



From The Executive Director

Dear Colleagues,

New Year's Greetings from the Tri-Association! I hope that second semester is off to a good start, and best wishes for a successful recruiting season ahead.

The Annual Educators' Conference in Mexico City was extremely successful. Those of you who were present at the Business Meeting in Atlanta this past December received the financial report, which included the solid revenue that was generated through your enthusiastic participation and that of exhibitors. Thank you for your positive response and support!

Feedback from participants indicated an interest in the conservation of resources through the reduction in the size of the hard copy of the program and conference bag contents. I will keep these requests in mind for future events.

I am in the planning stage for this year's conference which will take place in San Jose, Costa Rica on October 6-10, 2014. I look forward to receiving presentation proposals from staff members in your schools in support of this year's conference theme: "Roots & Wings". The template for presentation proposals can be downloaded from the Association page through the following link:

<https://www.tri-association.org/page.cfm?p=634>

I hope that many of you are considering sending student teams to the [Global Issues Network Conference \(GIN\)](#), to be held at the Carol Morgan School, in the Dominican Republic. The dates for this event are March 13-16, 2014. Check out the terrific website that the Carol Morgan GIN Team has developed at <http://gin.cms.edu.do>. You can register on this site or on the Association site at www.tri-association.org

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The American School Foundation of Monterrey will host the continuation of the Literacy Institutes on March 8-14, 2014. Sixty-eight teachers and literacy coaches in training will convene for a week of live demonstrations and training at the Association's demonstration school. This cohort is in its second year, and has been an extremely successful initiative. So far, more than one hundred teachers and administrators have received training in best practice literacy methodologies. I want to take this opportunity to thank the American School Foundation of Monterrey for hosting us again!

In this edition I am sharing two articles from the Marshall Memo that I think you will find interesting: The first article talks about feedback, a.k.a. "constructive criticism". We know this is an important tool for change, yet few master the art of giving and receiving feedback well. The second article talks about the management culture at Google and how it supports the move from "Good to Great". I found this article of special relevance because at the last Executive Directors' meeting we met with two representatives from Google, one of whom we had met last year when he worked for Apple! This person made poignant comments about the difference in the organizational cultures between the two companies, many of which are illustrated in the article. Under the resources section you will find the educational sites that contain Google's Educational Vision.

Other articles include Bill and Ochan Powell's comments on inclusive education in the international setting, and an interview with Pat Bassett, who keynoted at our Fall Conference. We are also featuring community work and experiential learning taking place at the American School of Puebla and the American School Foundation of Monterrey. My deep appreciation to these two schools for their contributions to this edition of the Newsletter.

I look forward to seeing some of you at AAIE/Boston.

Steve Desroches is the new head at Colegio Jorge Washington in Cartagena Colombia, and he was not included in the list of director changes in the Fall Edition. All the best to Steve, and to all of you facing new challenges and opportunities this year!

I encourage you to send me articles for the final edition for this academic year no later than March 1, 2014.

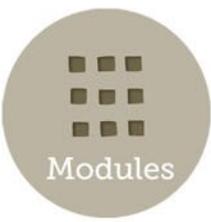
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Sonia Keller, Ed. D.
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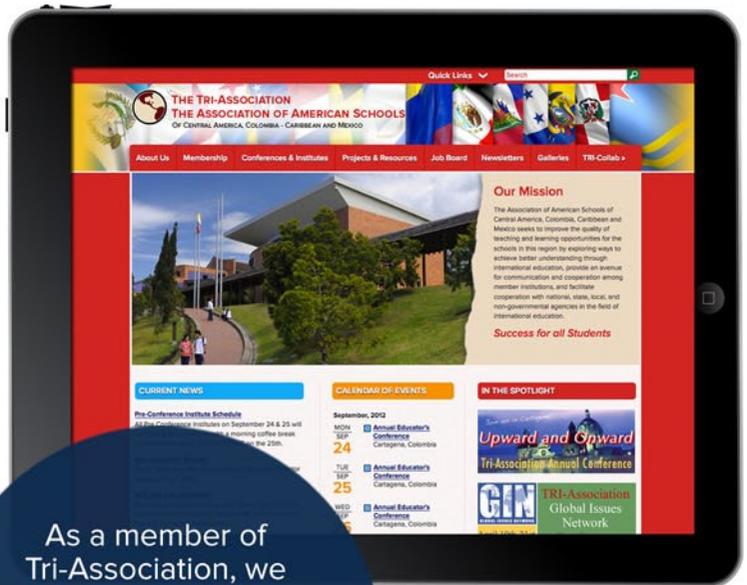
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International Schools on the Edge of Possibility

By William Powell & Ochan Kusuma-Powell

The moral lens of history is clear. Unfortunately, our window into the present is often murky.

For example, it is relatively easy to perceive the moral repugnancy of the racial segregation that existed in the South of the United States during the first half of the Twentieth Century. And yet a hundred years ago there were many intelligent and otherwise compassionate people that accepted racial apartheid as the normal state of affairs. How could they have missed the inequity?

And so we ask ourselves, what inequities are we currently missing? What moral blindspots will future generations identify and hold us accountable for? Stated more positively, what opportunities do we have to make the world a more humane and decent place?

We believe that international schools are poised on the edge of possibility. We have an opportunity to redefine our values about the inclusion of children with special learning needs.

Over the past decade international schools have become more tolerant of children who learn differently. Some international schools still maintain exclusive admissions' policies, but increasingly we are seeing schools admitting children with mild to moderate learning disabilities. This is unquestionably a good thing. However, an attitude of tolerance is not enough. As educators and educational leaders we need to move beyond the myths and mindsets that limit our will to serve.

An historical note...

International education, as we know it today, did not exist before World War II. In the early part of the Twentieth Century, there were overseas national schools, mostly British and American. However, the aftermath of the WW II saw an increasingly mobile business and diplomatic community and with it the growth of international schools. These were schools designed with a philosophy born out of the carnage and intolerance of the world war. These were schools in which racial, cultural and ethnic diversity was welcomed and appreciated. We believe it is time for these same schools to exhibit similar tolerance and appreciation for learning diversity. We see this as a logical, but long overdue, redefinition of international education.

How many of our schools would be comfortable with an admissions policy that excluded specific ethnic or religious groups? We suspect very few. However, a significant number of our international schools have admissions policies that either explicitly or implicitly state: "No dyslexics. No autistics. No Down Syndrome Children." Such exclusion runs counter to the values of international education.

Our experience...

We know from personal experience in several international schools that the education of handicapped and learning disabled children can serve to enrich the learning experiences of *all* members of the school community. As counter-intuitive as it may seem, it is our contention that the integration of special needs students serves to raise the organizational intelligence of the school: in terms of student and teacher achievement, emotional intelligence, and moral intelligence. It is a false dichotomy to think that college preparatory schools cannot serve learning challenged students. What is required is will and skill.

Will and Skill...

In order to realize the promise of international education we need school leaders and teachers with the will to serve children who learn differently. We need efficacious and energetic educators who consciously make the decision to teach *all* children – educators who believe firmly that children do not need to earn the right to belong. Educators who are willing to explode the comforting myths of impotency (“There are more appropriate settings for these children.” “Where will the money come from?” “We can’t be all things to all people.”)

But passion is not enough. We also need educators with skill – teachers and administrators who understand how differentiated instruction can provide multiple access points to the curriculum for children who learn differently. We need teachers who are skilful observers of student learning and who can identify and cater for different intelligences and learning styles. We need educators who understand the curriculum at a conceptual level and have a broad repertoire of instructional strategies. This is the mission of a non-profit consortium of international schools:

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Q&A: Patrick Bassett

By Sloane Alexandria Starke
ASF Communications Coordinator

The keynote speaker at the 2013 Tri-Association Conference talks about how international schools, teachers, parents and students will adapt to the revolution in education now in progress.

Patrick Bassett, retired president of the U.S.-based National Association of Independent Schools, was the keynote speaker for the first day of the Tri-Association Conference, setting the tone with his thought-provoking vision of the future of schools. He also sat down with the editor of The American School Foundation's magazine, Focus, to share more insights on the information age, project-based learning and the future of education.



Focus: What are the challenges for international schools in this new era?

PB: There are a number of challenges for international schools. They tend to be more narrowly curriculum driven. They tend to accept the IB curriculum as sacrosanct, or the AP curriculum as sacrosanct, and that all the work should lead to doing well on that test. That's a hangover from hundreds of years of thinking that that's what's really important. If your kids are deeply educated they're going to do well on those tests, but the problem is parents are fearful that the kids won't score well if they're doing something that's actually engaging. My experience is that parents think kids are supposed to be miserable, just like they were miserable when they were in school.

Focus: How do you change parents' ideas about what education should be?

PB: Wouldn't you want your kid in a school where the kids are on fire with learning? But they feel stuck. The reason international schools have the biggest advantage is they are large schools, so they can conduct lots of experiments to give kids and parents choices. Here's the classic choice I would give you: You can take Algebra I the way we've always taught Algebra I, textbook driven. Or you can take project-based algebra, real-world math. How many kids and parents want to be in the project-based Algebra I, and how many want to be in the slug-it-out, we're-all-going-to-be-on-the-same-page textbook class? It wouldn't matter if 90% want to be in the traditional class, and sit on the sidelines and see how the other class goes. When the other class catches fire, there will be pressure from the kids: "Why can't we do that?"

Focus: OK, to make this real. You poke your head into the ideal revolutionized classroom. What do you see going on?

PB: I'll tell you what I don't see going on. Kids are not sitting in chairs in a row, dutifully taking notes from the teacher. That's where really smart kids drop out, either physically or intellectually, from school. Kids are really adaptable. It's the adults who have always created cultures that are punitive for kids, that are suppressive of their natural instincts to discover and learn.

Focus: What would you say to a teacher who's struggling with having to get kids ready for a test in a year, and on the other hands wants to revolutionize?

PB: They can challenge their own assumption that these two outcomes are mutually incompatible. That's the main thing, the assumption that you can't do stuff the way you've done it traditionally and sequentially and fuse that in a context that's project-based and real-world-attached. You can do both. You don't have to do five days of really imaginative, real-world problem solving. How about one day out of the week? And then when you find out it works better and it's more fun for you and the kids, you go to two days.

Focus: What do parents need to know for their child to have the best K-12 preparation?

PB: They have to be good consumers of education. If you have options where you live, in terms of public, parochial and independent schools, you should visit all of them. Find a way to get permission to attend class. You will immediately know what kind of school you're in, by the culture. Now, at [independent] schools, success has always been attached to achievement. But achievement should be part of a bigger ambition. What kind of person do you turn out to be? What kind of contributor? What kind of leader? Do you actually have the skills that count? As a parent and consumer, these things are really important. What are the kids like? Do you want your kid surrounded by caring, smart kids? Some of the schools in the world that have the best test scores and best placements are the meanest places. You would never want your children in that school. If you were a good consumer you'd go there and you'd see that.

Focus: How does the Tri-Association strike you as a group?

PB: I love the group! It's a wonderful life, especially for the teachers who change every three years. They have this wanderlust. It's the opposite of most teachers. Most teachers want to be anchored. They don't want to change their textbook. They don't want to change their test. For whatever reason, the international group has a compulsion to move from a place like this to the most remote, impoverished country in the world, just because it's an adventure.

Focus: How do the students benefit from that?

PB: They benefit mostly because these teachers really are global citizens. They understand about cosmopolitanism. You go to South Africa, then you go to Indonesia, then you go to China, then you come here. Those are four incredibly different cultures! We like to think we have so much in common in our humanity. The core values of character, that's all the same. But how we transmit messages to kids is very different. So these teachers are like the foot soldiers, the front wave.

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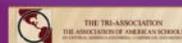
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A grain of hope for the La Máquina and Los Planes Communities in Puebla's Sierra Norte region

By Linette Ramirez / Social Interaction Coordinator

This past September, 2013, the cyclones named Manuel and Ingrid struck Mexican territory. The states of Michoacán, Guerrero and Puebla were seriously affected by the rains.

The American School Foundation of Puebla and extended community took on the task of identifying damaged populations in the state of Puebla and, with the help of Civil Protection Services and local friends (Rogelio and Raymundo Prior) were able to find two communities affected by the flooding of the Pantepec River in the Sierra Norte: La Máquina and Los Planes. Both areas are part of the municipality Francisco Z. Mena. This municipality is situated in northern extreme of Puebla, meeting the state of Veracruz to the North, East and West, and Pantepec and Venustiano Carranza on its southern side. Both populations are Totonaca, with 382 and 460 residents respectively. Their principle means of income is the cultivation and harvest of corn and oranges. They live from the land and live to work the land; the people are marginalized and survive in extreme poverty.

Once we had identified communities to help, we began to collect provisions on our campuses and the Colegio Montessori Tepeyac joined forces with us. On October 7th, we assembled 810 provisions bundles equal to eight tons of food, and an additional one ton of clothing, shoes, diapers and personal care articles. On the 8th and 9th of October, eight school staff members, one parent and one Red Cross representative caravanned out to the communities with the provision in tow.

The first leg of our journey was a seemingly endless, sinuous road through mountains and crags that lasted for seven and a half hours before we reached our destination, La Máquina.

When we arrived at Z. Mena we began our descent towards the Pantepec River where a few boats were waiting to help transport provisions to the other side. The paths were muddy and marked with puddles. We formed a human chain and, with the help of local residents, unpacked the first of the provisions. It was exhausting work while the sun beat down on us and our feet slid through the muddy turf. Nevertheless, our effort was worthwhile, as we saw joy and gratitude spread across the faces of adults and children alike.

On the other side of the river trucks were waiting to carry us and our supplies to the settlement, where we set up stations to distribute the provisions and supplies. The municipal inspector gave us a list of affected families, which made handing out goods easier and more efficient. At around seven at night, amidst the twilight and fireflies, we drove back to Z. Mena to eat dinner and rest, happy to have completed our task for the day.

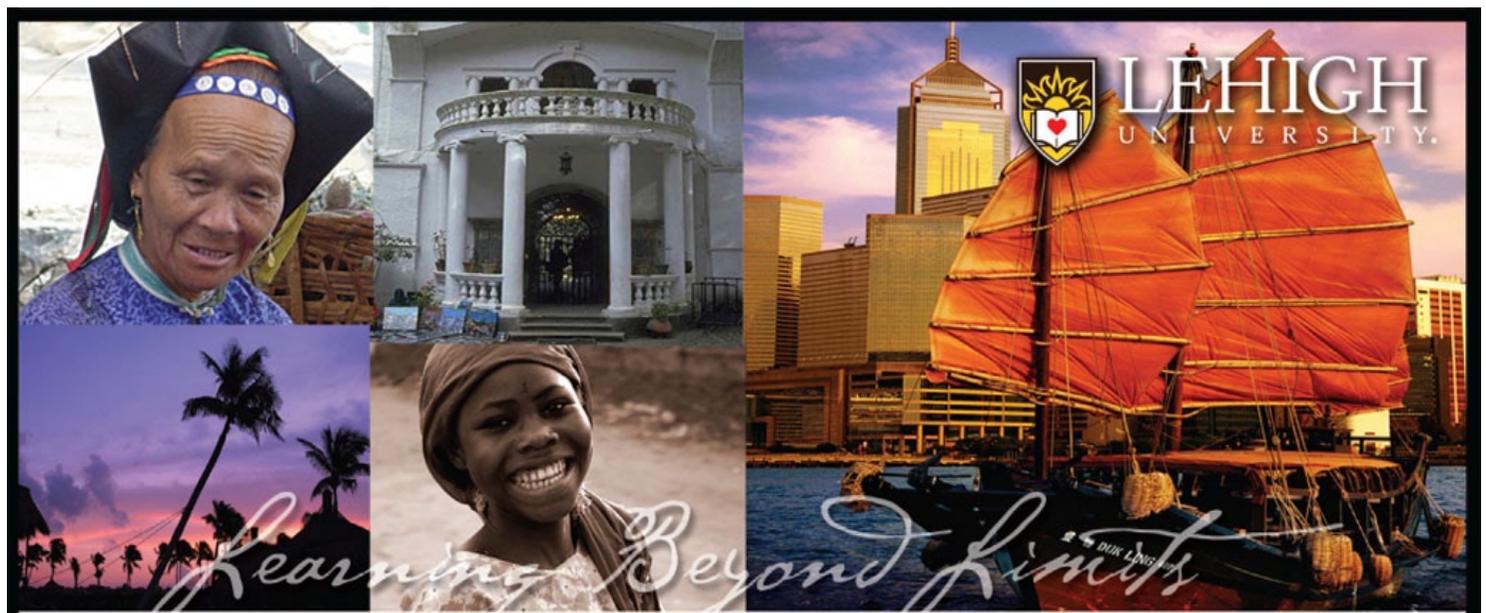


The following morning found us ready to begin our second day of work. The distance to the Los Planes community was considerable, and again the roads were extremely wet, making it difficult for our vans to get past. We were able to garner the help of a few trucks willing to take provisions into the town. Again we had a list of families from the municipal inspector, and when we arrived to Los Planes we were able to hand out the provisions in a practical manner.

Upon encountering the sad reality of these two populations we realized there is still much more work to be done; we live in a country full of inequality, but we are capable of making a difference.

It was gratifying to watch how our students from Preschool, Elementary School, Junior High and High School, their parents and our staff members generously brought supplies to their assigned areas and then later helped to put together the provisions bundles and organize supplies. Since our policy is always to take supplies and provisions personally to the neediest communities, many businesses and alumni joined our task force and helped to carry out this humanitarian deed.

Our work is a reflection of the good will and solidarity so present in the American School Foundation of Puebla community.



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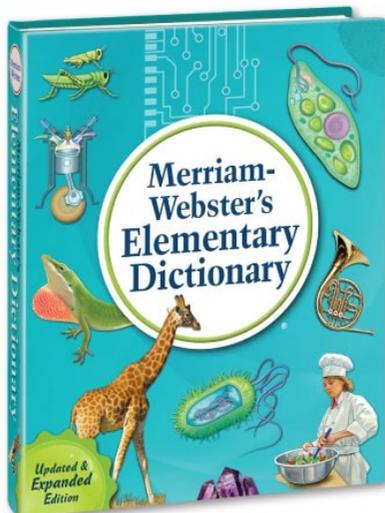
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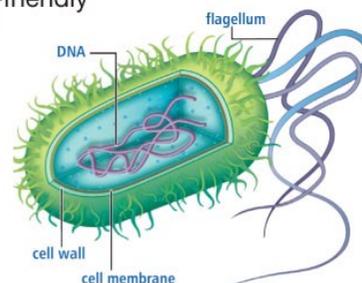


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ASFM News Release

Middle School Alternative Exams

16 December 2013

Kelly Bryan

ASFM 6th-7th Students Share Experiences Instead of Finals

Finals week may still offer the quiet of still classrooms interrupted only by the scurry of pencils scratching on answer sheets for some students. However, sixth and seventh grade students at the American School Foundation of Monterrey (ASFM) are active when they squat closer to examine an artifact and talkative when they share ideas for a new nature park. Both groups are completing alternative exams, which allow students to use the information from their classes in a real-world situation. While the sixth grade students are using their knowledge to sift through an archeological site prepared for their study, the seventh graders are developing environmentally friendly plans for the nearby Huasteca Canyon.

ASFM students no longer worry about getting individual test questions correct. They are too busy sharing their creativity in legends they have written and ecotourism possibilities they have explored. The real test during finals week is on the teachers. Each year into the alternative exams brings new possibilities. Can they build a better experience for their students the following year?

Mary Brey, a seventh grade social studies teacher, is confident that the work will continue because it benefits the students. Brey had hopes and dreams for the alternative exam years ago: "I wanted there to be true collaboration for the students in a meaningful way. I wanted to see my students tackle something that was relevant to their lives and integrated all of their subjects—that is what 21st century skills is about after all."

When Brey came to ASFM seven years ago, she was shocked at the rigid schedule of traditional exams put before her sixth grade students. "It just is not best practice in the middle school for our students to sit for exams," she stressed. Teachers like Brey eked out time from their busy schedule to try something new. Her dreams did not come true during that first year of planning. "It just fizzled out; we didn't get anywhere." However, Brey was determined and her principal backed the effort. "We started a task force and included the instructional coach. We did research on what was already out there that might be adapted to serve our students. We got the sixth grade team to take on a project as a pilot and we haven't stopped since."

The cross-curricular sixth grade project which centers around a simulated archeological dig of the ancient city-state turns sixth graders into curious scientists. With plastic bags covering their shoes, students are armed with a toothbrush, zip lock collection bags, work gloves and sketch paper. After two days of digging are completed, the recovered relics, tools and handcrafts are moved into the school and placed in identified squares to reflect a grid of life during the ancient period. Students visit the collection of items to reflect on earlier life and how the artifacts paint a complete picture of a society. The final project is a written essay that brings together their social studies and English lessons.

Jennifer Sikes, the middle school principal, said, "The idea of assessment as learning is maximized through our cross-curricular assessments. In more traditional exams—assessments of learning—the learning comes to an abrupt halt during exam review week and then students simply "brain dump" during their 90-minute exams. Instead, in grades six and seven we see students

continue to learn and apply their knowledge and skills throughout the assessment weeks. The level of learning is exponentially higher and longer lasting.”

Students echo her enthusiasm for the project. Thirteen-year-old Raquel Odriozola said, “When we found our first artifact, a bone that might be a rib, we were so excited. Everyone in the group took turns to look for an artifact. It took about an hour to find it.”

Daniel Rubies, 12, thought the cross-curricular examination was “fun because it was a new adventure.” Switching between using his hands and a shovel, Daniel and his group pulled “lots of pottery, jewelry and corn” from their dig and then cleaned the artifacts with toothbrushes.”



The hours of planning and preparation that the sixth grade teachers put into the “test” were worth it, said Gabriella Campoy, one of the sixth grade team leaders. “I have always loved watching some of my students have the ‘aha’ moment when they start applying all the concepts they have learned during the semester in one real-life project.”

ASFM sixth graders will have another cross-curricular exam experience to look forward to in the spring semester. Though the teachers have to work to continue to refine each exam’s offerings, they devote the hours because

they understand the value. This spring, sixth grade ASFM students will be able to create a fictional island nation complete with all its vital components. Again students will use acquired skills and knowledge from all their courses. “The spring exam is really my favorite. I can attest to how our students grow with these experiences,” said Campoy.

The successful experience of the sixth grade team gave seventh grade teachers a push to go beyond a cross-curricular venture to build an extraordinary interdisciplinary experience for their students this year. Amanda Torti, the seventh grade team leader, explained, “Our students have had the sixth grade alternative exam experience, so we wanted to honor that and still push them to do more collaborative work.”

Seventh grade teachers pulled together to offer an alternative exam uniting all of their courses, the environmental goals of the school itself, and the nearby treasure of the Huasteca Canyon for the Fall, 2013 alternative exam. Brey, who had pushed for the alternative exams from the beginning, was on-board again since she had recently moved to the seventh grade level. Brey was able to bolster her fellow teachers during the time-consuming and detailed planning sessions. “I shared that we needed to ‘make this happen’ because I had seen the value of it when we offered the cross-curricular exam to sixth graders. All the students were engaged,” said Brey. “The thing that surprised me about the new type of exam was the fact that the kids continue to learn even as they are showing what they have already learned,” she added.

The seventh grade interdisciplinary exam began with team building at Monterrey’s Fundidora, a reclaimed foundry that is now described as an “urban sustainable park” and a visit to a history museum to learn about the Huicholes, the early people of Monterrey. Students took advantage of the “fun” day away from school, but teachers understood the building blocks were being put into place. The goal of the seventh grade “exam” experience was for the students to work together in small groups in order to plan a development for the Huasteca Canyon.

Sikes shared the value of the initial day in the work to come: "During grade seven final presentations a teacher asked a group, 'What is your biggest take away from this experience?' One boy said, 'The biggest challenge for us was to really work together. We didn't know each other very well before this, but we had to work as a team.'"

The teamwork started in the Huasteca Canyon when students set up tents for an overnight stay and joined together in learning opportunities. Seventh grade science teachers welcomed visiting speakers and set up experiments in the canyon during two days so that the students could contribute their own scientific knowledge about the special environment. Rachel Davis, one of the science teachers, explained, "Everything we did tied into our curriculum. When we were in the canyon, our students had the opportunity to hear from a geologist. I laughed because we were out in the field and surrounded by the things that we had been studying all year. The geologist was able to summarize our whole unit within a few minutes and the kids understood it." The group also managed their own experiments such as measuring the velocity of the water in the river of the Huasteca. Then the students were able to pair that knowledge with the susceptible limestone rocks that weather away from both water and acid. Standing in the canyon, students reflected, "Could development also threaten the environment of the Huasteca?"

Cory Austen, the other seventh grade science teacher, said, "The Huasteca is a very special place for many reasons. The canyon is considered the "bellybutton of the universe" for the Huicholes who continue to make annual pilgrimages to the spot. And the canyon is the site of a natural water reservoir that holds at least fifty percent of Monterrey's water underground. Hurricanes replenish the reservoir, but development can destroy that natural filtration system." It is important to Austen, who lives in the canyon area and enjoys the ecotourism activities such as rock-climbing in the Huasteca, for his students to make the connections. "It is possible that our students at ASFM will be the guys who are going to be involved



in development projects in Monterrey. Many chose to conserve the canyon's natural beauty in their project. I think that all of our experiences in the canyon and our work in the classroom has offered a powerful message of working toward sustainability."

Active student learning convinced all the seventh grade teachers that the alternative exam was worth every minute of the upfront work. Annalice Hill, a seventh grade English teacher, said, "The memory maker for me was seeing the students working together on the science labs that were created. The kids were really into it and everyone had a specific job that had to be done. It requires certain life skills to be able to work with different people." Parul Khare, the seventh grade math teacher, explained that the two weeks of independent work stretched the students, "They made a blueprint of their development and took on the perspective of a stakeholder in order to present it to prospective buyers, shareholders and customers. Students made websites, videos, and models for their proposals."

The opportunity to formulate ideas with others was real work, according to 13-year-old Patricia Madero. "Spending

time with people that I didn't think of as friends was the highlight of the experience. My group is developing an eco-park with different activities such as a zip line," she said. Like many of her classmates, Patricia is a native of Monterrey who had never visited the Huasteca Canyon before her alternative exam. "I was surprised after our visit. Why haven't I visited the canyon before?"

Classmate Ana Fernandez agreed, "I think this has been a great experience. I have always lived in Monterrey but I have never visited the Huasteca. I think that I have learned more by holding the real rocks in my hands and then organizing an apartment building that is going to be 'green.' My group is making a website to show how we are going to use solar panels and water-based energy to protect the environment."

Student groups completed a variety of projects over two weeks back in their classrooms as they took ownership of the assignment. Teachers served as coaches and then assessed the work before choosing the "Best of the Best" to share their work with parents and visitors.

ASFM teachers at both the sixth and seventh grade levels are already discussing ways to improve the "exam" for next year. But Brey was thrilled, "My special moment came when I saw that the students' eyes were being opened up to the natural beauty of what was around them. They felt they were part of that special spot when we left. The students thought, 'This is mine. This is something that I am part of.' And that will make a difference in their lives as well as the future of Monterrey."

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Six Steps to Receiving Criticism Well

In this valuable Harvard Business Review article, Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone (Harvard Law School/Triad Consulting Group) say that in the corporate world, performance evaluations aren't working very well, especially when they contain critical feedback. Here are some recent survey results [might there be similar stats from the world of K-12 schools?]:

- Only 36 percent of managers complete appraisals thoroughly and on time.
- 55 percent of employees said their most recent performance review was unfair or inaccurate.
- 25 percent said they dread evaluations more than anything else in their working lives.
- Human resources leaders said their biggest challenge was managers' unwillingness to have difficult feedback conversations.
- There's relatively little helpful coaching and mentoring.

It's obvious that many managers need to get better at delivering criticism, say Heen and Stone: "But improving the skills of the feedback giver won't accomplish much if the receiver isn't able to absorb what is said. It is the receiver who controls whether feedback is let in or kept out, who has to make sense of what he or she is hearing, and who decides whether or not to change."

The natural tendency when faced with criticism is to get defensive and push back. That's because of the tension between our need to be accepted as we are and our need to learn and grow. "As a result," say Heen and Stone, "even a benign suggestion can leave you feeling angry, anxious, badly treated, or profoundly threatened. A hedge such as 'Don't take this personally' does nothing to soften the blow." There are three ways criticism can activate psychological triggers:

- Truth triggers – The criticism seems untrue, off base, or unhelpful, making us feel wronged, indignant, exasperated.
- Relationship triggers – Something about this person makes it difficult to accept feedback that might be palatable coming from someone else ("After all I've done for you, I get this petty criticism!").
- Identity triggers – The criticism attacks your core sense of who you are, causing you to feel defensive, off balance, perhaps overwhelmed.

These are all natural reactions, say Heen and Stone: "The solution isn't to pretend you don't have them. It's to recognize what's happening and learn how to derive benefit from feedback even when it sets off one or more of your triggers. Taking feedback well is a process of sorting and filtering." Once you've done that, you can figure out if the feedback is potentially helpful or genuinely worthless. Here are their suggestions:

Know your tendencies.

Over time, many of us establish patterns in the way we respond to criticism, for example:

- "This is plain wrong!"
- "You're doing this by e-mail?"
- "You of all people!"
- "I'm flooded with shame," said one executive, "as if I'm Googling 'things wrong with me' and getting 1.2 million hits, with sponsored ads from my father and my ex."
- Smiling on the outside but seething inside;
- Getting teary;
- Being filled with righteous indignation;
- Rejecting feedback in the moment but considering it over time;

- Accepting it right away but later deciding it's baloney;
- Agreeing intellectually but having trouble changing your behavior.

If you are aware of your patterns, you can make better choices on how to process criticism. "I can reassure myself that I'm exaggerating," says the Googling guy quoted above, "and usually after I sleep on it, I'm in a better place to figure out whether there's something I can learn."

Disentangle the 'what' from the 'who.'

"If the feedback is on target and the advice is wise, it shouldn't matter who delivers it," say Heen and Stone. "But it does." We need to recognize when a relationship trigger has been activated, step back, and make an objective analysis of the validity of the criticism.

Hear the coaching side of criticism.

Most feedback has an evaluative component and a coaching component. We tend to be more attuned to the first, hearing it as an attack on how we've been doing things, even our professional competence (our identity trigger has been pulled). "Work to hear feedback as potentially valuable advice from a fresh perspective rather than as an indictment of how you've done things in the past," advise Heen and Douglas.

Unpack the feedback.

For example, a woman is told by a male colleague that she should "be more assertive." She might make a snap judgment and reject the suggestion ("I think I'm pretty

assertive already") or acquiesce ("I really do need to step it up"), but what does this guy really mean?

- Does he think she should speak up more often?
- Should she speak with greater conviction?
- Should she smile less? More?
- Should she have the confidence to admit she doesn't know something?
- Or the confidence to pretend she does?

Before doing anything, it's important to find out what prompted the suggestion, what her colleague saw her do or fail to do, how he defines assertiveness, what he's worried about, and what he expects. In other words, they need to talk! Only then can she decide if the suggestion is worth acting on.

Ask for lots of mini-feedback.

"Feedback is less likely to set off your emotional triggers if you request it and direct it," say Heen and Stone. "Soliciting constructive criticism communicates humility, respect, passion for excellence, and confidence, all in one go." So don't wait for the annual performance review; during the year, request bite-size advice. And don't ask global questions like "Do you have any feedback for me" – rather, ask "What's one thing you see me doing (or failing to do) that holds me back?" Bosses and colleagues are usually happy to respond, and the specific coaching tidbits are often helpful.

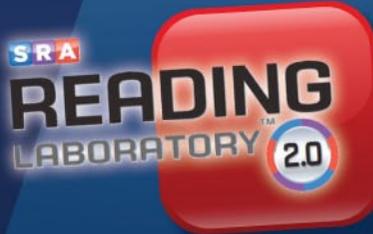
Engage in small experiments.

"When someone gives you advice, test it out," suggest Heen and Stone. "If it work, great. If it doesn't, tweak your approach, or decide to end the experiment."

"Find the Coaching in Criticism: The Right Ways to Receive Feedback" by Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone in Harvard Business Review, January-February 2014 (Vol. 92, #1-2), no e-link; this article is adapted from Heen and Stone's forthcoming book, Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback (Viking/Penguin, 2014).

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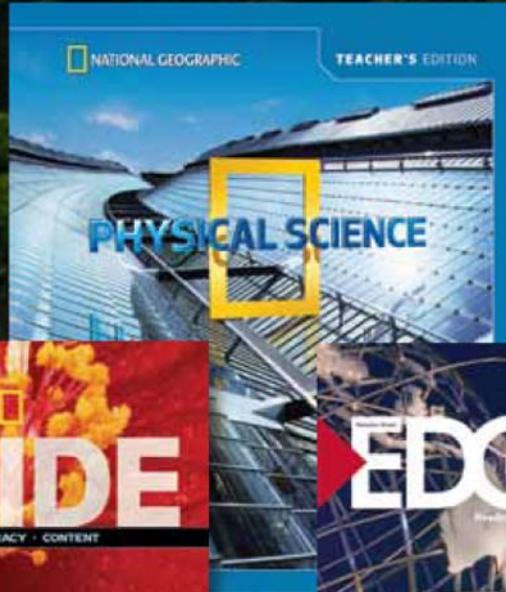
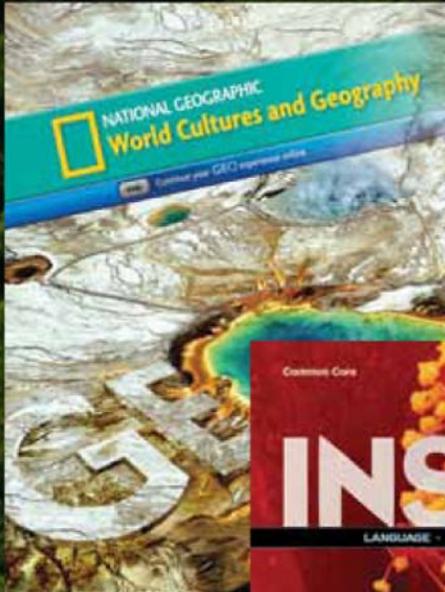
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How Google Helps Its Managers Go From Good to Great

In this Harvard Business Review article, David Garvin (Harvard Business School) says that in Google's early days, engineers questioned the value of managers [in the same way that some teachers question the value of their administrators]. Google engineers "believed that management is more destructive than beneficial, a distraction from 'real work' and tangible, goal-directed tasks," says Garvin. After experimenting with a flat organizational structure, Google realized that it needed managers for some key functions, but decided to keep their number to an absolute minimum. The typical manager has 30 direct reports – a deliberately high ratio to prevent micromanagement and provide space for engineers' innovation and decision-making.

As the company grew, Google set up Project Oxygen to analyze what its best managers were doing, agree on a shared vocabulary, and create a survey to evaluate managers. A highly effective team leader, Oxygen found:

- Is a good coach.
- Empowers the team and does not micromanage.
- Expresses interest and concern for team members' success and personal well-being ("Engineers hate being micromanaged on the technical side, but they love being closely managed on the career side," said one manager).
- Is productive and results-oriented.
- Is a good communicator – listens and shares information.
- Helps with career development.
- Has a clear vision and strategy for the team.
- Has key technical skills that help him or her advise the team.

Google managers are evaluated semiannually by their direct reports on those characteristics with questions like these:

- My manager delivers difficult feedback constructively.
- My manager gives me actionable feedback that helps me improve my performance.
- My manager does not micromanage (get involved in details that should be handled at other levels).
- My manager regularly shares relevant information from his/her manager and senior leadership.
- My manager helps me understand how my work impacts the organization.
- My manager has regular one-on-one talks with me.
- My manager has the technical expertise to effectively manage me.
- My manager talks about all aspects of career development – not just promotions.
- My manager has had meaningful discussions with me about my career development in the past six months.

Managers who score low in particular areas are required to engage in professional development – for example, managers who do poorly on vision are helped writing vision statements for their teams and bringing the ideas to life with compelling stories, and managers with low scores in coaching are given pointers on delivering personalized, balanced feedback. Managers care about their scores and Google-wide data show steep improvements among those who initially scored low.

"How Google Sold Its Engineers on Management" by David Garvin in Harvard Business Review, December 2013 (Vol. 91, #12, p. 74-82), no e-link available

RESOURCES

▶ Links to Google's Education Vision:

- Google Education Overview:
<http://www.google.com/edu/>
(the "Malaysia has gone Google" video is one of my favorites)
- Google Apps in Education:
<http://www.google.com/enterprise/apps/education/>
- Google Apps in Education Training Center:
<http://edutraining.googleapps.com/>
- Google Chrome in Education:
<http://www.google.com/intl/en/chrome/education/>
- Google Search in Education:
<http://www.google.com/insidesearch/searcheducation/>
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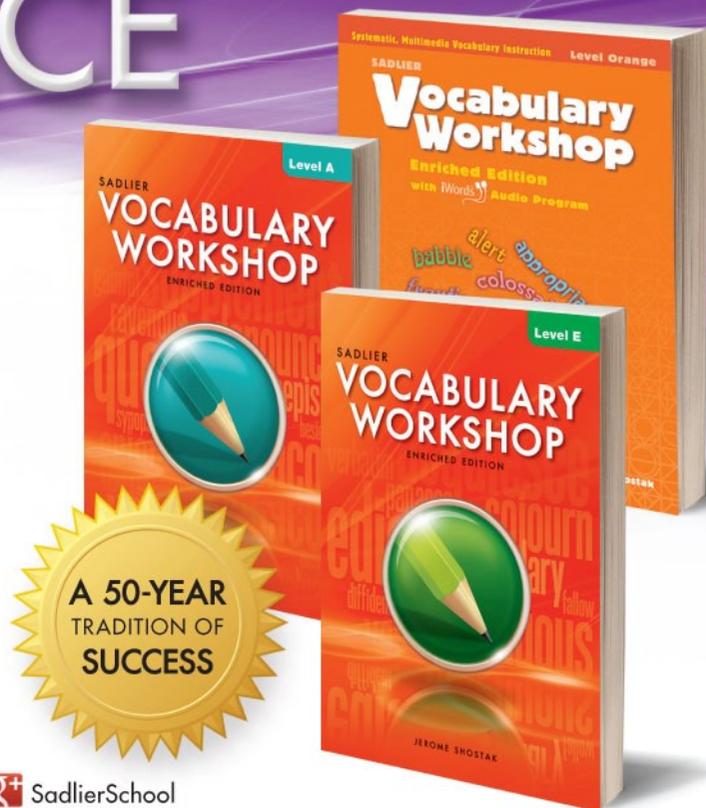
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► From the Executive Director

I appreciate the schools and individuals who contributed pictures and articles for this edition of the newsletter. This year I hope to receive more entries from others schools in the region. This is a wonderful way to celebrate and share the important work that is taking place in your school, so I look forward to hearing from many of you!

The deadlines for submission for the Winter 2013 Spring and Fall 2014 editions are:

- Winter Edition: October 30, 2013
- Spring Edition: March 1, 2014
- Fall Edition: May 1, 2014

Corporate Members

- Balfour Yearbooks
- Cengage
- College Board
- Crystal & Company
- finalsite
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Brace
- International Schools Services
- K12
- McGraw Hill
- Pearson Education
- PESA Uniformes
- Search Associates
- Simply Teach Tech
- SUNY
- TieCare International/ Global Benefits Group
- Turning Technologies

Associate Members

- Achieve3000
- Compass Learning
- FCD Educational Services
- Framingham State University
- George Mason University
- Lehigh University
- Merriam Webster
- NWEA
- Rediker
- RenWeb School Management Software
- Seton Hall University
- William H. Sadlier

Supporting Members

- ATD-American Co
- Committee for Children
- Counseling for International Schools
- SAGE
- Walden University

Other Exhibitors

- Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education (CSEE)
- Developmental Studies Center
- International School Associates LLC
- Mosaica
- Mount Union University
- Permabound
- Raymond James Financial Services
- Rubicon International
- Scholastic
- Teacher Created Materials
- Triumph Learning
- Virco, Inc
- Wegoo Interactive