy before getting to work. Instead, many of us are building our ship at sea, without a map that charts our final destination. It is imperative that schools revisit their Mission, Vision, and Values to ensure that

the daily work of supporting struggling students is in alignment with the school's philosophy.

Leadership and faculty need to have a map for student support and know where the school is headed before embarking on their journey. In 2015, we began our self-study phase with one guiding question: *How do we best serve diverse learners, in terms of breadth and depth, within*



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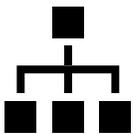
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Support Services? To look at that question in a comprehensive way and use the answers to guide refining our philosophy, we worked with our leadership team and other stakeholders to explore the following questions:

- Is our Mission and Vision inclusive for all types of learners?
- Do we have a clear picture of the needs within our current population?
- Does our leadership team have clearly articulated short-term and long-term goals for Support Services in the Strategic Plan?
- Is the current Support Services model adequately funded and staffed through our standard tuition fees and/or additional revenue streams?
- Do we have a comprehensive admissions process that sufficiently addresses linguistic diversity and students with special needs?

Know Your Now: Programming



Oftentimes, we are too busy trying to meet the needs of our students with poorly designed systems and are not taking the time to properly map out a fully articulated program that comprehensively supports all of our learners. This is particularly

true at large schools in which Support Services faculty and leadership may be focused on divisional issues instead of recognizing larger trends and needs that are pervasive throughout the school.

Understanding student need through an organizational perspective is crucial before initiating any changes. For this section of the work, you need both the quantitative data and a qualitative understanding of your students. When undertaking a self-study of this depth, patterns will emerge that you will be able to incorporate into your gap analysis. In short, the path between where you are and where you

want to go will become much clearer when you can answer the following questions in as much detail as possible:

- Do you have a clear system and process for identification of students with special needs? Does this system provide accurate data or can it be improved?
- Describe the current student support programming at your school. Does that programming sufficiently meet student need throughout your school and do you vertically align the framework of your supports?
- Do you have a common language for student support, including protocols around process, procedure and documentation? Does your staff receive annual training in order to build a common understanding of student support programming?
- Describe your data analysis and information management systems. Do they meet your needs for tracking student information, storing data, sharing documents efficiently and ultimately supporting students?

Know Your Next Steps: Refinement



Just when we were patting ourselves on the back for all of the foregoing work with philosophy articulation and program analysis, we realized that the real work is just beginning. Good programming cannot be based on individuals but must be part of the school ethos. In order to create a schoolwide sustainably effective program, schools need to create a systems approach for consistently analyzing, refining and enhancing programming by engaging in the following:

- Conduct an annual gap analysis with your leadership and student support team in order to get from where you are to where

you want to be. After this, you must establish your short term and long-term goals with completion dates and persons responsible.

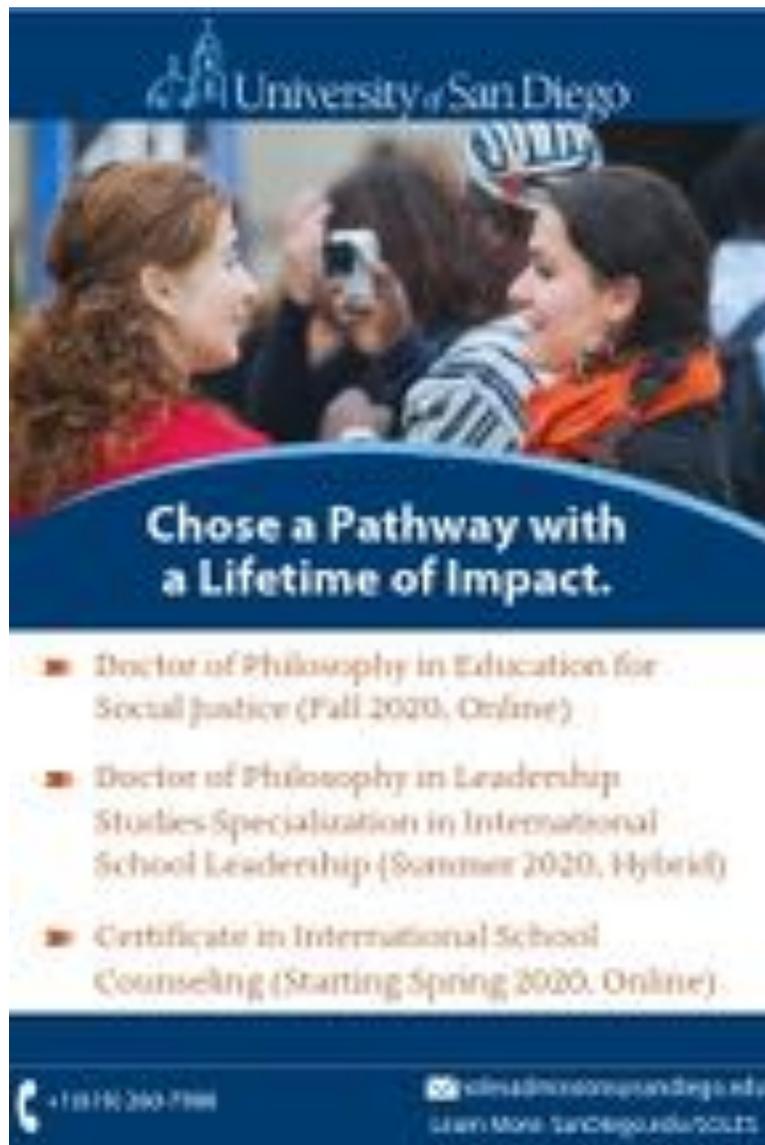
- Work with the leadership team, enrollment office and business department to ensure your changing model continues to be financially sustainable.
- Seek consistent feedback from stakeholders, including students, parents and teachers regarding effectiveness of programming and use this information in your gap analysis before making any future goals.

It is possible for any school to reach new horizons with the proper systematic approach when designing student supports.

Contact Renea Pope rpoppe@nido.cl or William Randall wrandall@nido.cl to find out more about how to use a systems approach to improve your support services model.

William Randall

Will Randall currently serves as the secondary divisions Student Support Coordinator for The International School Nido de Aguilas in Santiago, Chile where he has been living with his family for the past three years. Will has had many roles in over twenty years of education, including classroom teacher, Learning Support Specialist, educational psychologist, and district level RtI program manager in Monterey, CA. Will's professional interests are supporting students through effective systems, developing MTSS frameworks for international schools, and partnering with other international schools to help them improve their supports for students. Prior to living in Chile, Will and his family were in Stavanger, Norway. This is their second international post and they are loving the adventures and lifestyle that international education has provided them.



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Renea Bartlett Pope

Renea Bartlett Pope currently serves as the primary divisions Student Support Coordinator at The International School Nido de Aguilas. Renea began her career in the Atlanta area and has taught students from early years to high school in three countries in general education, EAL, and literacy intervention with a focus on dyslexia. Since 2012, she has also worked in professional development through consulting and teacher preparation at a local university in Santiago. Renea's particular professional interests are in program development, women in leadership, and looking at the intersection of language development and learning needs for international students. Renea and her family love Chile and take advantage of traveling around South America.



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A Time for Goal Setting with our Seniors Students at PASB

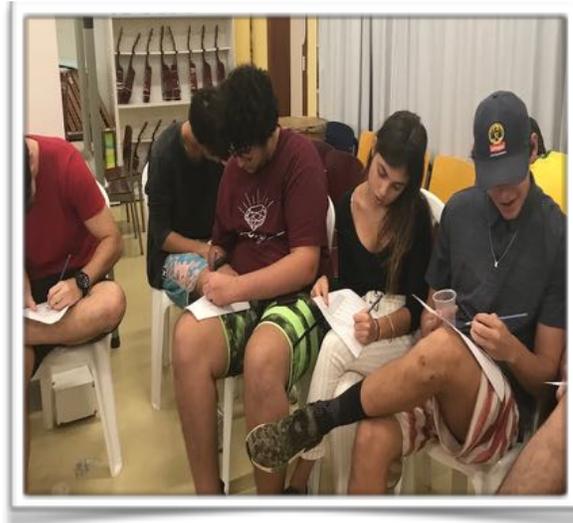
By Leticia Daza - Secondary Deputy Principal
Pan American School of Bahia - Brazil
l.daza@pasb.com.br
[@DazaLeticia](https://twitter.com/DazaLeticia)

At PASB, teachers and administrators decided to have a Welcome Lunch for our Senior Class of 2020, followed by a session of reflection about the importance of Goal Settings for their last and challenging school year. We know that our Seniors have a lot to carry on their backs this last year of school; thinking about academics, IB exams, SAT, applications to Universities, among other things. That's the main reason that we, as teachers and administration, need to support them emotionally and academically in order to help them make this last year of school a memorable learning experience.

Tony Robbins affirmed that *"Setting goals is the first step in turning the invisible into the visible."* We cannot ignore that our lives without goals are lives without a destination and that we can't go back and change what has already happened, but we definitely can start where we are and change the ending. Goal-setting was defined as a psychological

tool for increasing productivity involving five rules or criteria, known as the S-M-A-R-T rule (Doran, 1981) and it is by far one of the most popular propositions of the psychology of goals. S-M-A-R-T is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. Likewise, Goal-setting contributes to successful learning through personalization, because it actively engages students in their learning, fostering agency through inviting decision making.

At PASB during our Goal-setting time with our Seniors, teachers focused on guiding them to set their goals for the following days, months, until the end of the school year and beyond. I can't express how proud I felt witnessing such an important moment with our students to ask reflective and learning process questions; to pursue personal aspirations and to challenge themselves, and overall, to take ownership of their learning.



The above pictures were taken during our Goal Setting Lunch with our Seniors.

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Doran, George T. (1981). "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives", *Management Review*, Vol. 70, Issue 11, pp. 35-36.

Robbins, Tony. *The Art of Goal-Setting*. Retrieved August 21, 2019 from <https://www.themeritclub.com/new-blog/2018/self-help-tips-the-art-of-goal-setting>

Leticia Daza is the Secondary Deputy Principal at Pan American School of Bahia – Brazil. She has been working in International Schools since the last decade. She’s a passionate and lifelong learner. Experienced in instructional design, student-centered coaching, language acquisition processes, collaborative teaching and learning strategies, and leading professional development.
l.daza@pasb.com.br
 @DazaLeticia

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research, and maybe a library visit (you know if you are crazy and want fresh air or something not digitized), and you have more information than I (little Ms. 1981) could have ever imagined possible. My students at PASB have all of the sources they could ever want. The question becomes, “How do you organize all of that information?” Your students may look at you and ask other questions. “How do I find a good source?” “What is an index card?”

When I first started teaching IB History I had this problem. Students would research, write a paper, and submit a list of links. Unfortunately, they would have no idea whatsoever how to cite properly, and more importantly, what information came from where. I would tell them to go back



What Happened to the Card Catalogue? Helping Students Research and Manage Sources

By Christian Strayhorn, teacher at the Pan American School of Bahia in Salvador, Brazil.

*Do you remember the days of writing research papers before the internet? Were you, like me, forced to dig through the card catalogue, books, and journals to find pieces of information? Maybe you recall your teacher making you use index cards, with each card coded based on source. You developed a symbol or color for each source. If it had a star, it was from the encyclopedia. Maybe you color-coded your cards, with blue coming from *The Journal of American History*. Before you could actually write the paper, you had a stack of 300 or so cards that you then organized based on theme, main ideas, argument, etc. You were saved in the end, because you knew exactly which source to cite, because the card had your “magic” code. You could put them in ANY order, and you would always know the source.*

Fast-forward to today. Sources are at our fingertips. A few Google searches, a little database

and cite their sources, and they would struggle for days to find where they originally encountered the information. I quickly realized the index card solution of 1995 was no longer a realistic solution, so I developed my own system that is computer friendly.

To start, I make all of my students create a bibliography page first. This page can easily be added to, and rearranged in alphabetical order. I make them use proper format, telling them that they only have to do it once! Whether using MLA, Chicago Manual, or APA, the first time they use a source, they must do it properly. Then they never have to worry about it again. This page must be color-coded based on source. This process is incredibly easy to do, because word processing

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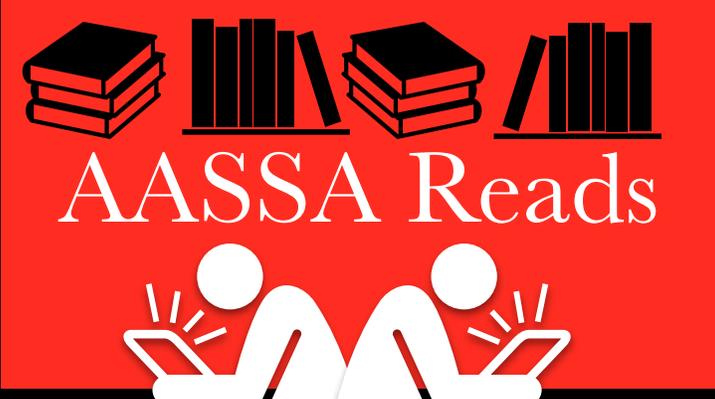
software has every color imaginable. See the example below:

Next, I let the research begin. I ask students to take ALL notes in one document. Students are free to take notes from any source they want. What is the trick? They have to take the note in the same color as the source. This process allows students to cut and paste their finished notes by theme, category, or even paragraph without forgetting where the information originated. No matter where the information ends up on the page, the color will indicate the source that should be cited.

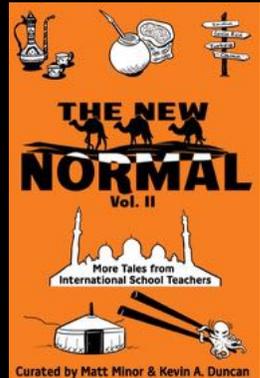
The goal in the end is for students to connect sources with their notes in an easy and simplified way. On a side-note, I never let the kids cut and paste their original notes or take notes in a foreign language. I make them take notes in their own words, thus avoiding plagiarism. Cut and paste is only allowed once notes have been recorded on the note sheet.

This technique is especially helpful for ESL/ELL learners. The language can be overwhelming, and this process assists students in organizing their thoughts at their own pace. There is no need for them to feel on-the-spot pressure to translate. They have time to record their thoughts in their own words and continually access and move the information. Even the most unorganized students find great relief in knowing everything is in one place and easy to find.

Christian Strayhorn is a teacher at the Pan American School of Bahia in Salvador, Brazil. She has been teaching for 13 years. In those years she has taught History, English, and Theory of Knowledge. Christian enjoys writing in her spare time and has written three historical fiction novels and one non-fiction book. c.strayhorn@pasb.com.br



AASSA Reads



The New Normal Vol. II: More Tales from International School Teachers

Curated by Matt Minor & Kevin A. Duncan

The New Normal Vol. II: More Tales from International School Teachers

“I have friends that moved from South Africa to China with an anvil. Others who crossed an ocean with a ladder they once found in a dumpster. As a

minimalist who has packed and repacked for many moves, I often wonder if each of us, in any way, are a sum of the objects, especially the unnecessary ones, we choose to carry with us. For me, it's my braille.

It's been an odd object to own everywhere I've been in the fifteen years since I worked at Perkins School for the Blind. This lump of thick, gray metal is about the size of an old typewriter, has a foldable handle, and only nine keys. It weighs, in my professional opinion, approximately as much as a small elephant. I took it with me as proof to my deafblind student that I would stay within reach, and proceeded to haul it as a carry-on through airports all over the US, and eventually the world. I used it to braille him letters to share stories from my life. We brailled to plan our travels together, some real and some only imagined. We outlined parts of his memoir, a project we'd never complete because he died a few years later.

After that, I didn't keep the braille for its brailing function anymore, but as a symbolic grip on that part of my identity..."

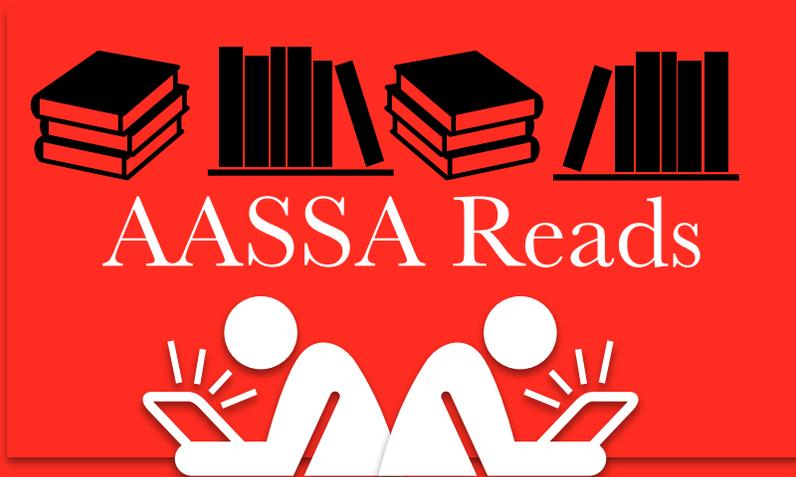
This excerpt is taken from the beginning of "The Things I Carry," one of the 41 true stories in *The New Normal Vol. II: More Tales from International School Teachers*. Set in 28 different countries, including AASSA nations Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela, the stories shed light on the experiences of living and teaching abroad.

From lighthearted tales about making silly mistakes when trying to make friends as a new teacher or dealing with an extremely quirky tour guide, to more serious ones such as dealing with the loss of a parent while living overseas or having a child go to the emergency room in an

unfortunate circumstance, the collection has stories for everyone.

This collection of stories was co-curated by former Columbus School teacher Matt Minor and current Lincoln School teacher Kevin Duncan. Paperback and Kindle versions are both available on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07QT8PWGV>. 100% of the proceeds support the Children of Haiti Project, an organization dedicated to bringing education and health needs to those lacking traditional opportunities for a quality school experience. *The New Normal Vol. II* is an engaging read for a wide variety of audiences, including but not limited to international teachers, those aspiring to be, and their loved ones. Some schools throughout the world have even purchased copies for their incoming teachers as part of their orientation process. If you want to find out what happens with the braille (and much more!), order your copy today.

Kevin Duncan teaches IB Economics and IB Global Politics at the Asociación Escuelas Lincoln in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He can be reached on Twitter (@duncanka) or via email (kevin.duncan@lincoln.edu.ar)



AASSA Highlights

Do you have good news from around the AASSA region? Did you win an award, publish a book, receive an educational recognition?



The Spotlight on the AASSA Region

Congratulations to Patricia de Zaldívar, Director of Finance and Operations, at Escuela Americana El Salvador!

Patricia was the recipient of the Will Hancock Unsung Hero Award that is given to a business officer who has made an extraordinary and significant difference in her/his school community. Outstanding job, Patricia! What an amazing example to follow!



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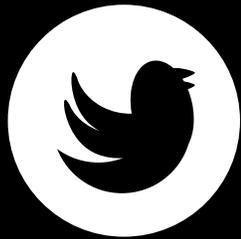
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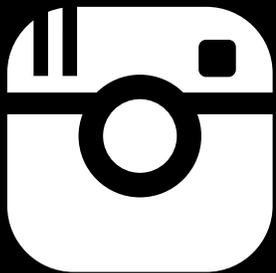
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A Flagship Program for 21st-century Global Citizenship Education



By Dr. Nina Markham, IB Biology and ESS teacher at Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School in Lima, Perú.

A Flagship Program for 21st-century Global Citizenship Education: iGEM at Colegio Roosevelt, The American School of Lima

Is it possible for students to genetically modify bacteria to turn red? How about modifying bacteria to extract mercury from the environment? Does it sound like science fiction to you? As George Church, founding father of synthetic biology, claims, "It is only science fiction until you remove the fiction" (Mezrich 2017). Indeed, the FDR iGEM (international genetically engineered) team can do this! The iGEM team at FDR is the only South American high school team to be a member of iGEM. In fact, at the 2018 international competition, FDR was the only high school team from the entire Southern Hemisphere to compete! Last October in Boston, MA (USA), students presented their research in a 20-minute oral



presentation, as well as poster format. Furthermore, they comfortably rubbed shoulders and discussed scientific progress with college students, graduate students, and Ph.D. researchers. *The team in Boston, just after their presentation*

What are the additional benefits of having an iGEM team? Our students have learned the theory and practice of synthetic biology in seeking to solve a global problem through genetically engineering

bacteria to perform a task of their wishes. They have collaborated with local companies and universities to solve their problems, and have reached out to the community by teaching STEM lessons to elementary students, creating infographics, and presenting seminars. All of their own initiative.

It all started with a visit to T.A.S.A., a local company that is the largest distributor of anchovy-based fishmeal in the world. There, the team discovered that the company regularly tests for 20+ pollutants in the fishmeal before distributing it throughout the world. If any pollutant is above acceptable standards, the fishmeal is diluted, still resulting in the contaminants being shipped out and being fed to fish or livestock in other parts of the world where it might ultimately end up on a dinner plate!



Learning about fishmeal production at TASA

The team set out to come up with a solution using synthetic biology to remove the neurotoxin mercury, one of the contaminants tested for, from the fishmeal before distribution. We didn't have the expertise or lab equipment necessary to attack this problem, so we enlisted the help of Dr. Daniel Guerra from Cayetano University in Lima. He, along with his graduate student Keren Espinoza, opened up the lab to us in order to conduct our experiments. Keren taught students the fundamentals of synthetic biology and guided them through the process of learning the skills they needed to conduct the experiments. The students had many brainstorming sessions with Daniel and Keren as they began designing and engineering their construct that would make bacteria extract mercury from the environment. Cayetano University is in the process of adding a synthetic biology major to their offerings and we were the guinea pigs in this process. They also received iGEM DNA from us that will help them with this start-up. So, it was a win-win for everyone.

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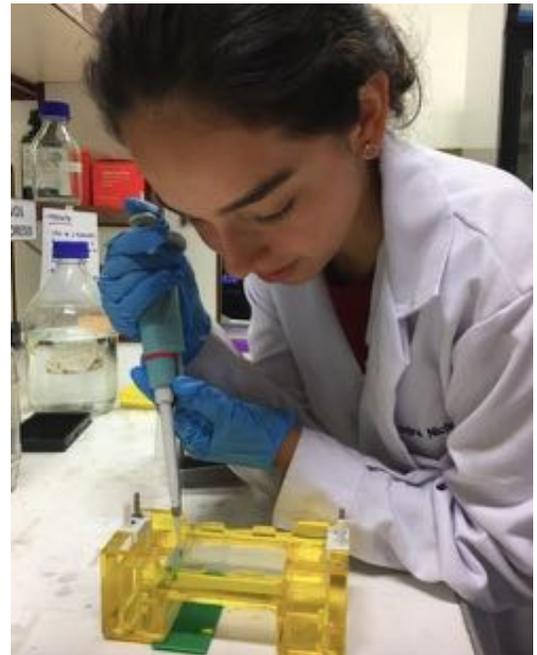
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Student working in the lab at Cayetano

To be a competitive iGEM team, students must make a connection between synthetic biology and the real world. Thus, our team formed a "Hardware" group in which they began the design process for a container in which the reaction between the modified bacteria and the fishmeal will take place.

Additionally, it is a requirement to have a human practices component of your work. This involves reaching out to the community to educate the student, parent, and greater community about synthetic biology and STEM-related topics.



Our students chose to collaborate with a club at our school that teaches English to the children of school staff on Saturday mornings. The iGEM team created and compiled inquiry-based science lessons that additionally exposed these young students to science and scientific terminology. They joined the Habla Roosevelt Club on Saturdays to deliver the lessons. They also integrated a Girls Can! program, in which they attend 5th-grade classes and specifically work with the girls to foster interest and confidence for girls in STEM-related fields. To disseminate information in a more modern way, they published an online FDR science journal where they educate the community about science, especially the area of synthetic biology. Furthermore, they presented a seminar to the teachers and parents at the school about synthetic biology, as well as their research. All of this, in addition to doing the lab work!

Finally, all teams must record their work and efforts on a team Wiki page that has a strict deadline on which all editing is cut-off. Here is our team Wiki from 2018: (2018.igem.org/Team:ColegioFDR_Peru).

As a result of all of their efforts, they were awarded the AASSA Global Citizen Award in March 2019. Also, after presenting T.A.S.A. with the work they've done, T.A.S.A. has agreed to



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provide a \$2000 sponsorship for the team during the 2019 season.

iGEM is student-driven higher-level work. How can you foster this? Get help! Global problems aren't solved by one person or even one group alone. Solving global issues requires multi-level collaboration. What better way to get students working and thinking like true collaborators and think-tank experts than by forging collaboration with colleagues at your school and local universities. Our team had support not only from me (IB Biology/ESS), but our IB Physics teacher, coding teacher, a visiting professor, and our IT department. Similarly, the work simply could not have been done without our collaboration with Cayetano University.

Read what students have to say about their iGEM experience:



"iGEM helped me realize how much I like synthetic biology and that I want to study it as a career..."

"I feel immense pride in being part of this club"

"...this team, or I should say 'this family'....I always wanted an environment where we could learn synthetic biology, but I didn't expect the amount of knowledge and lab experience we've all gained...I hope that everyone will get a chance to experience what iGEM brings to the community and I cannot wait for the next season to start with new people joining our family!"

"It's a team of intrinsically motivated students. It's a team that has learned to work together. It's a team that is proud of the work they have done. That is truly special. Really I don't think you'll find that in the average classroom."

"I joined iGEM and had no idea what to expect from it, but you gave me this feeling of confidence so I kept on attending sessions...and iGEM became one of the few places where I felt completely safe and identified."

Read up on iGEM and consider the benefits and the possibility of starting your own team. It's not for the faint-hearted! It requires a lot of work, but it is worth it!

Mezrich, B. (2017). *Woolly: The True Story of the Quest to Revive One of History's Most Iconic Extinct Creatures*. Simon and Schuster.

Dr. Nina Markham is an IB Biology and ESS teacher at Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School in Lima. She earned her Chemistry degree at Brigham Young University, her Ph.D. in Immunology at the University of Utah, and her teaching credentials from St. Joseph University. Before Peru, her teaching career has kept her busy in international schools in China, the Netherlands, and Saudi Arabia. The 2018 season was her first year mentoring an iGEM team. If you have questions you can contact her at nmarkham@amersol.edu.pe.



Students presenting to parents, teachers, and other high schools.

Thinking Math: An Approach to Math Instruction



By Vicky Placeres
Elementary School Principal, Uruguayan American School, Montevideo, Uruguay

Mathematics instruction has evolved over the years. Some parents may associate math class with workbooks and problem sets from their own school days. These exercises emphasized learning the procedures for calculations and problem-solving. While drill and practice still play an important role in mathematics learning, nowadays there is more focus on conceptual learning. In other words, the goal is that students are able to understand and explain why they are doing what they are doing. With a conceptual

understanding, students are more likely to be able to transfer their math skills into new, unfamiliar and “real life” contexts.

Last school year, the UAS Elementary School adopted the Math In Focus program, based on the Singapore Math Approach for Grades 1-5. This program emphasizes more collaboration, discussion, the use of models, and multiple problem-solving strategies than the former mathematics approach.

So what does a typical elementary school mathematics class look like? A class will typically begin with an anchor task, which is a problem or question posed to help students construct the meaning of a concept. For example, if the lesson objective is: Using objects to find number bonds. Find different number bonds for numbers to 10, then the anchor task might start with the teacher

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posing the question, “Marcos bought 4 toys. How many ways can he put his 4 toys into two chests to put them away?”

The teacher would then model an approach to the problem, which contains several steps. First, the teacher will ask students to represent the problem concretely. Students might draw or use blocks to show the number of toys Marcos has. Second, the teacher will record students’ answers on the board and draw the answers to help students visualize



the solution. Third, the teacher will then present a variation on the anchor problem to see if students can solve it without teacher assistance: “What if Marcos bought 5 toys? How many ways can he place his 5 toys into the two chests? Draw all the ways you find on your paper.” Throughout the demonstration, or exploration stage, the teacher is constantly describing his or her thoughts, or “thinking aloud,” so that students can follow the problem-solving process.

Students then choose the strategy that works best for them and work independently, or in pairs, to solve the problem. Afterward, the class discusses not only the solution to the problem, but also how they arrived at the solution and why they chose a specific problem-solving strategy.

As the class continues, students work on other exercises as the teacher monitors their progress. Students that demonstrate that they understood the strategy will work independently, while the teacher assists individuals or small groups that need more assistance. The lesson closes with a class reflection about their thinking process and a

discussion of the most effective problem-solving strategies. In effect, the teacher aims to make students aware of their thinking, (i.e. build their metacognition) so that they understand what they are doing and why they are doing it.

“I do not just guess answers. I think about the problem.”--UAS first grade student

With the Singapore Math Method, classes tend to be more active and collaborative. When you walk into the room, students might be discussing a problem, sharing different problem solving strategies, drawing a pictorial representation, or debating the answer. Providing a model and time for students to practice with concrete pictorial representations of the problems has been key to



helping them internalize new mathematical concepts and skills and to understand that math is about thinking, as well as getting the right answer. As one first grader aptly put it, “I do not just guess answers. I think about the problem.”

Vicky Placeres was appointed Early Childhood and Elementary School Principal in 2016. She has been working at UAS for the past fifteen years. Before taking her current position, Ms. Placeres worked as the Elementary School Coordinator, K-12 Curriculum Coordinator, Advanced Placement/Testing Coordinator, ELL Secondary Coordinator, and ELL Secondary Teacher. Ms. Placeres holds a B.A. in Educational Sciences from Universidad de la República Oriental de Uruguay (UDELAR); a Teacher TESOL certification from Trinity College London; a K-12 Leadership Certificate from Kaplan University; and a Masters in Educational Leadership from Leigh University.

Virtual Schools: effective ways to meet demands



By Gavin McLean, International Business Development Director, Edmentum International

With the needs of students continuously evolving and the ever-changing demands from the education industry, schools are under increasing pressure to offer the widest possible range of courses. Central to this is recruiting and retaining highly qualified teaching staff, yet this can be challenging, particularly when it comes to specialised subjects and curricula.

One solution addressing these demands is virtual schools. With the flexibility and scope to provide multiple courses, taught by qualified teachers in an online environment, virtual schools are growing in popularity. Starting as an extension for home school networks in high school, it is now being used across all K-12 as well as a much wider range of settings.

According to research, student enrolment in state virtual schools increases 11 per cent year-on-year (2012-2016). There is already an established market in Middle Eastern and South American countries and the field is also gaining traction in China and East Asia. This increase in attention has led to full time virtual schools increasing by 8 per cent a year. In 2018, the global virtual school market had an estimated worth of US \$2.39 Billion (2018) and is expected to reach US \$4.92 billion by end of 2024. Subsequently, there are significant opportunities and the benefits offered to both students and teachers are invaluable, and while the education sector faces significant challenges, the virtual school market has the potential to address these issues and create effective ways of working across the world.

Addressing the challenges and opportunities

Let's look at the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a prime example. This alliance is comprised of

six Middle Eastern countries including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman. Throughout these countries, there has been a rise in student enrolment numbers in private schools; the number of Emirati students (citizens of the UAE) is expected to rise to 66 per cent by 2023, in Saudi it will increase from 18 per cent (2017) to 30 per cent by 2023, and in Kuwait over 40 per cent of all students are in private K12 education.

While these projected figures show a real appetite for the private school sector, there aren't always enough resources to meet this demand. For example, in Qatar, while enrolment numbers are expected to rise to 70 per cent, there are not enough private schools. In Saudi, they are

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investing \$51 billion in education spending and 480 new educational buildings for 2019, and 6,000 new K-12 educational buildings by 2030, yet, obtaining permits and licenses for schools can be time-consuming. Added to this is the areas in which schools are built.

In Kuwait for instance, the government often provides land in locations away from residential areas, creating an access barrier to learning. With big targets to hit, virtual schools will address the demands, and be able to provide the much-needed support through a more accessible and convenient way for children to learn, no matter where they are based.

Another challenge faced by traditional brick and mortar schools are high staff turnovers - often due to the expatriate populations in places like the UAE. Therefore, although enrolment numbers are increasing, staff numbers may not be reflective of this, which can often lead to disruption in learning cycles which inevitably impact performance. Offering virtual assistance can not only mitigate disruption but means that there are no gaps during staff changes, lending itself to greater consistency and continuity of learning for pupils.

There is also a shortage of qualified teachers in areas like Saudi, due to their restrictions on the number of expats allowed, or Kuwait, where expats under 30 aren't allowed to obtain a work permit or those over 30 are required to hold a

Bachelors, Masters or Doctorate degree. This significantly limits the pipeline of talent and makes it difficult to attract quality teachers, especially when competing with the rest of the GCC and wider education markets. Instead, we need to be able to offer a solution that allows an influx of teachers regardless of difficult scenarios – whether that's shortages, high-turnovers or lack of course choices for students – so that they can teach in a way that has little restriction and offers them more flexibility. This will inevitably lead to a more effective way of filling the teacher gaps.

The challenges presented aren't just prevalent in the GCC either; the same themes emerge throughout South America too. The Brazilian Ministry of Education's budget for 2019 was projected to be US \$30 billion. However, in May 2019, the new Minister of Education announced there would be a 30 per cent cut in education budgets. This is a real concern, which will likely have a significant impact on workloads and efficiencies, inevitably leading to further teacher shortages. This is only amplified by the fact that the budget has been specifically cut for professional development too, and any attempts to modernise teaching practice have been blocked by teaching unions. To this end, virtual learning environments are an

effective way of stemming the tide and ensuring young people have access to high quality education in a way that mirrors 21st century lifestyles and helps overcome the challenges experienced by students as a result of teacher shortages and budget cuts.

Further to this, private bilingual schools have to offer US high school courses. It is often difficult to find certified US high school teachers in Brazil, making virtual schooling an attractive alternative. This not only increases the likelihood of teachers seeking other ways to teach and pursue professional development opportunities, but also for parents looking for more consistent, accessible and flexible ways for their children to learn.

Key benefits

Being able to provide alternative learning options presents many advantages, the first being flexibility. This not only includes flexibility for teachers and students when it comes to teaching and learning in a physical sense, but also the ability to expand course choices and allow students to enroll at any time of the year. This is especially important for those with families who work abroad or have travel

commitments. This will not only help to attract and retain students but will also be a surefire way of satisfying parents. While provision for students is incredibly important, so too is the challenge of filling the gap when it comes to teacher shortages and providing a virtual school environment is an effective way of combatting this.

When it comes to alternative pathways, with the right platform, students will also have the option of accessing vocational courses, helping them to effectively prepare for future careers and have a deeper understanding of the requirements and skills needed in order for them to be successful in the world of work.

Accredited virtual schools will also offer international students the opportunity for Dual Diploma Tracks which will help them achieve an accredited US HS Diploma in order to access US colleges. This can be done alongside or in place of a local curriculum, again providing maximum flexibility and accessibility.

While there are a range of challenges facing education and the private school sector, with this, comes just as many opportunities. Therefore, it's important for countries to look ahead and identify their own educational challenges and assess how alternative

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approaches to education can help. Whether this works in conjunction with a more traditional learning environment, or is offered as a standalone provision, it's important that we provide a challenging but fun and rewarding academic setting. After all, empowering both students and staff to take control of their teaching and learning is the key to success.

Author: Gavin McLean has nearly thirty years' experience in business and curriculum development in international education. Based in the United Kingdom, Gavin has worked for some of the largest international publishers including Macmillan Education and National Geographic Learning, and has consulted for public and private sector companies, multinational agencies and donors in various global markets. Gavin and his team are dedicated to working with international schools to implement technology that genuinely benefits teachers and students.
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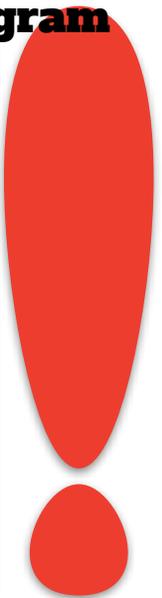
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Trendsetting for the Future



By Jeffrey Hudson, a middle school science teacher at The International School of Curitiba in Brazil.

The evolution of schools and society has always been comparable to the chicken and the egg. Our students may like to think school isn't cool and has nothing to do with the real world, but the past tells us otherwise. When we look at historic events that helped to shape modern society we often see a parallel movement of ideas within educational thought. The creation of normal schools and the introduction of a public education system started with ideas based on the Enlightenment period. Modern student-centered pedagogy was born out of necessity from the remarkable societal shifts caused by worldwide urbanization, immigration, and industrialization of the Progressive Era. The U.S. Civil Rights movement of the 50's and 60's sparked *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which in turn added momentum to the movement. The force that led to these paradigm shifting events was inextricably connected to the curriculum that students were learning at the time. This trend of schools and society evolving in tandem continues today as students and teachers try to grasp an ever-changing societal ideal controlled by the flow of information from one digital platform to another. Furthermore, data shows a disturbing trend that less and less of the world's population is partaking in the political process (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). In a report analyzing the global trends shaping the future of education, OECD researchers state, "There are worries that [low voter turn-outs] reflect a growing disaffection and apathy towards the political process and institutions, especially by the youngest citizens." As we identify and assess these growing societal trends, it is important to decide what role education will play in preparing the next generation to deal with unprecedented technological advances in an economy driven by

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big data, fake news, and ever-evolving digital platforms. Incorporating social and emotional learning (SEL) benchmarks with focus on healthy digital citizenry into general curriculum will help combat this unfortunate trend of political apathy.

So...What is Digital Citizenship, anyway?

Digital citizenship is complicated as it is constantly being redefined by new advances in information technology. The Cambridge Dictionary definition reads:

"Someone who is skilled in using the internet in order to communicate with others, buy and sell

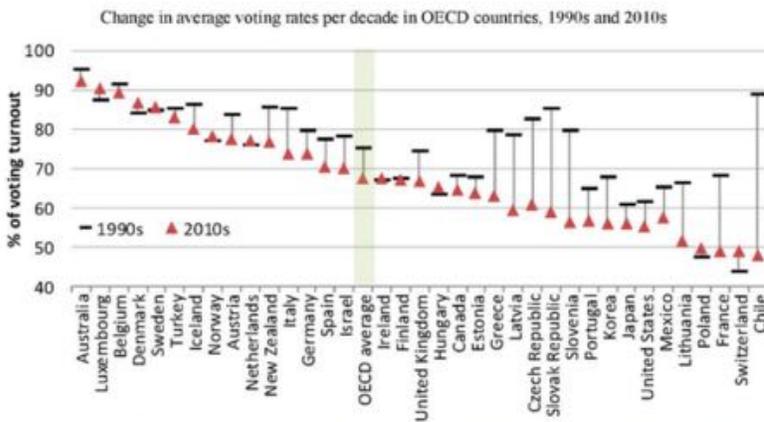


Figure 1. Decline in voter turnout in OECD countries in the 1990s and 2010s. Voting in Australia, Luxembourg and Belgium is compulsory. Voting was compulsory in Chile until 2012. Source: Trends Shaping Education 2019, OECD

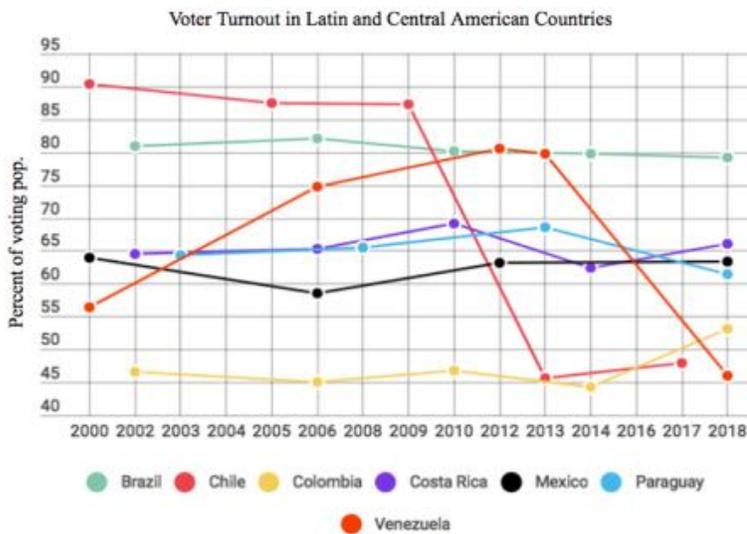


Figure 2: Voter turnout rates from 2000 to 2018 in various Latin and Central American democracies. Source: Americas Society/Council of the Americas

things, and take part in politics, and who understands how to do this in a safe and responsible way.”

This is a good start, but is too simplistic to truly explain what digital citizenship is. When we think of the myriad of social media platforms our students use, it’s tough to use one definition that encompasses everything. Suffice it to say, digital citizenship is uniquely defined for each individual by the content and programs they engage with, their age, and their socio-economic status. As digital citizenship varies greatly among individuals, the challenges facing school communities will mirror those of its individuals. Though each school is unique and should personalize their digital citizenship curriculum to reflect their community, Common Sense Media presents a list of topics that summarize the main areas that make-up the bulk of our digital lives:

1. Media Balance and Well-being
2. Privacy and Security
3. Digital Footprint and Identity
4. Relationships and Communication
5. Cyberbullying, Digital Drama and Hate Speech
6. News and Media Literacy

It is difficult to quantify the effects lessons based on these principles can have on a student body. That being said, the impact of digital citizenship education can be seen in multiple case studies from around the U.S. (Common Sense Media, 2019) As time passes and the need for discussion centered around our digital lives becomes more prominent, I predict more evidence proving the positive impacts digital citizenry education will come to light.

Character: The Key to Integrating Social and Emotional Learning

From a young age, the vast majority of learners have already discussed things like honesty and “the golden rule.” Classroom expectations and codes of conduct from around the world identify the most important rules to follow to ensure all members of the community feel welcome and respected. Incorporating social and emotional learning into curriculum can be a difficult task, as it will vary from community to community, but I argue most schools have at least something similar in place already. Defining SEL at your school will simply help integrate things like empathy and compassion in all content areas. A good place to start would be the incorporation of the word character into your educational language. The versatility of the word is broad enough that curriculum can be adapted to reflect the needs of the community while remaining focused on how students can have a positive

impact on their communities and the world. Educators already bring their unique life experiences, which provides invaluable perspectives to their students. Having well-defined SEL vocabulary for the learning community will facilitate conversations and make reflection a seamless part of general curriculum. Furthermore, making these types of adjustments to your community's educational practice is easy to justify as there is a rapidly growing body of evidence that shows that SEL has a positive impact on everything from academic performance to upward social-mobility. (CASEL, 2019)

What Happens Now?

We know that schools and society are and will continue to be inextricably connected. Right now, the information that our students use is being collected, created, and curated by every type of human being on the planet - not just textbook authors. From poor farmers in sub-Saharan Africa to CEOs in Manhattan penthouses, everyone has the opportunity to publish something in our digital world. Though this can give voice to marginalized communities, it also makes the truth hard to discern as "facts" change depending on what media outlets we decide to frequent. Inserting digital citizenship in everyday curriculum will help students wade through this vast quantity of unverified data with a well-trained eye. As modern educators, we are faced with a unique challenge: we must guide students through an incomprehensibly complex digital world, all while navigating it ourselves.

The connectedness of the world's population has never been so absolute; every action in both our physical and digital lives ripples through society in ways we could never imagine. One may wonder how we could even test the impact of SEL education. Luckily, international and American schools are perfect cases; they are present in virtually all cultures around the world, and yet remain relatively comparable through similar academic programs like the IB or AP. Teaching students the value of empathy and compassion within existing curricula will make

reflection a part of their everyday lives; developing our students' character will lead to positive impacts on their communities, wherever they end up. The geopolitical climate may dishearten some, or even make us question the effectiveness of our efforts towards change, but I argue that this is precisely the time we should be most motivated to change the world for the better by making character, empathy and compassion an important part of our lives (both in digital and physical world).

About the author:

Jeffrey Hudson is a middle school science teacher at The International School of Curitiba in Brazil. He focuses on inquiry-based and transdisciplinary learning using the lab facilities in ISCs brand-new Design and Innovation Lab. Jeff's previous teaching experiences range from lower income urban schools in the U.S. to rural districts in sub-Saharan West Africa. He has a passion for development work and enjoys exploring the historical and contemporary connections between modern societies.

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The Reggio Emilia Approach, a Constructivist Approach



By Ana Paula Lima da Rocha,
 teacher at the International School of Curitiba



“Creativity becomes more visible when adults try to be more attentive to the cognitive processes of children than to the results they achieve in various fields of doing and understanding.”
 — Loris Malaguzzi

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The Reggio Emilia approach tends to move the focus from the teacher to the students. The classroom is no longer a place where the teacher is the only one who knows everything, and children are not seen as an empty vessel ready to be filled. In the Constructivist Approach, the students are actively involved in their process of learning; the child will construct knowledge based on personal experiences. Teacher and students have the ability to discover in a dynamic, ever-changing view of the world we live in, having the opportunity to explore, play, create -- not just having a teacher presenting facts to be memorized.

As teachers, we need to learn how to listen to the child; but how can we teach if we are only just listening? According to the Reggio Emilia Approach, listening means being able to interpret what the child wants to learn. If he/she brings a flower to the school and does not know if it is going to grow or die, there begins a project. A project will be born from a child's curiosity, and in that process we will be able

to explore the many languages of the children, such as, art, language, music, math, fine motor skills, science and social behavior in order to listen to the child. The teacher can use different aspects:

- To listen means to have the sensitivity to connect to others;
- To listen is a sensory movement: The teacher does not only listen with the ears, but with the whole body;
- To listen does not produce ready answers, but constructs questions;
- To listen requires that we show ourselves the value of the unknown, so that we overcome the sense of precariousness that takes over us whenever our certainties are put in crisis;
- To listen demands time: a time full of silence and long pauses;

But as teachers, how can we put what we listen to into practice? The child has autonomy, the teacher is a participatory observer, and the school is a safe territory, which favors exchanges and learning opportunities. The so-called "documentation," for example, is one of the main tools for the constructivist schools and demands that teachers closely look at how daily school life can be so rich in details. How to document? Here are some things to contemplate when documenting, as well as some helpful tips:

- Take a photograph from the play time of the little ones in order to document their processes of research and exploration of things;
- Every form of registration is valid: videos, audios, notes, etc.;
- Understand that the child is a developing brain, but it is also a learning body;
- Take care of space, so as to favor autonomy and ease of locomotion, to minimize as much as possible the teacher's interventions, such as "do not go up there", "do not touch that;"
- Provide materials that stimulate thinking and allow the child to explore them as they are available and are shown a smooth way to learn;

- Provide activities that establish connections, both of the children with the world and of a child with another. Working issues such as diversity, respect, otherness, social injustice, class issues, race and freedom are welcome in this regard;
- Before you propose your own questions as an education professional, listen and listen to the children's own questions.

exploration and discovery through a self-guided direction. The Reggio approach asserts that young children develop their personality during the early years. Enriching the “one hundred languages” by Loris Malaguzzi, the children will explore in many ways such as drama, painting, sculpturing and more; the importance of learning through experience is one of the languages of the child. The children are the



Documentation wall from age group of 3 to 4 years old

To document goes beyond the teacher’s expectations when we start to see the child as a whole. According to Loris Malaguzzi, “Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, carefully observe what children do, and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different from before.” (Malaguzzi, 1994). Think outside the box, have the child be the protagonist of their own story, observe little details and always listen to what they have to say and do.

As a Reggio Emilia inspired school, the program should include the principles of respect, creativity, a sense of community,

protagonists of their own learning. If they are well confident with themselves, others, and the environment, they will be able to learn their own way using their heads, hands and hearts.

Sources:

<https://www.reggioalliance.org/periodicals/pedagogy-listening/>

<https://www.reggiochildren.it/identita/reggio-emilia-approach/?lang=en>

<https://childdiscoverycenter.org/non-traditional-classroom/what-is-the-reggio-emilia-approach/>

The Hundred Language of Children. by Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini and George Forman
Working in a Reggio Way. by Julianne P. Wurm

Ana Paula Lima da Rocha
Teacher at the International School of Curitiba in the early childhood department.. Bachelors in Pedagogy with post bachelors in Early Childhood, and also a Reggio Emilia Inspired educator.
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Learning What Really Matters: Connection.



By Crystal Godsiff, the Elementary Academic Support Coordinator at the International School of Curitiba, Brazil.

After teaching for nearly ten years in public education, I thought I was a pretty great teacher. Then my husband (also a teacher) convinced me to move our family and careers halfway across the world to live and learn as international educators in another country. That's when it hit me. I wasn't as good as I thought I was. Educators in the international community are amazing rockstars, and they take learning and adjustment to another culture to a whole new level.

Hang with me for a minute. I figured if I could teach Special Education in the US public school system, I could teach anywhere. Especially if "anywhere" was a private international school in South Korea. I wasn't just going to learn a new language, I was going to be amazing. But the big fat reality was, I wasn't. Actually (*dramatic pause*) I sucked.

If you haven't picked up on it yet, I can be very honest. It wasn't long before I realized my students knew way more than I did "academically." They studied longer and harder.

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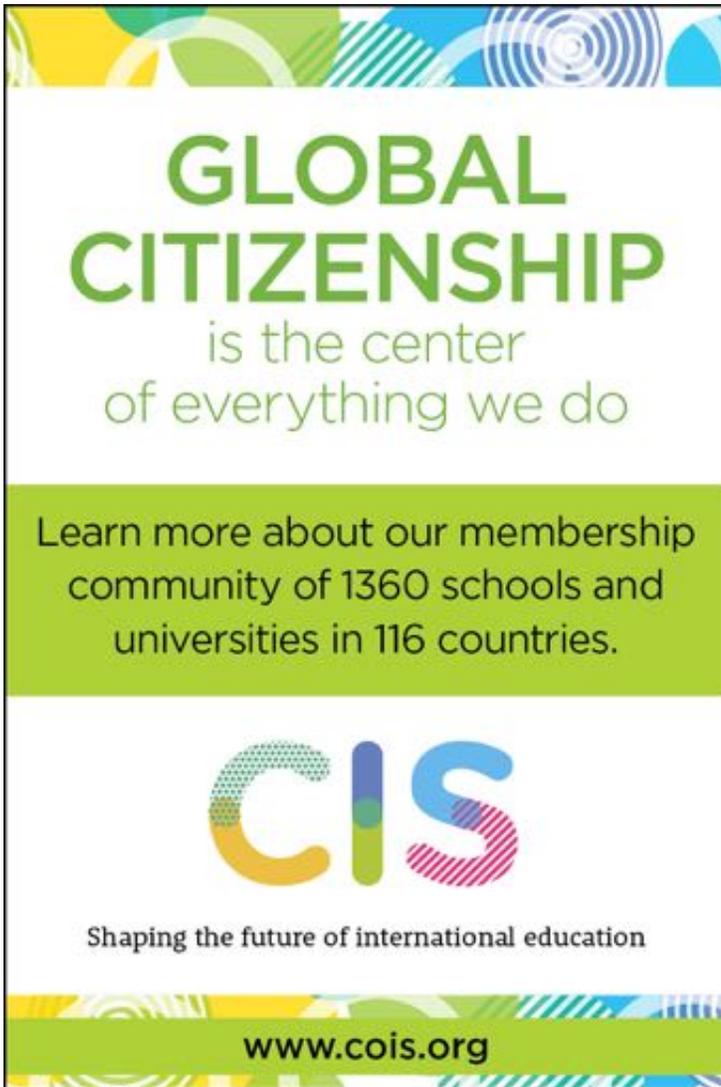
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They took more tests at a quicker rate and earned higher scores than I ever could. And for some, they actually made school look easy. However, for most of them, deep down, it wasn't. But more on that later.

My first week of teaching internationally was awful. When my students walked into class, I mispronounced many of their names, called them by someone else's name, or just stopped using their name altogether. I was completely out of my element, but I gained a whole new perspective: This is what many of my immigrant students back in the US must have felt like. While the culture, language, and even level of expectations from parents may be different, the students were all just kids. Kids who didn't need an adult shoving content down their throats, but a teacher who would take the time to get to know them; ask



them questions; care to learn how to pronounce their names correctly. I had failed to do that. Teaching internationally was so much harder than I could have ever imagined.

It is not easy as an adult to admit you don't know how to do something, especially in front of students, who expect us to have all the answers. That is exactly what I found myself having to do. I had to trust my students to translate directions for me to a driver or read the instructions on a prescription for my child's antibiotics. Other times, it was just helping me order the correct toppings on a pizza. In these moments, I learned to rely on my students. In doing so, I realized that I needed to trust others before I could expect them to trust me. What did my students need from me?

That's when the special education teacher in me took over. I like solving problems. I love being challenged. I realized most of my students didn't need support learning content. They needed connection. In an international school community, teachers come and go (some move on as frequently as every two years) and the students, well some of them do, too. In reality, building relationships in an international community between the staff and students has been, and will always be, the real challenge we face as

international educators. That is what really matters.

It's certainly not easy. You may not even like it, and you probably will fail. Nevertheless, in the end, it will always be worth it. Oh, and here is a small trick I learned that will go a long way in making connections. If you can't pronounce a student's name on day one, at least learn how to spell it correctly. Then you can just write them letters or little notes while you practice. It may have taken me four years, Hunho, but I nailed it. I hope.

Tips or suggestions for building connections with students (dependent on the age you teach):
Find out what students need. Sometimes it's as



easy as asking them. Or reach out to parents. They tend to know their child best. Do this early. Check out: Pernille Ripp's beginning of the year parent questionnaires- <https://pernillesripp.com/2013/07/24/my-beginning-of-the-year-parent-questionnaire/>

Ask them what they do for fun. Sometimes it's eating ice cream with chopsticks.

Depending on their age, join them for recess. Or take a walk with them. Sometimes we all just need to take a break, outdoors.

Invite students to eat lunch with you. Most kids want to have someone to sit next to in the cafeteria. Look for those that sit alone. If you teach secondary, feed them snacks.

Interview your students. Check out: Jennifer Gonzalez's student inventories- <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/student-inventories/>

Find a game they like to play and learn to play it with them. My favorite was chess.

Read to them, every day. Shared stories are always a great way to connect and get students to open up and talk. I even did this with some of my high school students and they loved it. At least that is what they told me. Check out: Jillian Heise's #classroombookaday- <https://sites.google.com/view/cbad>

Ask them for help with something you are not good at. One student left me tips on how to keep my plants alive. Another fixed my fan after I assembled it incorrectly because I couldn't read the directions. They were written in Korean.

Reflect. Never forget what it was like to be a student.

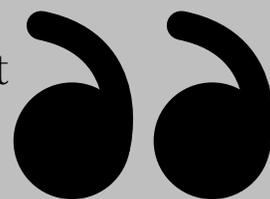
Listen. Sometimes all a student needs is an adult who is there when they need them most. They don't need you to give them advice or fix their problems, just listen.

While these ideas seem relatively simple, at the end of the day, they require you to be available to your students. They evolve over time, with patience and practice. As teachers we sometimes never know which connections will make a lasting change in a child's life. Don't worry about getting it exactly right. Just LEARNING to CONNECT, that's what really matters.

Crystal Godsiff is currently the Elementary Academic Support Coordinator at the International School of Curitiba, in Brazil. For the last 4 years, she has lived in South Korea working as the K-12 Learning Support Coordinator in an IB international school. Crystal began her teaching journey in 2006 working in self-contained classrooms for students with mental health disorders and received her Masters in Special Education from the University of Seattle. She has been teaching and learning from her



Don't worry about getting it exactly right. Just LEARNING to CONNECT, that's what really matters.





VPLC 2.0: A Virtual Professional Learning Community for Instructional Coaches

By Kristen Moreland, Instructional Coach, Pan American School of Porto Alegre and Julia Dennis, Instructional Coach, American School Foundation of Monterrey

*A version of this article first appeared in the December 2018 issue of the TIEonline Magazine.

“The most valuable resource that all teachers have is each other. Without collaboration, our

growth is limited to our own perspectives.”
~Robert John Meehan

Pick up almost any book written about instructional coaching, and there is most likely a page or a chapter calling for more professional learning for the coach. In some systems, this can be arranged without too much difficulty; coaches in the same district or area can gather on a consistent basis to deepen their understanding of content standards, dive into relevant data, hone their facilitation skills, and benefit from the wisdom and experience of colleagues who might have insight into the ‘problems of practice’ faced by a coach. Kristen was fortunate enough to have participated in such a community in the United States; the power of this type of

collaboration nurtured her development as a coach.

But when you are working in the isolation of an international school, with the closest coach being a city or country away, how does collaboration take place across time zones and geographic boundaries? Through the internet, of course.

Here in our region, coaches have been provided several training opportunities to deepen their practice such as workshops on Student-Centered Coaching (led by Diane Sweeney), Cognitive Coaching, and a variety of other sessions offered during the AASSA annual conference. Yet, just as we know that teachers need coaching support after a PD to make changes in their practice, coaches, too, need this ongoing support to keep their skills sharp in order to be able to meet the ever-changing needs of today’s teachers. In 2018, this was the inspiration for the creation of a Coaches Virtual PLC. Our goal was simple: provide a space where coaches can virtually connect to continue to deepen and expand their knowledge and application of coaching principles and techniques.

Are you a coach or do you fill that role in your school? We invite all of you to join us in reading Jim Knight's Impact Cycle! The first virtual



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discussion over chapters 1 and 2 will be at the end of September. If you are interested in participating, please connect with Kristen directly and she will share more details:
kmoreland@panamerican.com.br

Not quite ready to commit to a book study? Sign up for our weekly update by clicking here. This weekly newsletter shares articles and resources and other little gems to inspire and transform your coaching!

You can hear more of Kristen and Julia's thoughts on coaching in Episode 6 of AASSA Radio

After 15 years as an English teacher on three different continents, Kristen transitioned to an instructional coach role in 2012. She joined the Pan American School of Porto Alegre, Brazil, in July of 2018. Connect with her on Twitter @kmorekin or on Instagram @educatorsforhumanity

After teaching middle school math in Texas public schools, Julia moved abroad to continue teaching and later become an instructional coach. This is her 5th year as an instructional coach and her second year at the American School Foundation of Monterrey, Mexico. Connect with Julia: julia.dennis@asfm.edu.mx



The Role of Wonder in Early Childhood: Finding Children's Natural Desires for Learning

By Muriel Vermelho, teacher in ECC 1 level at the International School of Curitiba, Brazil.

When children are born, a sense of wonder is born with them. Plato and Aristotle said that wonder is the beginning of philosophy.

Children have an enormous capacity to think of impossible things, this is simply their way of admiring a reality that is, but could just as easily not have been. They are astonished by any

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reality, including the natural laws of our world, just by the simple fact that it exists.

How can we recognize this wonder, that so naturally should occur, in our students? How does it manifest in our daily routine?

Kids have an amazing ability to see things with new eyes, even when it is the tenth time they are looking at it. This movement allows them to marvel at the very existence of such objects. Their questions about our world should never be seen as a demand for explanation, but rather as the beginning of their philosophical thinking. For that reason, it is absolutely normal for children to ask impossible questions, and it is our role to let them think, analyze, research and

discover on their own. Presenting an answer to every question is not allowing a child's wonder to blossom.

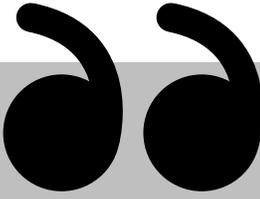
The smallest, most ordinary things trigger wonder and motivate children to satisfy their curiosities. All we have to do is prepare an environment that is conducive to discovery. It does not mean that learning requires an enriched environment. Actually, we must be attentive not to overstimulate children with external stimuli in such a way that these supplant their natural sense of wonder; in fact, this could even lead to inattention, impulsivity, and even loss of interest in learning.

Many scientific studies and intervention programs were initiated on the basis of necessary interventions for at-risk children and were later used as regular educational programs for mainstream children. It was (and still is by some educators) believed that success in learning was recognized by reaching numerous educational milestones and "The sooner these can be achieved the better". So why do we keep finding ourselves struggling to deal with young children and teenagers that lack interest in learning?

To date, it has not been scientifically proven that these early learning programs lead to positive results. The same occurs for educational technology media: CDs, DVDs or apps that promise to develop children's abilities to acquire new language skills or teach them valuable lessons of their daily lives. Some studies even go the opposite direction and point to a relationship between the consumption of DVD media and a decrease in the vocabulary and cognitive development of young kids.

These so called educational shows present children with a bombardment of colors, movements and sounds, an average of 7.5 abrupt changes of scenes per minute, which is ordinarily impossible to be experienced in their day-to-day lives. It should not surprise us that children get

bored, impatient and nervous when they return to the real world around them.



"Bright and flashy screens displaying loud and fast-paced content disturb the only true and sustainable learning that exists in a child: that of discovering and rediscovering the world for oneself and at one's own pace, with a sense of wonder that goes beyond mere curiosity for the unknown."

L'Eculyer, Catherine. The wonder approach: rescuing children's innate desire to learn. First Edition. Kindle Edition, 2018.

Most of our children and teenagers are fascinated by the new technology offered to them, but this is not the same as wonder. The first one is passive and depends on the external stimuli. The second is active and remains open in the face of reality. In order to have calm, curious children in our schools, we must return to the slow-paced rhythm that harmonizes with a child's inner workings.

Wonder is, therefore, the instrument of curiosity, discovery, inventorship, capacity of questioning without being bothered by uncertainty, and the ability to formulate hypothesis and verify the validity by means of observation. Kids who wonder are able to spot and discover plants, flowers, snails and butterflies. They will play with their shadows; they will dig up treasures from the beach or their backyards and imagine cabins that can be built from the trees in the forests.

This apparatus of wonder cannot be guaranteed in an ambiance of chaos. The necessary freedom to discover cannot be mistaken by permissiveness. To ensure a space is conducive to wonder, we must respect children's sensitivities, rhythms, spontaneous movements,

innate curiosity, and the natural phases of childhood.

The early years teacher who recognizes oneself as a facilitator of the learning process carefully designs a space that allows young children to move, discover and wonder, carrying one's work with discretion and humility. In more advanced years, after the age of six or seven, discipline and structure become naturally and logically more and more a part of the educational instruction. For a child whose natural desire for learning has been successfully sustained throughout the first years, directed instruction will not restrict, but rather improve the conditions for wonder to operate.

Creating an environment with an appropriate range of materials is of utmost importance to foster a sense of wonder. For that, the choice of materials and organization of time is essential. Being careful not to offer excessive options of items and thoroughly deciding which ones should be at a child's disposal gives them autonomy of choice and freedom to work with them.

The structure of time is also important. Daily routines, when performed with meaning and with someone who not only directs the children but also loves them, become rituals. Rituals are nothing but routine with love. Daily ordinary tasks should not be underrated since they give children a sense of belonging and anticipation of their own activities. When it comes to the remaining use of time, which is not devoted to rituals, studies point out that less structure supports a child's development of executive functions that are key to learning, such as problem solving, creativity, sustained attention and better control of impulsiveness.

There are even some fundamentals that work invisibly on the backstage of wonder, such as silence, mystery, sensitivity, beauty and culture. It is in the silence that the mind will find no other

occupation but wonder. If a child is engaged in a previous activity, the excess of noise coming from a turned on tv, or noisy radio songs, will only pollute their senses, overloading one's brain, impeding it to find the questions or answers it searches for.

Children are able to accept mystery as part of their realities, which is why we must not hurry and shorten their childhood with unrestricted explanation of rational subjects. Kids are able to find joy in things they do not understand completely. Every adult explanation must be carefully thought out and given accordingly to each child's level of understanding. There is no need to push a child out of their natural development.

The human brain evolved to learn through experiences. The five senses are at the disposal of the child, who curiously uses them without hesitation. Deprive children of such experiences and, instead, offer overstimulating content (those alleged children's cartoons, DVDs, apps, etc.) could be harmful for their development. Sensory experiences not only collaborate for children to know the world around them, but also know themselves within it.

There is nothing without beauty. But if all things hold beauty within, is it fair to say that everything holds the same amount of beauty? If it was possible to measure the amount of beauty in each object, would it be correct to choose the least beautiful ones offer to our children, especially when knowing that beauty naturally increases interest of children towards such objects? It means that choosing what to expose our children to is a necessary exercise for adults. Being thoughtful when choosing which songs, images, and which toys to provide them is crucial when deciding what sort of adults we want them to be in the future.

Of course, culture has an important weight in our definitions of beauty. One has to be

consciously choosing to look for true beauty, true art, and to refine one's senses in order to be able to create children with refined senses. It is the adult that should play the role of the filter of everything that is harmful or damaging for young children's development.

Every child is born a learner, a discoverer, a questioner. It is our job as teachers in providing the opportune space for discovery to occur. One must dedicate yourself with care to rituals. Offer materials that enable the use of the five senses every day. Filter out what is not appropriate for the little ones. The school must be a safe place where the child can find personal and material support so that wonder blossoms without restraints, since it is through wonder that real learning happens.

Muriel Vermelho

Passionate about Early Childhood, Muriel believes in the innate desire to learn and discover that every child carries within. She graduated from Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) in Pedagogy, and also holds a degree in Neuro Pedagogy from Positivo University (UP). Currently works as a teacher in ECC 1 level at the International School of Curitiba (ISC).

Muriel is a keen learner of human development, from early to elder years and has been recently inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach and believes that wonder is the natural treasure of humankind.

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