

California Association of Independent Schools
Faculty Newsletter Spring 2005

REAPING THE RICHES



INSIDE:

Painless Paper Grading

Parent Teacher Conferences: Essential Conversations

Standing Up to Bullying

...and more

*From the Editor*

Reaping the Riches

It's that time of year again when we begin to look back at the year rapidly winding down to see what we're proud of and what we'd like to do better – or differently. As always, we are extremely proud at CAIS of the dedicated and enthusiastic cadre of teachers and administrators who support our professional development programs, not only by their attendance, but by **sharing their knowledge and skills**.

Each year, we enclose a flyer in the final Regional Meeting presenter mailing asking for articles about their presentations so that **the riches of the meeting** can be shared with our entire community. I never know for certain if we will receive enough to dedicate a whole issue to these articles, and nearly every year we do. This year was no exception.

A total of 311 teachers and administrators offered over 200 workshops to approximately 2100 attendees at Sacred Heart Schools in Atherton on Monday, March 14th. Sixty-four out of a possible seventy-two member schools participated in the Regional for a **participation rate of 88%**. As we might expect, not all workshops were equally valuable to all people, but a general impression left by those of you who sent back your evaluations (and thanks for that – we do read them!) can be summed up by one evaluator who said, “My workshops were some of the best I've been to because they were hands-on/interactive, had lots of helpful hand-outs that I could directly apply in my class, showed student work, and had well-informed, enthusiastic presenters.”

Inside you will find **a potpourri of a few of the many wonderful workshops**. Stacie Newman from The Harker School contacted us just after the Northern Regional in 2003 asking for any contacts/referrals we could make on handling the paper-grading load. We didn't have any, but she took us up on our suggestion that she host an affinity group on the subject in 2005 – which she did. She shares the conversation on page 1.

Darleen Herriman, from the Francis Parker School in San Diego, couldn't wait for next year's Southern Regional Meeting and flew north to show us “How Music in the Classroom Reaches Multiple Intelligences.” Then she wrote an article about it! **See what I mean about enthusiasm?** Equally engaged by her topic is Carmen Anthony from Head-Royce School and P.O.C.I.S. who reminds us that there is an “invisible curriculum” that informs our regular curricula, which can be utilized to teach about diversity, tolerance, and character.

Betsy Fox from The Hamlin School relates the story of what happened when she put together a panel of four experienced teachers, all of whom were parents, (but none of whom had children at Hamlin) asking them to discuss frankly what the parent conference was like for them from the parent's point of view. Many more tissues were needed than she expected, and teacher empathy and apprehension of conferencing were greatly enhanced and reduced accordingly.

In writing about the Center for Teaching and Learning at Marin Academy, Peter Poutiatine envisions the future of 21st century professional development – the changes already in place and pending in both content and delivery. Research shows us that while not supplanting the need and value of workshops, seminars, and retreats, the most effective professional development for teachers occurs onsite and in **the normal course of the workday and experience**. The Center for Teaching and Learning creates a space for this learning.

*From the Editor*

Each year we invite a number of “outsiders” to join us. These are people from the wider community of education who have **special knowledge and expertise** to share in their respective areas. This year we have two such people who have written articles for us as well. One is from Linda Yaven, an art education professor at the California College of the Arts, who writes of her experience in Reggio Emilio, Italy, where she found a model of learning, documentation, that deepens learning and transforms traditional assessment. The second is trainer, Nancy Otto, from the Respect for All project of Women’s Educational Media, who presented the video, *Let’s Get Real*. Also included is an article by Lisa Pontell, from the Center for Early Education where the video was shown last fall and who had an opportunity to talk with the filmmaker, Debra Chasnoff.

In summary, it simply wouldn’t be possible to have a Regional Meeting without the work of the Professional Services Committees, and the wonderful folks at the host schools – this year at Sacred Heart Schools. Please join us in thanking them as well. We say goodbye to some of these PSC members as they complete their terms of service on our Professional Committees. In addition to the Regional meeting, CAIS sponsored a slate of Professional Days in the South. The average attendance was 36, and feedback from attendees was full of gratitude, even when some glitches caused disappointment. Opportunities to get together and network are few, and **always valued**. Please join me in thanking the following PSC retirees.

NPSC

Bridgett Longust, Menlo School
Languages

Kyle Barriger, Castelleja School
Math

Ray Wilson, The Athenian School
Physical Education

Robin McGlohn, Menlo School
Sciences

Karen Bradley, Head-Royce School
Social Science/History

Brent Block, Polytechnic School
Performing Arts

Shelby Brown, The Archer School
Social Studies/History

Donald Seymour, Berkeley Hall School
Technology

Pam Posey, Crossroads School
Visual Arts

SPSC

Stephen Bloodworth, Mayfield Junior School
Administration

Maria Pannell, Mayfield Junior School
Counseling

Vicki Olivadoti, Pegasus School
Early Childhood

Anne Graybeal, The Webb Schools
English

Matthew Kline, Turning Point School
Intermediate Grades

Amy Likover, The Webb Schools
Languages

Joann Davis, The Archer School
Library

- *Sandee Mirell*

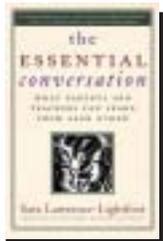
MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
2006 Regional Meeting
Monday, March 13th at Campbell Hall, North Hollywood

REAPING THE RICHES

California Association of Independent Schools
Spring 2005



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Affinity group comes up with tips on how to manage the paper-grading load



Painless Paper Grading?

By Stacie Newman

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Probably no one who chose to become an English or history teacher was looking forward to long sessions spent reading students' written work. However, every career has its pluses and minuses, and for many such teachers, the top of the minus list reads, "grading papers." To deconstruct this common dislike and to better understand ways to deal effectively with it, approximately 25 teachers met as an affinity group at the CAIS Northern Regional Meeting in March, explored the issue, and developed a few strategies.

First, we acknowledged that we often feel discouraged when faced with stacks of our students' newest assignments. Reactions ranged from mild irritation, to anxiety, to exhaustion (before we even begin!), and finally to outright dread. Many of us present admitted that we immediately respond to this situation by procrastinating. Suddenly, everything seems so much more important than tackling that set of papers.

Some teachers noted that part of their reluctance arose over how to respond effectively while not crushing student creativity. These teachers noted, as well, a desire for fair and even-handed grading from first paper to last. Our visceral responses of dread and procrastination are no doubt based in these deeper worries, at least part of the time.

We agreed that part of what it takes to achieve consistency in effective grading is a strong mental focus, which can be hard to attain either during or at the end of a long, tiring day of teaching. Teachers pointed out that evaluating work this complex requires a quiet and non-distracting environment not typically found at school. They find it hard to settle into a grading "groove" because various of interruptions, such as email alerts beeping on our computers, other teachers dropping by on business and social calls, and a clearly limited time before the next set of students files into the room. To make grading happen then becomes a matter of daily prioritizing, and setting up a workable environment as soon as possible. This might necessitate shutting down one's computer, or at least turning the sound off. Closing a classroom door can feel like a vote against collegiality, but may be helpful on grading days.

Also challenging is the dual set of foci that English teachers (and also sometimes those in other disciplines) face when evaluating a student's paragraph or essay. We are usually expected to guide the student to stronger mechanics by marking grammar and punctuation errors, and we also must evaluate the strength of that student's content. This may require many teachers



reading the piece at least twice, so that we can shift gears mentally to help the student as effectively as possible. What can be discouraging about this is the feeling that the grading will be laboriously slow given how much must be assessed and how much brain power must be applied to the process.

Lastly, we sometimes experience uncertainty that our grading marks and notes will directly affect a student's skills and improvement, or provide an understanding of what the student is doing well and what is still challenging. Given these uncertainties, it can be daunting to put so much time into our efforts to assess student writing.

Having thoroughly dissected the reasons for our tendencies to procrastinate, we moved on to ideas for constructively dealing with these demands and our personal reluctances. Here are the highlights.

SETTING TIME LIMITS

After assessing a few papers to determine a sensible average for per-paper grading time, set a limit for a class set, and then use a timer. Even staying close to the time limit will help us stay efficient and feel productive.

Decide to do a certain number of essays in various breaks during the day, such as three before school, six during a prep period, and ten after school.

AVOIDING DISTRACTIONS

If distraction is a problem, look for stretches of time every day when a quiet environment can be created, or located. Some people are not distracted by noise and conversation unrelated to them, so after school, Starbucks is a work-

“First, we acknowledged that we often feel discouraged when faced with stacks of our students’ newest assignments. Reactions ranged from mild irritation to anxiety to exhaustion (before we even begin!)”

able solution. Others must have true quiet, which is where the school library (or the public branch) can be employed. Ear protectors (sound muffling earphones such as those used for the shooting range) also help some people achieve the silence they require. Especially in schools where space is quite limited, this last option can be quite effective.

RUBRICS

Use a rubric for grading content. While, admittedly, time upfront must be spent in creating the rubric, these grade criteria lists can help students prepare for their final draft as well, which may lead to more satisfying reading for the teacher. A separate discussion about how to create rubrics was beyond the scope of our group's topic, but much has been written on this subject, and indeed a workshop was held at the March conference detailing different approaches to writing and using rubrics. For more information, email me at stacien@harker.org.

ENHANCING STUDENT MOTIVATION

Grade student work without giving it a final letter grade. Then students will be more likely to absorb the information and corrections offered and ask questions to understand more fully. A few different approaches can be employed: ask student for a self-assessment, meet to discuss the final grade, or simply assign it afterward and inform the student. This technique may require a little more class time, especially for conferencing, but it is likely to lead to more student motivation to seek to clarify their content-related confusions, and correct their



grammatical errors, a more active process all around.

GIVING FEEDBACK

Some teachers find that typing comments to students moves them through a set of papers faster, as they can quickly explain in two or three sentences the paper's strengths and areas of weakness, as opposed to writing this information out by hand at the end of the essay. This is a particularly effective approach for content-related feedback, and for those teachers who find legible handwriting harder and harder to attain (that would be me, for example). A similar approach has been used by one teacher who had students bring a blank cassette which he used to record a few minutes of comments while he looked at the paper, referencing specific sections for the student to focus on when the student had the pa-

per back in his or her possession. (With both approaches, these comments did NOT take the place of the notations for grammar mistakes.)

NEW TEACHERS

First year teachers sometimes feel a bit unsure how high the assessment bar should be set for a given group of students. In such cases, other teachers of the same course (or same age kids) can provide guidance, helping the new teacher avoid reading through a whole class set trying to determine the expectations before actually grading them – a real timewaster. Less experienced teachers can also skim a class set of papers, grouping them by relative strengths in order to gain a sense for how well their students actually can do, and arriving at the placement of the reasonable expectations and the corresponding grades.

Naturally, our group shared

some Not-to-be-Tried-at-Home strategies for assessing papers.

These included throwing them one class set at a time down a steep stairwell and then assigning letter grades to them based on how far they fall (my mother-in-law's favorite "approach"), or eating one See's chocolate for each paper finished. While the jokes had the quality of gallows humor, we did see the silliness in the general tendency to want to avoid grading, given how much it can help our students if we return work to them in a timely way, with comments that they can absorb and use effectively on the next paper. And no matter how much any of us dreads the work, we all acknowledged that this is the ultimate goal of overcoming our "paper-grading phobia."

Many thanks to all who participated and offered such interesting and insightful ideas! 



How Music in the Classroom Reaches Multiple Intelligences

By Darleen Herriman

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“Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and life to everything.” - Plato

Why is music important? Why does it matter? Master violinist Isaac Stern believes “...music is the most natural activity for a human being and should be a part of every day life. A child should learn music just as he learns reading, writing, and arithmetic. It should be a central part of a persons’ education.”

Unfortunately, there are some who would consider music purely an extracurricular activity. Certainly, in many schools the subject of music has become unimportant next to other critical subjects such as math, science, technology, reading, and language. However, researchers are finding that music education is more closely related to these other subjects than first thought.

In 1983, Harvard University Professor, Howard Gardner, introduced his theory of multiple intelligences. Now, over 22 years later, his original book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* has been translated into more than 20 languages and is well respected around the world. Gardner defines an intelligence as “the ability to solve problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings.” Understanding how music advances the expression and development of multiple intelligences has profound implications for both the classroom teacher and the music specialist.

For instance, a simple “warm-up” tune such as “Johnny works with one hammer...” complete with physical motions not only involves the musical & linguistic (syntax, words) intelligences, but also incorporates the following intelligences:

- logical/mathematical: keeping the beat
- visual/spatial: placement & maneuvering of body during singing game
- body/kinesthetic: stepping, marching, controlling voice
- interpersonal: cooperative effort in singing and moving together
- intrapersonal: choosing a ‘leader’ during this

song adds to a sense of self-awareness, confidence and accomplishment.

Classroom instructors of very young children often teach the alphabet by singing, or chanting the ABC’s. Using the theme song tune from “The Adams Family” youngsters easily learn the days of the week:

Days of the Week (clap clap)
Days of the week (clap, clap)
Days of the week, Days of the week,
Days of the week (clap clap)

There’s Sunday and there’s Monday
There’s Tuesday and there’s Wednesday
There’s Thursday and there’s Friday
And then there’s Saturday

For a teacher that doesn’t feel comfortable singing, ‘days of the week’ can be chanted in rhythm and the students will clearly benefit. Not only are the obvious musical (chanting counts!) and linguistic intelligences being exercised, when adding the clapping and rhythmic cadence body/kinesthetic, visual/spatial and logical/mathematical intelligences are included. One source that I found recently for songs that teach a multitude of subjects for all ages is: www.songsforteaching.com. As educators, it is important that we motivate and engage as many children as possible, and although we may not be proficient in all areas, it is important to actively develop as many intelligences as possible for the benefit of our students. Children who receive early musical training will benefit for a lifetime. Both psychologists and music educators have proven that music has a beneficial influence in the training of the mind. Education without music shortchanges our children and their futures. Education with music offers exciting possibilities. The inclusion of music in the classroom provides an essential component for a well-rounded curriculum *and* a well-rounded child. 

“Table-talking” – a dying art – can be a path to increased tolerance and acceptance of all kinds of diversity



The Invisible Curriculum: Fostering Character and Integrity in Students

By Carmen Anthony

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The world appears to be ever shrinking. Technology allows us to see what is happening in the world almost as it is occurring. Our children are used to being bombarded with all sorts of desperate situations. Games have been developed to provide them with dramatic experiences of destroying others, and being destroyed themselves. We get to know of people with various ethnic, racial, social, economic, sexual orientations, etc., and have truly become an interconnected, global community. As I listen to the beat of some of the current music and consider the content of some television programming, I wonder how children are able to imagine becoming solid, empathetic human beings.

We teachers spend more waking hours with our students than their families for the most part of the academic year. So, it is imperative that we spend time doing what I call “Table Talking” with them. When I was a child, I heard my loved ones describe their days, attitudes, and experiences at the kitchen and dining room tables. It was here that my values began to take shape.

In truth, the principles were the same as those we learned in kindergarten, some of which are outlined in Robert Fulghum’s, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* like:

- Share everything.
- Play fair.
- Clean up your own mess.
- Don’t take things that aren’t yours.
- Say you’re sorry when you hurt somebody.
- Watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.
- Wonder.

Students who are overly programmed with their soccer, debate teams, various clubs and organizations, etc. do not have many opportunities to sit down and talk with their parents, and parents often do not have the time to instill the many basic life lessons that I learned at our family’s tables. A complete education requires not only academic achievement, but also ongoing multicultural work in conjunction with character building.

“When I was a child, I heard my loved ones describe their **days**, **attitudes**, and **experiences** at the kitchen and dining room tables. It was here that my **values** began to take shape.”

The classroom, because of its natural diversity, is the perfect place to study the positive attitudes that we would hope to emphasize with our students as they build their characters and multicultural perspectives. The focus and plan of this “Invisible Curriculum” is often not written down in the same manner as an academic strand, therefore we must endeavor to weave these universal attributes in our classrooms. As teachers, we must recognize these attributes as they occur in our daily routines, and develop class lessons and activities to enhance them. The “Invisible Curriculum” does much more than impart information; it inspires and strengthens students to act nobly—even when every inducement may encourage them to act otherwise. Thus, we endeavor to assist families in building healthy and happy children, and community leaders for our world.

The “Invisible Curriculum” concerns the heart, character, and appreciation of each individual. It is about life experience, valuing one’s history, see-





ing the present with clarity, and being able to project into a positive future. This curriculum is like a large bowl that incorporates the fundamental ingredients of the life-giving sources of the soul, as well as containing academic information and standards. Ingredients that are critical to the development of our children, as well as the world in which they will live are:

- Courage
- Loyalty
- Justice
- Respect
- Hope
- Honesty
- Love

Character building quite naturally leads to multiculturalism, as a true appreciation for each person develops. Countless pathways are available for this exciting journey. Resources possessing recipes specifically designed to nourish your soul and those of your students are but a fingertip away. Look to the old and the new to gather resources for your inspiration. You might find exactly what you may need in rehashing of *The Little Red Hen*, viewing a resource film, perhaps in a set of commercial, multicultural kits; or maybe even in a sweep of the Internet. We can easily find examples. They're everywhere! Practically everything can be utilized as a learning tool when talking about basic values and attitudes. It is up to each of us to consciously devote ourselves to adding this important piece to our curriculum. Consider each day with your students an opportunity to have "a place at the table" with them: to assist them in understanding the lessons they will need to value in order to lead happy and productive lives. Great luck to you! 

MEDIA RESOURCE LIST FOR THE INVISIBLE CURRICULUM

****A Place at the Table: Struggles for Equality in America***

Videotape and print, produced by Robert and Bobby Hudson (Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2000)
www.teachingtolerance.org

Apples and Oranges

Videotape, directed by Lynne Fernie (Montreal, Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 2003) order no. C9103019, 1-800-542-2164.
www.nfb.ca

****I Will Be Your Friend: Songs and Activities for Young Peacemakers***

DC and print, produced by Larry Long (Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2003)
www.teachingtolerance.org

It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School

videotape, produced by Helen Cohen and Debra Chasnoff (San Francisco, CA: Women's Educational Media, 1999) Distributed by New Day films, (201) 652-6590.
www.newday.com

****Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks***

Videotape and print, directed by Bobby Houston (Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2002)
www.teachingtolerance.org

****Starting Small: Teaching Children Tolerance***

Videotape, produced by Marie McGovern (Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center, 1997)
www.teachingtolerance.org

Teaching Life Lessons the Literacy Way

Heartwood Institute
1-800-432-7810
www.heartwoodethcis.org

That's a Family

Videotape, directed by Debra Chasnoff (San Francisco, CA: Women's Educational Media, 2000) (415) 641-4616,
www.womedia.org

The Shadow of Hate

Videotape and print, produced by Charles Guggenheim (Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center)
www.teachingtolerance.org

*free of charge with lesson plans and other materials from
www.teachingtolerance.org

De-stressing
parent-teacher
conferences by seeing
them with
parents' eyes



Parent Teacher Conferences: Essential Conversations

By Betsy Fox

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Will Erika's father think she's being challenged appropriately in math? How will Shaun's parents react to the recommendation that he be evaluated for learning differences? You've heard that the sweet Johnsons always bring a hot cup of coffee for the teachers. You remember the teacher down the hall talking about her discouraging conference with the Beryl's last spring. Uggh...you didn't go into teaching to work with parents!

As both a parent and an educator, I am continually fascinated by the relationships between parents and teachers. We all use the language to describe the importance of the partnership between home and school. Yet, topics not easily discussed often create a tentative fragility to the relationship. Sara Lawrence Lightfoot captures the essence of it in her book, *Essential Conversations*. She details the layers of her parent's interactions with her childhood teachers and the role she attempts to play with her own children's teachers. She opens a dialogue about the stress each participant plays in the bi-annual dance of the Parent/Teacher Conference, and poignantly describes the unsent letters she's written to her child's teachers after each conference -

letters in which she feels safe expressing her true emotions and thoughts.

After recently reading this book, it became apparent to me that there might be a way to help develop greater understanding among the lower school teaching faculty at my school. What if they heard how parents actually feel as they enter the doors of the classroom? What if they listened to parents describe what it's like to sit in the small plastic chairs and listen to their child's intellectual, social, physical, and emotional life analyzed, then evaluated? What if they understood how parents vacillate between wanting to hide under the desk and wanting to defend all that is not perfect with their child?

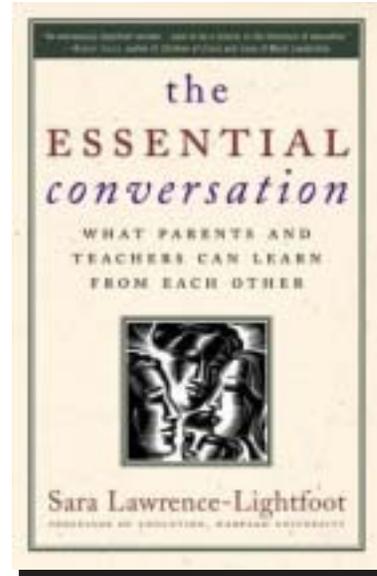
I asked four veteran staff members, none of whom have children enrolled at our school, to participate in a panel discussion. Each spoke for their allotted 5 to 7 minutes, after which questions were taken from the audience, the remainder of the teaching faculty. I did not consciously think about the makeup of the panel though it turned out to be quite diverse. The first panelist spoke with tears in her voice, then in her eyes. She explained

“What if
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how she never thought she would be attending school conferences alone, without her husband. As a widow, she dreaded the biannual trips to the school for conferences, even Back to School night. The reality of raising her children alone was particularly poignant during parent conferences because the absence of her husband was so definitive and concrete.

The next teacher, the mother of a young child with learning differences, brought tears to our eyes as well as her own when she described the emotions felt in realizing a school placement was not appropriate for her daughter, and the deep sadness surrounding decisions about her daughter’s educational future. As the next teacher sat listening to the first two, thoughts came to her mind that she had not planned to share. Again through wet eyes, she discussed the effect of a tough divorce on her ability to sit with her ex-husband in a parent/teacher conference. She described how difficult it is to even hear the words of the teacher through all the negative words coming silently from her ex. The last panelist thoughtfully reminded us that even couples that seem so “together” in the conference don’t always agree on the recommendations they hear for their child. This may cause silent, unnoticed tension. She reminded us to not make assumptions about the thoughts and lives of others.

This was the stuff of which PBS documentaries are made. Not only did



I neglect to provide tissues for the speakers, I should have had them on each table. Many teachers asked questions of the panelists, as well as one another, in the large group discussion that followed. One teacher who had remarked on her way into the meeting, “I sure wish we could have this time to prepare for our upcoming conferences,” remarked as she left, “This was the best possible use of this hour.”

The next day lunch and hallway conversations inevitably became debriefing sessions. Near the end of the week, as we sent the teachers into those parent/teacher conferences, they were armed with an important tool: a better understanding of the folks sitting in those little chairs on the other side of that two foot high desk—the parents.

As we continue to work towards a true partnership between home and school, this discussion helps create an understanding past the obvious. The relationship between parents and teachers can be so very powerful; it is crucial we continue to develop understanding and empathy. As Dr. Lightfoot concludes, “In their (parents and teachers) hearts, minds, and actions they hold the conflict and the resolution, the problem and the solution, the battle and the peace.”

Beginning in July 2005, Betsy can be reached at betsy@foxeducation.com and will be available on a consultant basis.

The Center for Teaching and Learning supports teachers as individual learners, and teaching as an opportunity for continuous inquiry into the art and, increasingly, the science of learning.



Teaching as a Context of Continuous Inquiry

By Peter Poutiatine

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"The Center for Teaching and Learning?" one of my students said to me recently. Squinting her eyes and looking at me askance, she regarded me with something like suspicion and mockery. "Isn't that a little—" she hung fire for emphasis before over enunciating the final word in a gush of attitude, "*—redundant?*"

She had caught me off guard. I don't recall just how I replied, but I'm sure I said something awkward and stumbly and vaguely defensive, because that's how I felt. Since then, I have been composing many fine retorts. My favorite goes something like this: "Yep. You bet it's redundant and purposefully so. At least it should be, but the fact is our profession hasn't always seen it that way."

The first thing you'll notice when you step into Marin Academy's Center for Teaching and Learning is the atmosphere. You'll find plants, couches, rugs, natural light, pleasing décor, and teachers earnestly engaged with seriousness of purpose in their own personal professional development. It is a sanctuary for all serious students of learning.

As your first impressions give way to second looks, you might notice the bookcases that stand against one

wall and hold a growing collection of the best of education literature. You'll find sections on education theory and reform, methods and curriculum, the brain, the history of American education, the newer ideas and insights as well as the seminal standards of the field, all arranged and cataloged. Nearby a bank of filing cabinets holds an amassed resource of lesson plans, syllabi, rubrics, handouts, readings, and other curricular materials, patiently collected and assiduously stored.

You might also notice the calendar of upcoming events. It serves to schedule an in-house seminar series, which regularly offers talks of direct, or indirect pedagogical relevance. A small staff of coordinators promotes the seminars, manages the resources, and organizes a classroom observation network, which is activated at a teacher's request and focused by a teacher's need.

The Center for Teaching and Learning, launched in 2003, is a place to blend teaching and learning in daily practice. It is born of the conviction that every teacher is on a unique trajectory toward greatness, and that our own professional development protocols are individu-



“The conventional model [of professional development] sees teachers as empty vessels in periodic need of filling. How long has it been since we stopped looking at students that way?”

ally negotiated, case-by-case, day-by-day, need by need. It takes as its central tenets that students teach and teachers learn, that at the beginning of the 21st century there are more new things to know about the science of learning than ever before, and that mastery in any field of endeavor requires active and reflective striving study. The Center for Teaching and Learning seeks to promote teachers as individual learners and teaching as a context of continuous inquiry into the art and craft of learning.

The usual model for professional development in schools chunks teacher learning into fairly large portions scheduled at fairly large intervals. Every year, schools offer up a professional development menu of discrete experiences, snippets of pedagogical insight, or curricular reform that are intended to add to or augment a teacher's knowledge base. Edward Joyner, Executive Director of the Yale University School Development Program, has termed this model “drive-by staff development.” To begin his essay, included in Peter Senge's important compilation, *Schools That Learn*, Joyner writes:

I coined the term “drive-by staff development” to help educators

understand the need for schools to be reflective places where teachers can select the training they need to improve teaching and learning. Such training should not be one-shot events that are disconnected from the core work of schooling. They also should be conducted by individuals who have studied the work context and who are willing to transfer their knowledge and skill. Instead of being consultant-dependent, teachers and administrators can solve their own problems when they have a process that allows them to collaborate, engage in no-fault problem solving, and work for consensus solutions. (Senge, 385)

At its worst, drive-by staff development constitutes a deficit model of education that regards teachers as in periodic need of things they lack, discrete skills and approaches that can be supplied in an hour-long faculty meeting, a three-hour in-service workshop, or an all-day conference. The conventional model sees teachers as empty vessels in periodic need of filling. How long has it been since we stopped looking at students that way?

The conventional model is not

only discretely portioned in content, but also is discretely scheduled in time, and it regards a faculty as being in uniform need of particular information at the same moment. *In uniform need.* As if all teachers were in need of the same skills, the same understandings, the same insights, the

same tools on the same day.

Tools. The construction metaphor seems apt because whether it is a new assessment technique or a different way of understanding the student-teacher relationship, they are tools we use in the classroom, pedagogical tools. And over the course of a semester, I often feel like I am building an understanding, like a carpenter building a house. If a carpenter starts building in the fall he can't wait until February to learn about concrete foundations. In February, he is going to want to know about interior trim or paint perhaps. And a *different* builder building a *different* house is going to need *different* information and *different* tools at that time. He might not even be painting; he might be wallpapering. So, like a carpenter's need for building tools, a teacher's need for pedagogical tools is dependent on the particular challenge he is facing at the moment. We are not all in uniform need. No news here.

For me, the building metaphor works on a different level, too. After a really good conference or in-service day I often feel like I have just been to the hardware store. It is a heady excitement that comes with acquiring a few good new tools. The



difference is that at the hardware store, I get to choose the tools that I need for the task I have in mind. Not so with the current model for delivering pedagogical tools. They are chosen for me by someone else and presented for my benefit at a time not of my choosing. My option is either to accept them or reject them, but I can't choose to accept a different, more immediately useful tool, because it isn't offered. My challenge is to make the tool I am given fit my particular situation, which is an odd quandary. Imagine building a house that way. Maybe I need a hammer, but I am only given a really top-notch screwdriver.

We have all experienced good professional development of lasting relevance and importance regardless of our immediate challenges in the classroom. A familiarity with Howard Gardner's still-expanding theory of multiple intelligences can improve the presentation of a lesson, and no matter the subject matter or age group, knowing what neuroscientists currently understand about memory will improve lesson planning. But one thing we know about adult learning, especially, is that if a learner does not perceive an immediate usefulness for the new information, it will be harder to internalize, harder to remember, and harder to bring forth to apply in appropriate situations later.

To be clear, I am not arguing that the conventional model for professional development is not useful; I am saying that it is only half of the program. I am saying that it relies on a set of assumptions about what teachers need and that teachers' experiences, challenges, and needs for information on a daily basis cannot be satisfied by this model.

I have always seen teachers as students of learning, just as architects are students of spaces, artists

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are students of form, and doctors are students of the body. Our whole goal as teachers is to inspire learning in our students, and like most of us, I have no doubt that we are successful much of the time, and *that* is what amazed me. Our profession is dedicated to bringing something about that we can't yet explain. And yet we do it! Wonder of wonders!

The need for teachers to be constant students of the science of learning is greater now than ever before. At a recent Learning and the Brain Conference – a meeting of neuroscientists and educators that happens in Boston twice a year – Kenneth Kosik, M.D. of Harvard Medical School and Director of the Kosik Laboratory of Cellular Neuroscience introduced a lecture on the genetic underpinnings of the mind by making a prediction. He said, “more will change in the next 30 years in education than has changed in the last 300.”

Dr. Kosik spoke about learning on a cellular level, what it looks like in the brain, how neurons pass information to each other, and our most promising current theory of learning. I was struck, as a young teacher, that neuroscientists, not to mention teachers, have never yet known what learning is. I mean not *really*. In an eye-opening moment for me, the implications for teachers were startling.

It is worth considering here for a moment why we need a cellular understanding of learning. Teaching is a well-established profession, after all, and students do learn in our classrooms. Why do we have to be able to explain learning if we know it when we see it? It is a good question. But we don't ask it of other professions. Imagine the auto mechanic who says, “I don't know what causes a car to run well, but I know it when

I see it." Or the doctor who says, "I don't know what causes heart disease, but I know it when I see it." With the science of learning advancing today as fast as it is, education is becoming, like medicine and psychology, a technically and technologically advanced profession. Knowing it when you see it just doesn't allow for the level of studied advancement that these professions demand.

A hundred years ago medicine was at a stage of development equivalent to where teaching is now. Doctors knew a well patient when they saw one, and they knew a sick one, too, but they knew comparatively little about what caused the wellness or the sickness. Medicine was on the cusp of some major breakthroughs – antiseptics, later penicillin, genetics – but it hadn't made them yet. Even so, people got better under treatment. The important question is, why did they get better? Was it because of the treatment? Or in *spite* of it? Would the patients have recovered *anyway*? Until we began to understand the concept of wellness and the etiologies of diseases, we couldn't know which treatments were therapeutic and which simply were not enough to kill. Doctors tried a treatment and if the patient got better, they kept doing it. If the patient died, they tried something else the next time.

The social sciences call this a behaviorist approach – think B.F. Skinner, reinforcement stimuli, and behavior modification – and education continues to rely on it to evaluate pedagogy. New techniques come through our profession frequently. Cooperative learning, experiential education, project-based learning, concept attainment, direct instruction, think-pair-share, and a million others that I simply haven't been around long enough to name. And



we think we have no way of knowing whether they are effective or not, until we try them.

So we try them and we measure the results with an assessment. If we like the results, we keep doing the technique. If we don't like the results, then we say the technique didn't work, and we don't do it again. The fact is this model can tell us only two things: what we did and what happened. It can't confirm a causal relationship between the two, between our technique and our assessment because correlation does not imply causation. Deep down we know, the patient might have recovered *anyway*.

Does this mean that all teachers have to become neuroscientists and researchers? No. Fortunately,

neuroscientists are content to do the reresearch and gain the understandings for us. But with the recent advent of functional MRI and other advanced brain imaging technologies that allow us to see the brain in the act of learning, there is simply more to know about teaching and learning than ever before. So, what this *does* mean is that teachers need to stay abreast of recent and forthcoming developments in the science of learning and strive to apply the newfound understandings in the classroom. In the next 30 years our classrooms will be the proving grounds for the new science of learning and teachers will be the practitioners of these new understandings and insights. I can't wait.

A visit to Reggio-Emilio provides a new “take” on assessment – making learning visible

Documentation: Reflective Classroom Practice in Accelerated Times

By Linda Yaven

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Several snowy winters ago it was my good fortune to visit the thirty-five infant/toddler schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy which *Newsweek* magazine named one of the top ten educational systems in the world. Since I teach college I was concerned about possible relevance, but it was Italy, after all, and I happily went. The experience there transformed my professional life as a teacher and an educator with a learning consultancy.

Documentation is an interactive model of learning. Italians refer to it as “the second skin” of their schools. We find the children’s work visible everywhere: classrooms, hallways, school entrances - even bathrooms. While this describes schools in the USA, too, what was different was how student work was accompanied by the children’s own words: about their work, their decision-making and/or sequenced explanations of the phases of a project unfolding. It was captivating to find small children’s reflections upon their learning visible everywhere. The Reggio teachers were *making learning visible*, uncovering the “back story” of learning.

Over the six years since returning from Reggio I have adapted their model to my American classroom, teaching “The Teaching and Documentation Project” in the Graduate Design Program at California College of the Arts (formerly CCAC) and giving workshops on this approach most recently to K -12 teachers on our military bases in Japan, Europe and the States.

At CCA, my students design, teach and document an art/design project at a school site in the community working in teams in a variety of K- 12 classrooms. As a result of this multi-age documentation-rich learning is generated for my students and their K -12 students. I am a learner too in this regard; documentation always

brings discovery with it.

Ordinarily we think of documentation as something conclusive occurring at a project’s completion - and the teacher as the primary assessor. An alternate definition is emerging in cutting edge educational circles. Here documentation is not something moribund, but alive and responsive to a group of learners.

Documentation is the “footprint” of a learning process that allows us to follow the “tracks” of the learning taking place. It lets students revisit learning through reflective conversation about what the documentation reveals. Sometimes next steps in the learning process become clear, or are adjusted in response to what we hear students say about what they are seeing. Documentation, in this sense, allows us to be responsive.

As students talk about the documentation they engage in acts of interpretation. While assessment is at work in any classroom, documentation makes this explicit – its visibility sparks inquiry. It offers students a voice and a view into - no matter the age - how assessment processes impact learning. Classroom stress levels are reduced and collaborations are enhanced. Why? Documentation uncovers - providing concrete evidence of learning, and it allows ideas as well as the social relationships at work in any class to surface. Documentation transforms the student-teacher relationship - you have to be brave.

Several layers of documentation took place in our class. My students documented their students, I documented my students, and they documented each other and me. In some cases, my students’ students were documenting. We documented objects and environments too. We used photographs, video, drawing, charts,



“Documentation is the ‘footprint’ of a learning process that allows us to follow the ‘tracks’ of the learning taking place.”

paper and pencil, audio, analog, digital – even performance. It is a great way to show those “outside” the classroom – administrators, parents, visitors - what is happening inside a K-12 classroom.

Of course we encountered the pitfalls that accompany group learning. Instead of dismissing these, the students were encouraged to *make their mistakes visible*. A gift of documentation is that gaffs, blunders, the *let’s not go there* moments were included as a legitimate part of the cycle of learning. The back-story was being revealed.

For at its core, we know deep learning contains mistakes, the redo and even failure. Documentation allows students to come back to

bungled moments in a cooler mood, and opens up the possibility of a lighter and more forgiving attitude towards themselves.

Without the teacher uttering a word the images give evidence of student interest and disinterest. The K-12 teachers in my workshops tell me later that simply having students see photos of themselves (and their peers) has shifted “slacker” students into more motivated class participants.

Documentation is not about beautiful or even “finished” work. Red-eye in photos, lopsided compositions, scribbles and musings – these are all respectable components of documentation. The objective is to uncover the traces of real learning, and in so doing let students

actively reflect upon that learning so a cycle of progress results.

Teachers say this model slows time down even as learning is deepened. At The Northern Regional Meeting, CAIS teachers concurred. In the midst of our accelerated learning environments documentation opens up reflective practice with notrouble at all. An adage in teaching is to explain less and show more – this model applies equally to art and academic subject content. Given the daunting educational issues we face documentation is a possible inroad – inviting reflective practice into the classroom in a way that students of all ages take to with ease and exhilaration.



Trainer offers an eye-opening set of facts and figures about the pervasiveness and denial of the extent of bullying incidents in our schools

Standing Up to Bullying – Part I

By Nancy Otto

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Last March, I presented a workshop at the CAIS Northern Regional Meeting on name-calling and bullying. The presentation centered around a powerful documentary called *Let's Get Real* in which over 50 youth talk openly about the realities of bullying. The film features bullies, victims, and witnesses talking about the rampant racial tension, anti-gay taunting and sexual harassment that goes on in schools everywhere. During the workshop, we talked about the various ways that teachers, parents, administrators and entire communities are using the film around the country to start a dialogue about bullying and what can be done.

As a trainer on educational diversity and safety issues for the Respect For All Project, (a series of films, written curricula and professional training aimed at fostering safe schools for all children), I work with administrators and teachers on how to increase awareness, respect, and celebration of difference at their schools through activities and curriculum. The need to address bullying in all schools and communities has become abundantly clear and urgent, especially in light of recent acts of school violence around the country, including the school shooting in Minnesota. As is well known, the students committing violent acts are often the victims of bullying and harassment at home and at school.

The majority of school communities is not grappling with blatant acts of violence and hate crimes. Rather they are struggling to notice the subtle, yet vicious name calling, taunting and verbal bullying that goes unchecked in locker rooms, hallways, playing fields and cafeterias. Bullying and name-calling, often referred to as a "rite of passage" for youth, results in an esti-

mated 160,000 children missing school every day out of fear of attack or intimidation by other students.¹

Often, the biggest challenge in school-wide efforts to confront bullying is the denial that it is occurring and that it should be taken seriously. Here are some facts.

- Sixty-six percent of youth are teased at least once a month, and nearly one third of youth are bullied at least once a month.²
- Six out of ten American teens witness bullying at least once a day.³
- Nearly one in six – or 3.2 million children in grades 6-10 are victims of bullying each year and 3.7 million are bullies.⁴
- Over the course of a year nearly 24% of students across grade levels reported that they had been harassed, or bullied on school property because of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.⁵

Given these statistics, teachers and administrators are looking for ways to start a safe dialogue with students to talk about what is happening to them. Creating the environment to have this discussion can be quite a difficult task.

One of the most powerful uses for the film is with students in grades 6-9. In countless classrooms where *Let's Get Real* has been shown to students, the reaction is the same – student after student, inspired by the stories in the film, talk about the bullying *they* witness – from girls gossiping behind each other's back, to the rampant use of the word "faggot" as an insult to the masculinity of boys being challenged in locker rooms. Just screening the film and opening a forum for discus-

sion can engage students and promote awareness. At one school, 8th graders “trained” incoming 6th graders using *Let’s Get Real* as a discussion starter into tougher issues like prejudice based on racial differences, perceived sexual orientation and religion.

At a recent San Francisco screening of *Let’s Get Real* for teachers, students and parents, the discussion that followed was typical. The students spoke up about their experiences, the parents were shocked by what they were hearing, and the teachers brainstormed about what could be done. After the screening, one school formed an Anti-Bullying Committee (ABC) to raise awareness, and create and oversee enforcement of anti-bullying policies. They launched an Anti-Bully Campaign Week using *Let’s Get Real* after which every subject area across the curriculum addressed bullying and name-calling in their classes. The ABC also presented their work to the PTSA which decided to schedule nine showings of the video for the parents so they could have a meaningful discussion with their children after seeing it.

A general overview of broad

“The majority of school communities is not grappling with blatant acts of **violence** and hate crimes. Rather they are struggling to notice the **subtle**, yet vicious name calling, taunting and verbal bullying that goes **unchecked** in locker rooms, hallways, playing fields and cafeterias.”

steps that schools can take to start creating safer environments involve having safe spaces for dialogue, campus-wide visibility and enforcement, and outlets for student action. Once students are aware and talking about how they bully and harass each other, they need creative ways to take action and share some responsibility of maintaining a bully-free community. For example, they could conduct informal interviews, or

surveys and students could write about the results in a school newspaper, or post them on a school bulletin board. Any way you do it, the most important task is to get the dialogue going and build the trust that students can talk to adults who will then respond in appropriate ways, and address the root causes of the harassment without it escalating further somewhere else. You may be surprised by what you uncover.

¹National Education Association, 1995

²National Survey of Students Grades 5-12, Families and Work Institute 2002

³National Crime Prevention Council, 2003

⁴*Fight Crime: Invest in Kids*, September 2003

⁵California Student Survey, 2001-2

More information is available at www.respectforall.org

Standing Up to Bullying – Part II

By Lisa Pontell

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We’ve all been through it to some degree: teasing, name-calling, bullying. It has often been thought of as a rite of passage, a part of growing up, but Debra Chasnoff, in her film, *Let’s Get Real*, offers a powerful antidote to the acceptance of bullying as a “given.”

Recently, the Center for Early Education hosted a screening of this compelling documentary, the third in her series of high quality media resources for confronting issues of prejudice. As part of the Respect for All project,

Chasnoff has previously produced *It’s Elementary*, addressing gay issues in schools, and *That’s a Family*, helping elementary school children understand different family structures. *Let’s Get Real*, is intended for a middle school population, including parents and teachers, and is accompanied by a detailed curriculum guide with activities to further explore the issues presented in the film.

Bullying has emotional and sometimes violent consequences. Kids stay home from school to avoid con-

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Debra Chasnoff

frontations. Mental health issues, and eating, or sleep disorders are often associated with bullying, and 75% of school shoot-

ings are related to incidences of bullying. To effect change in the widespread cycle of bullying, Chasnoff uses only youth voices to tell the stories. She is able to get into the hearts of kids on all sides of the bullying spectrum. No one is labeled as bully or victim, and each speaks so openly and wrenchingly about their experiences in school, that the audience feels their fear, hurt, confusion, and anger very personally.

The young people were encouraged to speak honestly and address not only their own and their peers' behavior, but also the underlying issues of prejudice, including race, gay/lesbian, class, religion, and sexual harassment. Chasnoff must have created a remarkably safe setting for the students involved, because they were able to speak candidly of deeply painful experiences, in which they were victims – or the bully. An

Asian girl spoke of feeling a fire inside her when she was teased about her race. A young boy, a victim of class discrimination, spoke of wanting to go home and go to sleep – or get a gun. A powerful bully talks of how it makes him feel good to intimidate others. After all, his brother does it to him. A girl speaks of the tens of taunting e-mails she received when she got home from school.

Chasnoff sees this film as a catalyst for dialog. It can be particularly effective with parents, offering a way to have con-

versations with their children, an entry into difficult territory. The Respect for All project also offers training sessions for schools to enlighten faculty and staff in ways to interact with children to prevent bullying. The goal is to increase awareness of the subtle and more egregious hurts that occur daily in the life of a middle school child. At the same time, the film illuminates the underlying factors that lead young people to tease or harass one another, including stereotypes and prejudice. The film is intended to engage the audience, but then, more importantly, to open up lines of communication between kids, and between generations. By exploring the sources of bullying, and alternatives to tough discipline policies, *Let's Get Real* offers guidelines to diffuse the epidemic of bullying, and hope for the development of mutual respect and empathy.

Let's Get Real