Celebration!
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All cover photos courtesy of Cam Sanders.
Note from the Editor

The school year 2011-2012 is fast fading into history. There are always lots of reasons to celebrate at the end of a school year, and this year CAIS is celebrating, too. Thanks to your support it was a very successful year for our professional development programs, and we would like to share some of the riches with you.

We give thanks once again to Campbell Hall for hosting the Southern Regional meeting where over 1500 educators from sixty-four different Southern schools met on Monday, March 6, 2012. Dacher Keltner, featured speaker at the 2011 Northern Regional Meeting was our Southern Regional Meeting featured speaker as well. In addition to being a psychology professor at Berkeley, Dacher is an author and the founder of GreaterGood Science Center (http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/). The mission of the Center is to study wellbeing through the lenses of psychology, sociology, and neuroscience, and the website offers a wealth of information on “the science of a meaningful life.”

In one of the three presentations Dacher gave titled, “The Compassionate Instinct: A Darwinian Tale of Survival of the Kindest,” we learned that science supports Darwin in the matter of natural selection. However, how many know that Darwin believed that natural selection favors “the most sympathetic members” of a community because only in such a group could “the greatest number of offspring” be raised? In social and sexual selection, and in promoting the health and wellbeing of children, it is the kindest who are the fittest. You can find Dacher’s slides at www.caisca.org/event_info/235/CAISBTBG-2012.pdf.

Dacher was not alone, however, in sharing knowledge with us. Over 160 workshops and their presenters educated us in everything from building data cultures, to building teamwork in P.E. classes and training 21st century musicians, to mindfulness and mentoring, and vericomposting. Most of these presenters were from CAIS schools. In fact, all but twenty-one workshops were given by CAIS presenters, which has been true for all the Regional Meetings I’ve been a part of planning.

This year the articles that follow are not only from the Southern Regional Meeting, but from the Northern Professional Days as well. Over three hundred people attended twelve workshops, all of which, I am happy to say, were attended either by me, or our administrative assistant, Genevieve Goetz who, in addition to registering people for our programs, coordinates the Professional Days.

I learned how to talk about chocolate in Chinese at the Languages Day, about place-based learning and global warming at the Sciences Day, and how to use backward design in creating units at the Elementary Grades. Day. I also saw how Shakespeare is interpreted and performed in Korea, Brazil and cultures around the globe (that was the English Day), and how librarians can be and often are valuable onsite professional developers at the Library Day.

We are so grateful to and proud of our CAIS community. Thanks to our Professional Services Committees, to our host schools, and all of you who supported our professional development programs this year with your attendance.

Thanks also to Cam Sanders of MugsyCl!cks (www.mugsycl!cks.com) for the wonderful photos of the Regional Meeting!

— Sandee Mirell
The "thought experiment" or problem described herein, together with the accompanying approach and calculations was developed by two seniors and their instructor at Mayfield Senior School in Pasadena, California, as part of a special study program introducing engineering thermodynamics. We feel that this problem, which requires physics, chemistry, and math elements, is a very nice project for students who are taking or have taken courses in chemistry, physics and calculus.

The Problem

Congratulations, you got a baby elephant (500 kg) for Christmas and you want to design a spherical, helium filled balloon that will just lift your elephant and you (50 kg) at sea level when the atmospheric pressure is 101.3 kPa and the temperature is 288 K. After you have designed and built the balloon, and you and your elephant have gotten onto the platform (see figure 1), the balloon just floats at sea level; it neither rises or falls. Suddenly, your elephant pushes you off of the platform and your balloon starts to rise. The question now is: How high will your elephant fly?

The Approach and Assumptions

Using the Ideal Gas Law and the Archimedes Principle you must first calculate the radius and volume of a spherical balloon filled with pure helium to a pressure of 101.3 kPa, that will just lift you, your elephant, the balloon bag, and the platform and harness. Assume your elephant weighs 4905 N, you weigh 490.5 N, the platform and harness weighs 490.5 N and the balloon bag weighs 0.981 N/meter squared. The sea level outside temperature is 288 K and the temperature of the helium is 288 K.

Once you have designed your balloon in terms of determining its fixed radius and volume, you must determine how high the balloon will fly after you have been pushed off of the balloon. To do this we want you to use two approaches and compare them.

In the first approach, assume that the temperature of the atmosphere is constant and equal to 288 K over the entire height from sea level (on the ground) to the final float height of the balloon after you are pushed off.

In the second approach, use the Properties of the U.S. Standard Atmosphere to determine the ratio of the air density at altitude to the air density at sea level with a sea level temperature of 288 K. Assume that the volume of the balloon is fixed, and the material is strong enough to withstand the pressure difference between the inside and outside of the balloon as it rises to its final height.

Verbal Description of the Solution

When we assume that the atmosphere is isothermal that means that the temperature doesn’t change as the balloon rises from the ground. This is a fair assumption if the balloon doesn’t rise very high. Using this assumption, our elephant will rise to a height of 1929 feet.

The U.S. Standard Atmosphere Tables gives, among other things, the ratio of the air density at altitude to the air density at sea level. After the girl is pushed off of the balloon platform, the total weight of the balloon is reduced by 490.5 N, and the balloon rises to a higher float point where the buoyancy force just matches the new weight. Using the standard table, the float point is 2392 feet. This is consistent with the fact that in the standard atmosphere case, the temperature drops with altitude, which results in the air density at any given altitude being higher in the standard atmosphere case than in the isothermal case resulting in the float point being somewhat higher in the standard atmosphere case than in the isothermal case.

The complete paper with all of the detailed calculations is presented on the CAIS web site www.caisca.org/page/22435_Conference_Presentations.asp?pass=2&event=235.

Reference

Is it ADHD, or Giftedness?

Mentally Gifted, Not Mentally Disordered

What does a mentally gifted kid look like? Would the average teacher consider the following kid mentally gifted?

Sam is a 7 year old and a second grader. He is a student in your class. He has a high activity level and appears more restless than other children his age. Sam has difficulty restraining his desire to talk in the classroom and interrupts you frequently. You have repeatedly tried to change Sam’s behavior, but Sam questions authority and he has a difficult time accepting rules and regulations. Sam’s homework is frequently messy because he appears careless and inattentive to details. Sam has a poor attention span, especially when he is bored. Sam’s home environment appears to be normal.

This vignette was given to 132 trainee teachers by University of Houston, Texas social scientists Anne Rinn and Jason Nelson. The trainees were then asked the following questions:

(Form A) If this child were a student in your class, what do you think the underlying explanation for his behavior would be?

(Form B) If this child were a student in your class, do you think the cause of his behavior could be attributed to ADHD or due to his being gifted and talented?

Participants were also required to back up their answers with reasons why.

Regardless of the question asked, the vast majority of trainees attributed Sam’s behavior to ADHD. Only one-in-five of them perceived Sam as potentially gifted on the Form A question. Nearly a third thought Sam might be gifted when provided that option on the Form B question.

Trainee teachers who were strictly of the mindset that Sam had ADHD provided reasons such as: “If Sam was gifted and talented his work would be neater than it already is and he would care more about doing his homework than he does,” “Talented students do not question authority or act up in class,” “Because he seems to be very active and excited but gets bored with the work,” and “If gifted and talented he would do the work and get bored afterwards.”

These rationales reflect the stereotype many of us have of gifted children. We assume them to be nerdy and quirky, academic-button-down types who take to school like a duck to water. But, the behaviors exhibited by Sam (commonly associated with ADHD) are actually fairly typical of gifted kids, especially when underchallenged or bored.

Excited about Ideas, Not Hyperactive

There are those gifted kids who are intellectually restless and excitable. Bursting with ideas, they are eager to display their abundant knowledge. They may ask questions incessantly, even ones that are off-topic. This speaks to a curiosity that is both ardent and genuine – a curiosity that darts off in different directions. They may be three steps ahead of the teacher, anticipating questions, prepared with answers. Containing their excitement until called upon...
may feel like torture. You can’t fault a gifted kid for wanting to blurt out answers that seem patently obvious. You also can’t fault a gifted kid who becomes overtly resentful due to the accumulated frustration having to wait while classmates cobble together answers that he or she can arrive at with lightning speed. It is estimated that most gifted kids placed in regular classrooms spend up to one-fourth to one-half of their school day waiting for their classmates to catch up to their level. Not surprisingly, all this waiting can cause fidgetiness and agitation, which can get misconstrued as ADHD-like behaviour.

Highly Logical, Not Oppositional

There are also those gifted kids who come across as haughty and aloof. As the saying goes, they do not suffer fools easily. They use their remarkable verbal and logical reasoning skills to question the actions of authority figures. These are the kids who see no reason why they should refrain from pointing out when a teacher contradicts him or herself, or fails to apply a rule consistently. They believe logic should always guide actions and have a blind spot for social tact.

Fourteen-year old Jim is one such kid. He was brought to see me by his physician parents because of an alarming interaction with a teacher that had caused her to feel unsafe in his presence. During a midterm exam Jim asked his teacher for extra time. She casually stated something to the effect of “take all the time you need,” knowing that Jim was a talented student who routinely aced tests.

Jim took this literally. He saw it as an opportunity to settle in and answer his American history essay questions with painstaking detail. He was the last one left in the class and the allotted test time had long-since passed. His teacher eventually required him to hand in his test. Jim had only answered three of the five questions. He became livid because this was in violation of what his teacher had indicated. He followed her all the way to the teacher’s lounge arguing with her over the unfairness of her actions. For days afterwards, Jim could not shake off his upset.

It would be a mistake to view Jim’s trouble with authority figures and rules as oppositional behavior. The issue with Jim is rooted in his accelerated logical thinking skills and his need to show greater sensitivity when others don’t share his logical approach.

Selective Interests, Not Distractibility

Many gifted kids manifest terrific feats of engrossment and motivation on tasks that interest them. On tasks that fail to capture their interest they can become easily bored, distractible, and unmotivated. It is important to stress that I am not talking here about a flourishing of focused energy and concentration around video gaming, or television viewing. Typically, the tasks that activate them are mentally taxing and passionately pursued.

These are the kids who plough through a book in the Harry Potter series in one sitting, while leaving their algebra homework untouched. They may think to themselves that it is pointless to do algebra homework for practice and reinforcement reasons. They are already confident in their pre-established fine grasp of assigned material. Getting buy-in from them around completing and handing in homework that is assigned to strengthen knowledge they already know well is a tough sell. They may fall behind academically, largely because grade points get deducted for consistently failing to turn in homework. Not uncommonly, they hit the ball out of the ballpark on in-class tests; that is, as long as these tests do not contain obscure information that could only have been obtained from doing a homework assignment.

When a kid appears restless, fidgety, distractible, argumentative, overly aloof, or unmotivated, we need to be careful assuming this is evidence of a mental disorder. We need to ensure that any assessment that is conducted looks at the possibility of mental giftedness. To not do so is like failing to check a car’s fuel level when it has unexpectedly stopped running.

Editor’s Note

Enrico Gnaulati Ph.D. is a psychologist in private practice in Pasadena, CA. He has published a host of scholarly articles and magazine pieces on child development and children’s mental health. He authored the book, Emotion-Regulating Play Therapy with ADHD Children: Staying with Playing, and has a forthcoming title, Back to Normal: Common Sense Explanations for Kids’ ADHD, Bipolar, and Autistic-Like Behavior. Dr. Gnaulati is on the board of directors at Sequoyah School, Pasadena, CA., and can be reached through his website at www.gnaulati.net.
All too often I hear teachers complain that their students procrastinate. Asking parents to monitor their children to help in solving this problem is not a good solution. The students will never internalize the concept of time if they are constantly being monitored. Without this internalization, even our due dates have no meaning for our time management dysfunctional students.

So how do we solve this challenge? It’s much easier than you may think. First, we need to come to terms with the fact that our students have no concept of time; a month seems like an eternity to them. Before they can understand a month, they have to know what time feels like. If parents want to help their children with this concept, they could speak in terms of time more often. For instance, I will ask my granddaughter, age four, to guess how much time it takes to get her clothes on. Then we set the timer of an elapsed clock which shows time passing by revealing a red section.

Her first guess was 200 minutes. She clearly had no idea what a minute was, so that sounded like a reasonable amount of time. So we played with a minute first. I had her watch the second hand and identified a minute. Then she guessed again. This time it was 100 minutes. We set the clock and she got dressed. When she was finished, we looked at the clock. The red section revealed five minutes. Every time she gets dressed when I visit, she wants to play the clock game.

Similarly, I have to use the elapsed time clock with my third graders to get them to understand exactly how much time a task takes. Without this knowledge, they can’t predict how much time different tasks in a long-term project will take them. Once they understand a minute, we move on to planning a day at a time.

Using a daily plan sheet divided into fifteen-minute segments, the students plan the after school schedules for each day of the week. They are asked to write in their extracurricular activities. They often will not consider time eaters such as getting dressed for different athletics or travel time. They tend to forget to put in dinner time, as well. Once they are assisted in filling in those time eaters, they highlight all unavailable time for doing homework. This makes it very clear how little time they have. As a result, a sense of urgency to get the work completed is created.

Having students schedule their daily assignments requires that they understand how their brains work. They need to know the impact playing video games has on their ability to concentrate and fall into deep sleep. When they learn the affects of the video game on the chemicals in their brains that assist in memory retention and the ability to process what they are studying, they plan appropriately. I have had students announce, “Looks like I won’t have time to do any video game playing tonight. I won’t have time because I have soccer for two hours.”

Once they are successful at managing one day at a time, they can be assigned two-day, then three-day and, finally, a weeklong project. After they have managed a weeklong project, it is safe to move onto a two-week project. Thus, a month-long project will be easier once they have planned successfully for the two weeks. By then, they will have a good idea of how much time activities take them personally.

Time management requires that students have a sense of their own internal clocks, so standardized time schedules do not make sense. What works for one student may be a setup for failure for another. Ultimately, we want our students learning what they need so they don’t have to have someone else provide timelines. I begin this process with third graders in September and by the end of January they really have a grasp of their personal needs.

How do they grasp that personal sense of what they need? They have to have opportunities to try and fail and try again. For exam-
Ultimately, we want our students learning what they need so they don’t have to have someone else provide timelines.

In our third graders do a Chit Chat once a month starting in September. They are to compose a thirty second to one and a half-minute presentation on a topic. They are to practice it any way they want, and then present it for their classmates. We tape each one; they review the filming, evaluate how they did, and prescribe any changes they may want to make for the next one.

They are very self-critical. It is better if the critique comes from them and the prescription for change is theirs as well. They then prescribe behavioral changes that will help them improve their next performance. As the months go by and they become better planners, their performances improve dramatically.

Then it is time to allow them to have others in their Chit Chats. This introduces a whole set of new issues. The first ones are usually a disaster. Why? Because they are only considering their own personal practice needs. They don’t think about coordinating with their classmates, and they don’t take into consideration the need to arrange for practice time. The evaluation session following these Chit Chats touches on how we need to consider our classmates’ time lines, whether or not their presentations were good enough to make them reliable partners, and how to manage practice.

The students recognize that some of their classmates would rather play at recess than practice, so they need to find a replacement, who then doesn’t get enough practice. As they plan the next Chit Chat, some will decide to do it themselves, while others will be seen planning to avoid the challenges they had encountered in the previous Chit Chat. It is not uncommon to hear their pre-planning to sound something like this:

“How much practice do you need?”
“When can you practice?”
“Are you willing to practice during recess?”
“Will your parents let you practice on Skype?”
“Do you have Facetime on your phone so we can practice over the phone?”
(Can we get together for a sleepover, so we can practice?)
“How many Chit Chats are you in already?”

It seems like a lot of prep to get them ready for a long-term project? Really it’s just front-loading the planning that takes the time. Once students develop a storehouse of strategies for planning and timing, the project planning becomes a breeze and offers a new opportunity for more problem solving.

Now that they are ready for a long-term project, the following steps will assure success for them, take parents out of the picture, help you see if the project is appropriate for your group, and if you have allowed enough time for the students to be successful.

Step one: Have the students think about the challenges they have had with projects in the past, and what challenges they might project for the project you have assigned. As a class, make a list of them and then, in a column next to each, have the students suggest solutions. This gives every child a chance to plan solutions. You will be surprised at how well they do and what wonderful solutions they come up with – ones that you would never have thought of suggesting. The power of the class as a collective group of problem solvers is amazing. Those who don’t think in a logical, sequential manner will learn reams from this exercise, and leave with their backpacks filled with strategies they other wise would not have.

Step two: Present the assignment with as few details as possible. The more we give them, the less they read. Offer a skeleton of the assignment with a place to list questions about it. Then list the questions on the board. Answer them as they are asked. Emphasize the need to ask as many questions as possible, and the need to listen to classmates’ questions because they may ask something the rest of the class had not thought of asking. Compliment those who ask questions and point out to the class, “Aren’t you glad Gloria asked that question? She just saved you. Let’s show our appreciation.”

Step three: List all the activities this assignment will require and the time students believe they will need to complete each item. For example, if making a poster is a requirement the students would list this and place the number of days in parenthesis next to it. Every one of your students will have different amount of time next to each part of the assignment. This is a real eye opener and is the perfect argument for not providing anything but the end due date for the students.

Step four: This step creates a sense of urgency in the students. It requires that each student have his or her own monthly calendars. Begin scheduling each of the requirements, beginning with the last thing they will do. If it is a presentation, they record the due date on the calendar and back up the number of days required to practice.

The first step automatically creates different calendars. Students do the same thing for each step of the assignment. Your valuable editing time should be included. I always tell them that a smart student has the person who is going to grade them edit their paper to see if they are on the right track. We discuss the amount of time I need. I tell them that I am a busy person and go over the board. Answer them as they are asked.

Step five: The self-evaluation step is often left out of projects, whether they be a one day or a month long assignment, but it is the most important. Taking time to reflect on what worked for them and what didn’t and to prescribe a change if necessary will improve future performances. These prescriptions for change need to be described in observable behavior changes.

Space does not allow me to go into depth on each of these steps. Should you like the detailed planning book, it is available online at my website at http://homeworkdoc.com/.
Nationwide, schools are embracing digital technology for the extraordinary opportunities it provides to teach, learn, and create. Yet, experience has shown that the challenges of effectively integrating such powerful new tools into our classrooms – especially ones where students are assigned individual computers or tablets – require new skills and new codes of conduct. Kids need to learn to think critically, behave safely, and participate responsibly to thrive in the digital world.

Common Sense Media (http://www.commonsensemedia.org/educators) is an independent, national nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering families and schools to help kids thrive in a world of media and technology. We developed our free Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum to help educators teach their students how to be safe, responsible, and savvy media consumers and creators as they navigate the digital world. This curriculum aligns with national technology standards and provides comprehensive resources to teach about online safety and security, digital citizenship, and research and information literacy skills. The lessons also focus on fostering students’ creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills.

The curriculum is based on the work of the prominent researcher Howard Gardner, professor of psychology and education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and his colleagues at the GoodPlay project, who have studied teens’ ethical online decision-making (www.goodworkproject.org/research/goodplay). What they’ve found is that, online, kids think primarily about the immediate, individual effects of their actions but much less about larger, lasting impacts to themselves and the wider community.

This narrow view, plus the fact that kids tend to self-reveal before they self-reflect, may create a volatile mix within the digital realm, and the potential negative outcomes – like cyberbullying – are too common. Recent statistics from Pew Internet and American Life reveal that while relatively few teens ages twelve-seventeen report experiencing online cruelty directly (fifteen percent), eighty-eight percent have witnessed it at least once. Of the kids who witness this kind of cruelty, few talk to an adult. Additionally, although much of this online cruelty takes outside of school hours, the conflict often begins or resurfaces at school and the ramifications can affect the entire school community.

Common Sense Media’s curriculum resources, all available for free online, include lesson plans, activities, videos, and interactive components for K-12 classrooms, as well as effective professional development, parent outreach, and administrative support elements. In addition, we offer a Cyberbullying Toolkit that helps schools navigate how to effectively address this problem. http://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/cyberbullyingtools.

This is the reality that schools around the country face when integrating technology into their school communities, and many of them have turned to Common Sense for help. For example, St. Matthew’s Parish School in Pacific Palisades, CA, recently hosted a training on understanding these issues and integrating lessons about Digital Citizenship into curricula for nearly twenty Southern California independent and parochial schools and over fifty educators. Common Sense is also working with Hillbrook School in Los Gatos, CA to deeply integrate digital literacy and citizenship lessons to bolster their pioneering one-to-one iPad program.
What these schools recognize is that administrators, teachers, and parents are key to helping our kids use digital media and technology safely and responsibly. This starts with appreciating the realities of the digital landscape: it’s available 24/7; its reach is vast; it can feel anonymous; its content can be permanent.2 Kids need to learn that they’re creating digital footprints – all of the information online that exists about them, either created by them or posted by others about them – to prevent them from leaving online records that may damage their reputations, college acceptances, and in time, even job prospects.

Additionally, the core principle of guiding students to be great citizens online and offline makes it a particularly good fit for independent schools focusing on students’ social/emotional and character development. Common Sense encourages schools to incorporate expectations about digital behavior into honor code or school values statements.

Critical to turning wired students into great digital citizens is ensuring they are receiving consistent messages at home and at school, but parents need guidance on how to have these conversations, too. As community hubs, schools are uniquely positioned to gather parents to learn and share their common experiences, questions, hopes, and frustrations when it comes to their kids’ digital lives. Common Sense Media’s site for parents, as well as full Parent Media Education Program for schools, trains parents to ask questions of their kids like “How do you present yourself online and what are the ramifications of your actions?”

In addition to videos, facilitator guides, and presentations to use for in-person gatherings, Common Sense provides tip sheets to send home, post on your site, or include in a newsletter to reach your entire parent community. These resources are designed to prepare adult mentors to help teens examine questions of privacy, ownership, credibility, and community – the foundations of good digital citizenship. Together, we can help kids and teens reflect on the ethical implications of their online activities.

With a baseline understanding of how to behave and interact appropriately, the benefits of digital media and technology outweigh the risks. At that moment, the Internet can be embraced as an extended classroom - one that allows increased connections and collaborations, as well as unlimited learning through powerful new tools for research, educational games, and websites.

Funded by the MacArthur Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation and others, Common Sense resources have been adopted by nearly 30,000 schools from all fifty states and more than one hundred countries worldwide. In Los Angeles, we offer tailored parent education programs with expert speakers who can help independent schools ensure that parents and educators are on the same page. In addition, once registered, teachers anywhere can find online professional development tools, as well as information about webinars hosted by Common Sense Media.

Together, we can help all children thrive in the 21st century. Find guiding principles as well as practical resources to use to teach digital literacy and citizenship at www.commonsense.org/educators.

Editor’s note: Jim Steyer, founder and CEO of Common Sense Media, has just published a new book, called Talking Back to Facebook.

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1 http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Social-networking-climate/Part-1-Backgroud/About-this-study.aspx

2 Some of these factors are described in researcher danah boyd’s paper “Taken Out of Context: American Teen Sociability in Networked Publics.” Read the whole paper to learn more about this digital landscape at http://www.danah.org/papers/TakenOutOfContext.pdf

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Elizabeth Stavis pilots the Digital Passport interactive learning program

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...kids tend to self-reveal before they self-reflect...
Is it possible to assess quality in an arts program? How do you know if you’re providing a quality program?

What Does QUALITY Look Like?

These seem to be hard questions to answer, aren’t they? I think most people would answer something like, “I know it when I see it.” But that’s too indefinite when it comes to assessing the arts in an educational setting.

I’ve been an art teacher on and off for over three decades now. I’ve taught in three states, in public and private schools from inner-city to urban to rural. The one thing they’ve all had in common is that at least once a year I’ve had to jump through the hoops of a formal observation. And those have varied widely in expectations, the instrument used, and interpretation. During all this time I’ve only had one principal who was a former teacher in the arts – a music teacher. Does it make a difference when my some of my evaluators have freely admitted, “I don’t know anything about art…(or music…or theater…or dance)”? Yet, they’ve had to evaluate me the same as the math teacher with the same assessment tool.

Teaching any of the arts is complex. It’s a juggling act at times because several different things can be happening at the same time. My particular discipline is also materials-intensive – an elementary art teacher manages a large volume of materials daily. Perhaps only a science teacher approximates the amount of “stuff” that it takes to run a good hands-on program. I also teach students to handle a breadth of materials successfully in order to give their ideas physical form, and then train them to manage these within the confines of the art studio space.

When this is done well, my evaluator may not even be aware of my management skills – but when kids get “off-task” then it can become a major focus. And indeed it has…oh the stories we art teachers can tell! I could fill the rest of this article with ways that kids have unwittingly sabotaged my formal observations. Like the time a new third grade boy, on his first day in the art room, sat in the back of the room tossing cakes of dried watercolor into volcanic splashes of water… in a class of forty-five, I didn’t catch it since I was busy demonstrating the lesson. But wouldn’t you know, the vice principal was sitting directly behind him keeping score. That particular by-the-numbers evaluation instrument noted how many kids were on task, if the kids could articulate the lesson’s objective, etc. It focused entirely on what the kids were doing, shifting away from the teacher. But I digress.

So this is my point – I can train kids all year long to do a good job with a variety of materials and have an art room that runs reasonably smoothly, that is, until the day of the formal observation. And then what can become the focus often wasn’t the main point at all. Sometimes I’ve wondered if the evaluator actually observed the same lesson I taught! How do arts profession-
have found that this tool is applicable to all content areas, not just the arts. When they trained their principals how to evaluate their arts programs, the districts found it helped them more clearly define what all teachers should be doing to meet the goals of 21st century education.

This tool is so new chances are you haven’t heard of it yet. But here in Los Angeles, some of us have been fortunate to be part of the initial roll-out spearheaded by Arts for All, a collaborative, county-wide effort led by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and Office of Education to re-store and sustain arts education for all public school students.

Developed by the same folks who brought us the theory of multiple intelligences, the “Qualities of Quality” is the result of research conducted by Project Zero at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education. Funded by the Wallace Foundation in 2009, the team spent a year visiting arts programs and interviewing arts educators across the country. From this multitude of conversations a concept developed. And that’s an important distinction – it’s a concept, not a checklist. It’s designed to help us identify what’s going on in an arts-based lesson as we observe or teach it.

In January 2009, the lead researcher came out to work with superintendents from Los Angeles County school districts as part of Arts for All’s Leadership Fellows Program. Spurred by their discussions, and by repeated questions from the arts, education, and funding communities to explain what quality “looks” like, Arts for All staff developed a series of workshops to orient people to “Qualities of Quality,” and practice using it as a tool. During this past school year, these workshops have been conducted for district arts coordinators, funders who give grants for programs, teachers, program developers – anyone who needs to evaluate the quality of an existing program, or intends to create a new program, or apply for funding. I participated in the workshop in October, and shared an abbreviated version at the CAIS conference in March.

Here is the essence of the “Qualities of Quality.”

The Project Zero researchers discovered there are four key factors in every quality program. They came to refer to these as four “lenses” that we look through when analyzing an art experience. These are the HOW in which we look at the arts.

Student Learning

Pedagogy

Community Dynamics

Environment

All four lenses are actually taking place simultaneously in an arts experience. One is not necessarily more important than another, but may be of primary focus at any given time. However, they all serve student learning. And, as you can see, if the teacher is focused on building community dynamics in a lesson, but the evaluator is focused on pedagogy, the ensuing conversation may veer off into various tangents. It’s when we view the lesson through the same lens that we can have more meaningful evaluations and discussions.

The four lenses of quality elegantly organize all that goes on in the arts classroom. There’s nothing esoteric about it. Like putting on a pair of glasses, the observer simply uses one of the lenses to describe what he/she actually sees and hears within that framework. If the lens is switched, the evaluator will see different things occurring in the very same lesson.

Choose a specific lens, and these are the characteristics you’d be looking at within that lens.

Student Learning

Focus is on the students – what students are doing; the projects or tasks they’re involved in, the character of their engagement – in the arts we aim for total heart, body, and mind. The opportunity to make original choices is key in 21st century education, so there should be experimentation, exploration, inquiry – not reliance on copying or mimicry.

Pedagogy

Focus is on the teacher – not only versed in craft, but authentic, 100 % engagement in modeling artistic processes, in inquiry, and developing good habits, in the conception of lesson plans, incorporation of standards, and implementation of instruction, and in making learning relevant - connected to other content areas.

Community Dynamics

Focus is on relationships – among students; between students and teacher; between teacher and colleagues - parents-adults who may be involved; respect and trust among all participants.

Environment

Focus is on the physical space – creating a functional and aesthetic space, the materials, displays, and resources, time given for sufficient engagement in arts learning and student-centered - not teacher-centered.


You might be interested in contacting Arts For All for training, Talia Gibas 213-202-5933, or TGibas@arts.lacounty.gov.

Teaching any of the arts is complex. It’s a juggling act at times because several different things can be happening at the same time.
When I say the word mindfulness to a group of educators and ask what the word signifies I get several definitions. This is a paradox of language - as a word becomes popular, its original meaning can become vague. Although the movement of mindfulness into mainstream secular society is relatively recent, we already see some instances where its meaning has become blurred. That is why I’ll begin this introduction to mindfulness for teachers and their students by describing what I mean when I talk about mindful awareness.

The root of the word mindfulness (called sati in Pali, the language of the original mindfulness texts) is memory or recollection. In classical Buddhist training mindfulness is used as a tool to investigate inner and outer life experiences. Buddhist scholar Andrew Olendszki describes the classical view of mindfulness: 

"[M]indfulness derives from a root meaning memory or recollection and refers to the cultivation of a certain presence of mind that remembers to attend with persistent clarity to the objects of present experience. Like meditation in general, it involves placing attention deliberately upon an object and sustaining it over time, but unlike one-pointedness and absorption [meditation], mindfulness tends to open to a broader range of phenomena rather than restricting the focus to a singular object. Like a floodlight rather than a spotlight, mindfulness illuminates a more fluid phenomenological field of ever-changing experience rather than isolating a particular object for intensive scrutiny. This alternative mode of observation is necessary because mindfulness practice is more about investigating a process than about examining an object."

By investigating inner-and-outer life experiences with mindfulness, educators and their students refine attention while developing social skills and greater social/emotional awareness that strengthen the attachment relationships between children, teens and their teachers. It’s not uncommon for educators and youth to describe mindfulness as transformative. This inner-transformation hinges upon how well we communicate key universal concepts to newcomers. Articulating key universal concepts simply and accessibly is the first step. The second, equally important step, is to create opportunities for youth and educators to experience a visceral understanding of those key concepts, and provide a framework within which they can contextualize them.

The framework Inner Kids uses is the ABCs of Attention, Balance and Compassion through which we simply articulate over twenty-five key universal concepts. These key universal concepts are derivatives of wisdom traditions, modern science, psychology, and educational pedagogy and are common to one or more of these fields. As a mindfulness-based program we pay close attention to universal concepts drawn from Buddhist training that can be taught in a secular way. These key concepts are not only universal, but also comprehensive. They’ve already been translated into well-established secular adult programs (most notably Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction or MBSR), and the secular programs for adults have been the subject of extensive peer-reviewed, scientific research studies for decades.

The process of investigation known as mindfulness can be taught to youth through a series of games and activities that provide students (and their teachers) opportunities to understand key universal concepts. By singing songs, playing games and partici-
pating in mindfulness awareness activities, a framework will emerge naturally within which students better understand and contextualize life experiences that feel “more or less mindful” to them. We couch this framework within the language of seven strategies (or life-skills) that help students manage life’s ups and downs.

These strategies are stopping, focusing, choosing, quieting, seeing, caring and connecting, and each of them relates to one or more of the ABCs of Attention, Balance & Compassion. We introduce our strategies in a circle, with focusing in the center because it is at the heart of classical introspective training and a pre-requisite to utilizing the other six strategies effectively. Here’s how the seven strategies emerge through the investigation of inner and outer experience with mindfulness:

It becomes easier for students to stop when they have a heightened awareness of sense impressions (I’m feeling anxious, I’m feeling upset, I’m feeling out of control) that cues them to pause and reflect before speaking or acting. As students slow down, breathe and focus, their minds tend to quiet and a space opens up in their moment-to-moment experience that allows them to see what’s happening in and around them more clearly and make wiser choices. Through this process, students become more attuned to their inner and outer worlds and as a result they notice how everything and everyone is both connected and changing. As they begin to recognize these connections and patterns, other qualities like caring and connecting naturally emerge. (Olendzki 2009)

Given that educators have a heavy workload, it’s important that mindfulness doesn’t become yet another “add-on” to an already overloaded classroom routine. Mindfulness-based activities can be easily ‘dropped-in’ to what educators are already doing and are well-suited to circle time, a morning meeting and/or classroom transitions. Mindfulness-based songs, stories, and activities needn’t be dreary, sedentary and quiet. They can be fun and stimulating as they introduce the strategies and key universal concepts that support the ABCs of Attention, Balance & Compassion and give students and educators an opportunity to practice them together.

Before sharing mindfulness with your students you’ll want to learn about it yourself. If you live in Los Angeles a good place to begin is with courses at UCLA’s Mindful Awareness Resource Center taught by myself. As students slow down, breathe and focus, their minds tend to quiet and a space opens up in their moment-to-moment experience that allows them to see what’s happening in and around them more clearly and make wiser choices. Through this process, students become more attuned to their inner and outer worlds and as a result, they notice how everything and everyone is both connected and changing. As they begin to recognize these connections and patterns, other qualities like caring and connecting naturally emerge. (Olendzki 2009)

It’s not uncommon for educators and youth to describe mindfulness as transformative. 1

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1 Olendzki, Andrew, Clinical Handbook of Mindfulness, Sprenger, 2009
2 Ibid

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1. Make sure you know what you want from your practice.
For starters, examine within yourself why you’re practicing mindful awareness. Many novices hope it will help them manage the ups and downs of everyday life and do so with kindness and compassion for themselves and others.

2. Don’t take it, or yourself, too seriously.
I would urge you to maintain your sense of humor through the process, because you will need it. Many of the machinations of our minds turn out to be hilarious. This leads me to #3.

3. There’s no such thing as success or failure.
Developing healthy life-skills is the goal, not getting an “A” in mindful awareness.

4. Keep it simple.
If you can commit to sitting thirty to forty-five minutes a day and stick with it, that’s fantastic. But for many, this can be an unrealistic goal, especially when first starting out. Commit to a few minutes at a time, twice a day, for a specific number of days that you predetermine. Maybe you’re comfortable committing to seven minutes in the morning and seven minutes in the evening for seven consecutive days. Maybe four minutes a day, twice a day, for 40 consecutive days. It doesn’t matter which regimen you choose; what matters is that you choose one that you can fit in your daily life and stick with it.

5. Find a buddy.
If possible, enlist someone to join you in this experiment. You don’t need to practice in the same room at the same time, but it’s helpful to check in with someone else when you start out.

6. Have some fun with it.
Before you sit down to meditate, spend a few minutes doing something physical. It’s tough to go directly from time spent planning, organizing or analyzing. Make the transition easy by first easing yourself into a more relaxed and playful frame of mind.

7. When in doubt, count breaths.
Here’s a simple breath exercise to focus and quiet a noisy, intellectually busy mind. Hold the number one in your mind when you inhale and relax on the exhale. Repeat this sequence with the next two breaths, holding the number two in your mind on the second inhale and the number three in your mind on the third. Repeat the sequence, starting with one, and keep counting three breaths until your attention stabilizes and you can rest in the sensation of breathing without counting.

8. Bring it from the cushion into your life.
If your aim is to employ mindful awareness to help you better manage life’s ups and downs, take some time during the workday to get in touch with your sensory experience. Once a day, make a point to do something where you’re aware of all of your senses while you do it – whether it’s opening a door, putting on your socks, or drinking a warm cup of coffee. Take the time to feel (not to think about, but feel) the touch of the doorknob against the palm of your hand, or the soles of your feet against the floor with each step, or the smell of your morning coffee. My guess is you’ll be surprised by the power of this simple practice.
In the spring of 2011, I was chosen to serve as the upper school English representative for the CAIS’s Northern Professional Services Committee and, as part of my position, was tasked with bringing together educators K-12 for a professional day to discuss a current, fresh, and relevant topic in the discipline. I knew immediately what I wanted to center our gathering around: Shakespeare.

Now, the study of Shakespeare may not scream “current” and “fresh,” but, then again, you’ve probably never seen a Taiwanese hard-rock, gender-bending *Romeo and Juliet* or a Middle Eastern *Hamlet* set in the context of a political summit. I had not either until I met Professor Alex Huang, winner of the 2011 MLA Prize for Comparative Studies, is a co-creator of the Global Shakespeares project (http://globalshakespeares.org/).

I had the pleasure of meeting Professor Huang during a summer course at Middlebury College’s Bread Loaf School of English in Santa Fe. Huang is simultaneously a master of modern media and a renowned Shakespearean scholar. In years past, Huang has travelled globally to study and speak about productions of Shakespeare across many different cultures. Thus, when guided by Huang’s energizing mix of global perspective and digital media, the Bard is anything but boring.

A summer professional development experience becomes a valuable professional day

Global Shakespeares, a project driven by Professor Huang, is an open access video and performance archive of contemporary global productions of Shakespeare plays. The project and its website are one of a kind in the world of Shakespearean scholarship, as adaptations from around the globe are catalogued and shared instantly. Through the project’s site, you can watch an inspiring array of Shakespeare productions from a Noh *Macbeth*, to a Brazilian *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, to an Italian *Othello* with puppets.

The vast potential of the Global Shakespeares project lies in its ability to allow teachers and students to openly and easily share remarkably diverse versions of Shakespeare’s work so that conversations about various cultural, political, and artistic influences in this global age are brought to the forefront through the medium of the Bard.

During the professional day, a three and a half hour session hosted at the Menlo School in Atherton, CA, Huang guided twenty-three visiting teachers (grades six - twelve) through the use of exciting and interactive digital media tools. He explained the value of digital literacy and collaboration, and even created a website full of resources specifically applicable to secondary teachers. He also guided several break out sessions to allow the teachers the opportunity to apply the digital media tools to their exploration of the Global Shakespeares project. As a result, teachers were able to construct thoughtful ideas about ways in which to infuse their classrooms with digital media and global productions of Shakespeare.
Yes, Diego wants to eat chocolate, and he’s hungry too! Or so we learned on Wednesday, February 15th, when Saint Mark’s School of San Rafael, California, coordinated and hosted a special workshop organized by CAIS Northern Professional Services Committee member, Kelly Giddings. The workshop, “CAIS Languages Professional Day: TPRS & Technology,” attracted over sixty language teachers from schools around the Bay Area and Northern California, including both independent and public schools. Planning and executing the workshop, not to mention presenting, was a highlight of the year for Kelly who spent months hand-selecting everything from the best topics, web tools and presenters to the tastiest mid-morning snacks!

Nationally recognized TPRS presenters, Huiching “Annick” Chen and Diana Noonan, demonstrated TPRS techniques, gave an extended sample lesson in Mandarin, and shared their insights and expertise using this methodology in Grades K-12. Additionally, Saint Mark’s World Languages Co-chair, Kelly Giddings, shared some of the latest technology and web-based tools that Saint Mark’s students have been using in their French, Mandarin and Spanish classes, including Voki (www.voki.com), Vocaroo (http://vocaroo.com), and Voicethread (http://voicethread.com).

TPRS or Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling is a method created by Blaine Ray for helping students acquire proficiency in a foreign language in a classroom setting. It focuses on using comprehensible input with the circling technique, a method of questioning, in order to tell outrageous, funny, or simply interesting stories using student input of details and teacher control of grammar, vocabulary and final content. This is an art!

TPRS has changed the teaching experience of thousands of world language teachers and has ignited the acquisition process for tens of thousands of students. It engages listeners and challenges storytellers, and students can play both roles, at least in part. It invites collaboration and fosters cooperation among students and between the class and teacher. Shy students are encouraged by choral responses, while exuberant learners can participate almost to their heart’s content. There exists a relaxed atmosphere with participants “affectively” open, facilitating the absorption and mastery of a new language. Studies have shown that students actually “experience” a story when it is inputted using the TPRS method, therefore acquiring more language, more naturally, and retaining it longer and better.

Our day began with a presentation by Diana Noonan, a three-decade veteran of French teaching, World Languages Coordinator for Denver Public Schools, and expert TPRSer of many years. Diana introduced us to three key players, Krashen, Terrell and Asher, whose theories and hypotheses about language acquisition not only paved the way for the teaching of world languages in schools, but also laid the foundation for teaching for proficiency.

Finally, it was Blaine Ray whose comedic genius and tireless faith harnessed them to the great vehicle of storytelling. The com-
A combination of Blaine’s tall tales told at a comprehensible pace with equally understandable structures and vocabulary saw student interest and acquisition skyrocket. Blaine’s method drew the line between language learning and language acquisition clearly and beautifully, probably the most important distinction a teacher of languages will ever learn. A handout of Diana’s articulating this very succinctly may be found on the CAIS (see the link below).

Participants at the workshop experienced this process for themselves, some for the very first time, when seasoned TPRS presenter Annick Chen began her sample lesson in Mandarin for the predominantly non-Mandarin-speaking crowd. She had them eating out of her hand with her audience-created characters, participant-guided actions, and even her “grammar pop-ups” that demystified this foreign language for most in the room. Her main character’s taste for chocolate also helped sustain the interest of the crowd, noshing on their afternoon snack. Her input assured members that she would stay “in bounds” by using structures and vocabulary she had articulated and defined for the group.

Our day ended on the Internet in an effort to tie technology in with TPRS. Saint Mark’s Spanish teacher and experienced TPRSer, Kelly Giddings, shared a wealth of free, web-based applications that offer excellent opportunities for students. Using a website like Voki, teachers can record their own stories, prompts or assignment instructions for students to access from home and listen to repeatedly. Learners can also record themselves or just type in their own written work to hear a program like Voki say it back to them in the authentic accent of their choosing. Both of these sites, as well as the interactive and equally accessible Voicethread, offer creative, enjoyable ways for students to improve their listening comprehension and speaking skills, especially in the area of pronunciation.

Both experienced TPRS participants and those completely new to the method agreed that they left with fresh ideas for teaching language. One participant commented, “This ranks as one of the most useful conferences, TPRS or otherwise, that I have ever attended. I have been doing TPRS for a while but will walk away today with many fresh ideas.”

Others remarked that they would like to return for another day to hear more from Kelly Giddings about the web-based tools available to all of us for use in our classrooms. Still another participant simply expressed her gratitude by saying, “Thanks for doing this every year,” referring to the previous four TPRS workshops that Saint Mark’s has hosted. All agreed that with the help and support of the Saint Mark’s staff, faculty and in particular our World Languages Department, this CAIS Professional Day was a huge success.

Editor’s note:
Handouts from the workshop can be found on the CAIS website at: www.caisca.org/page/22435_Conference_Presentations.asp?pass=2&event=251. If the link doesn’t work: Click on Resources tab on the home page (www.caisca.org); find Conference Presentations; scroll down to Languages Professional Day.

One participant commented, “This ranks as one of the most useful conferences, TPRS or otherwise, that I have ever attended.”
Standing in front of the class, the sandy-haired boy shuffles his feet, avoiding eye contact with the middle school students seated before him. He looks up, shyly meets his classmates’ gaze, and takes a deep breath. Exhaling, he begins telling a story in Spanish. The words come haltingly at first, then, as his confidence improves, he relaxes and expands his vocabulary, exploring different sentence structures and verb conjugations.

“Hay un chico que se llama Pablo,” says the boy. “Pablo quiere ocho gatos. Pablo va a Australia para hablar con el presidente de los gatos. Pablo recibe los gatos.”

“¿Pablo quiere gatos?,” asks elementary and middle school Spanish teacher Jen Block to the listening students. “¿Pablo está feliz o está triste? ¿Cuántos gatos recibe Pablo?”

The other students respond with a “sí” or “no,” or, depending on what is asked, with longer answers to open-ended questions.

While at first impression this may seem more like informal conversation rather than a structured, academic lesson, these students are engaged in a creative, innovative approach to second-language acquisition. Known as Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS), this method integrates physical actions and cues with vocabulary practice, and speaking and listening skills.

TPRS is a kinesthetic activity, so for students who learn best by “doing,” the combination of physical activity and speaking out loud make it a particularly effective way to increase their comprehension and skills when learning a new language involves creating gestures that students perform to represent Spanish words. Class member, Lekha Duvvoori, says combining the actions with spoken stories helps her comprehension. “I like watching for the hand gestures,” she says. “They are helpful and make the questions easier to understand.”

In this class, for example, students will make a smiley face and point to their cheeks to demonstrate “está feliz,” or point to the ground and tap their feet to show “right now” or “ahora.” Block facilitates the TPRS lesson by developing a skeletal story outline from questions she asks to elicit students’ input. Using this information, the class creates an imaginative story together incorporating the vocabulary words they are studying. “It is fun to hear different people tell the story in their own words, their own versions,” shares student Indigo Kelly.

Later, students read a story similar to what they created, and then Block asks questions to gauge their understanding. To further reinforce comprehension, the lesson generally concludes with students either taking turns retelling the story they’ve read, or a personal question and answer component, allowing each student to review questions from the story in a way that relates to their own personal experiences. “Getting up in front of the class and retelling a story isn’t too scary,” comments sixth grader Carl Ward. “I think it goes pretty well.”

Block explains that with TPRS, the stories are new to students even if some of the vocabulary is a review. By utilizing this teaching method in her classroom, she says, students new to Spanish don’t feel like they’re missing out on something that was previously covered, while students who have been in Spanish for a while do more than practice vocabulary in rote fashion. For her third and fourth grade classes, Block says she incorporates some elements of the TPRS method into the lessons, and in fifth grade is able to start working with TPRS-type stories.

“Students feel good about being able to understand what I’m saying since it’s supported with gestures and there is a lot of repetition,” she notes. “They are also much more willing and comfortable in terms of speaking in front of the class when they retell stories. The ability to adapt the type of question that I ask students is very helpful since I have various levels of students in my class. I can reinforce vocabulary for one student and then ask an open-ended question to encourage more conversation with another student, and everyone gets to participate at their own level.”
The Professional Services Committees help CAIS plan the Regional Meeting and the Professional Days. This year the Southern Committee (SPSC) planned the Southern Regional Meeting and the Northern Committee (NPSC) planned the Professional Days. CAIS thanks the committees for their invaluable service.

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