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Whether we like it or not, security has become as essential a part of our lives as food and drink.

Tom Marshall, see page 17

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**YOU!**

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Alumna 2011

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# Making our schools more secure

## Focus on safety and child protection

We wish to extend our thanks to all who have so far responded to our invitations, offered in the columns of earlier issues of this publication, to write to us on a wide range of topics. We would like to encourage even more readers to send their views on issues and events that are relevant to all involved in the promotion and implementation of international education in schools.

One of the themes to emerge from the contributions we have received concerns aspects of the security of international schools, and the responsibilities that each of us bears in ensuring that the environment in which staff and students work together in our schools is as safe as it can possibly be. Readers may already be aware of the work of

the International Task Force on Child Protection, led by Jane Larsson, Executive Director of the Council of International Schools, which recently published the outcomes of the latest stage of its work. Since child protection is a key feature of school security we have, with permission, reproduced below the June 2016 statement of outcomes from the Task Force as a prelude to a number of articles in the first section of this issue, including one by Jane Larsson herself, written by those with direct experiences relevant in different ways to the theme of security in international schools.

*Mary Hayden and Jeff Thompson*

The work of the International Task Force on Child Protection (ITFCP) has been undertaken by a coalition of 90+ volunteers, leaders of international education organisations, school leaders, counsellors, business and security managers, teachers, and school accreditation, inspection and recruitment professionals, working collaboratively across professions with dedicated law enforcement officials and the medical community. It is this broad collaboration and diverse perspective from a variety of roles which has enriched our discussion and, now, our results.

From our origin in May 2014, our charter has been to apply our collective resources, expertise, and partnerships to help international school communities address child protection challenges. Significant outcomes of our work, now completed by three volunteer committees are as follows.

### **Child Protection website launched in cooperation with ICMEC**

Our partnership with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) has resulted in the creation of an Education Portal at the new ICMEC website ([www.icmec.org/education-portal/](http://www.icmec.org/education-portal/)), where school communities can access child protection resources, and report suspected or known abuse. This is a significant step forward as we now have a reliable site for trusted resources. In an advisory role, the ITFCP will continue

to curate resources for the site, and provide guidance and access to reliable experts in law enforcement so that school communities can confidentially seek advice when they suspect or detect abuse.

Chair of the School Policies and Resources Committee, Greg Hedger, emphasized a significant finding of the committee: while resources are important, each school must ensure it is asking the right questions about behaviour. The Committee also cited the importance of having a Code of Conduct as a reference point, and its use to change school culture in detecting and reporting abuse.

### **Accreditation and Inspection agencies agree on recommendations to enhance standards for Child Protection**

Demonstrating strong collaboration, Accreditation and Inspection agencies evaluating international schools have now officially agreed and signed their names to a document which commits us all to the implementation of enhanced standards for child protection in schools. It was an historic morning in Atlanta on Sunday, 7 February as all of the U.S. regional accreditation agencies and CIS came together and signed the new standards for child protection as recommended by the International Task Force School Evaluation Committee. Adoption

Continued →

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of these recommendations continued the following week when the International Baccalaureate (IB) added their signature, and subsequently on 9 May in London when the Council of British International Schools (COBIS), the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) of the UK, and agencies conducting British inspection overseas simultaneously endorsed the agreement.

The new standards are articulated in two distinct domains:

- **Essential Questions:** 13 Questions which should be comprehensively considered and which form the basis of whole school community dialogue on policies and practices related to safeguarding and child protection.
- **Expectations:** 18 Essential Elements which school evaluation, accreditation and inspection agencies are strongly encouraged to adopt as essential requirements within their evaluation programmes as appropriate.

The recommendations are fully aligned with the values statements contained within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The agreed expectations will now be put into practice during the coming year. The formal statement including essential questions and expectations for schools can be found at the ICMEC Education Portal. As Ray Davis, Chair of the ITFCP School Evaluation Committee, concluded his final report in Atlanta, several of the accreditation agency directors spoke of the importance of identifying areas of challenge as schools begin to be evaluated using the new standards. They expressed a keen and unified sense of responsibility to support schools as we prepare to implement the new standards for child protection. We will continue to confer across agencies and will use this information to develop new resources to support schools.

### **Essential Recruiting Practices recommended following pilot at 75 international schools**

Essential Recruiting Practices for international school communities have been formulated following a year-long pilot at 75 schools globally. The International Task Force Recruitment Committee produced a checklist of core and recommended recruiting practices for schools to use when screening and assessing candidates. This document, containing the full set of recommendations, has been posted at the ICMEC Education Portal.

As a first step in adopting these recommendations, the Task Force strongly recommends that all schools broadly post a statement of commitment to safer recruitment practices in all places, including the following statement on all documents used as part of their recruitment and selection processes:

*'Aligned with the recommendations of the International Task Force on Child Protection, we hold ourselves to a high standard of effective recruiting practices with specific attention to child protection.'*

Co-Chairs of the School Recruitment Committee, Bridget McNamer and Chris Akin, summarized key observations made by participating schools during the year-long pilot of rigorous recruiting practices:

- the continuing poor performance of school leaders in verifying references;
- the use of a Code of Conduct emerged strongly as an effective reference point to assess behaviour that moves past the boundaries of educational roles; and
- there are difficulties obtaining criminal background checks, and even more difficulties vouching for their validity.

### **Interpol International Police Certificate**

Interpol has now launched an initiative to create one police certificate which would reflect criminal background checks in all 190 member countries. Members of the Task Force will be working with Interpol as the feasibility study gets underway, as there is significant potential for this initiative to improve the accessibility and reliability of background checks.

### **Child Protection Survey reveals three significant findings**

*[International School Training Needs Survey, September 2015]*

Our survey of 716 international educators revealed that almost half lack confidence in their abilities to detect abuse and that 90% believe annual training should be required and provided. They identified cultural difference as one of the primary barriers to reporting abuse. The full survey results can be found at the new ICMEC Education Portal.

### **Our future role**

We now move forward in an advisory role as enhanced standards for child protection are implemented in schools, to confer and collaborate with external agencies to identify, gather and provide resources to the international school community to support schools' development of child protection programmes. We intend that our work will have tremendous positive impact in our schools and, to this purpose, we welcome opportunities to report on our work and discuss our findings.

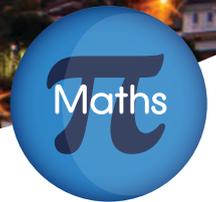
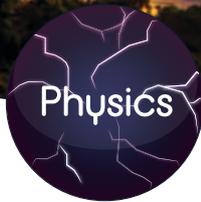
In an advisory role, we will focus on four areas of involvement:

1. To inform and advise multiple international and national organizations and schools of the outcomes of our work.
2. To advise ICMEC as they continue to gather and post resources at their new online Education Portal.
3. To establish a continuing link with Accreditation, Inspection, Law Enforcement and Recruiting agencies to identify areas of challenge that need continuing focus to strengthen school practices.
4. To continue to identify experts who excel in providing support and training to school communities.

As we provide this final summary of the outcomes of our committee work, we recognize the tremendous collaboration and service of 90+ volunteers during the past two years. On behalf of the founding organizations of the Task Force, we thank each of them for stepping forward to give so generously of their time, leading us forward.

Last but not least, all of the ITFCP founding organizations, among many others, are now taking steps, related to their unique missions and purposes, to further support international school communities as we address child protection challenges.

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# Recruitment and the law: What are our responsibilities?

Jane Larsson reports on the work of a committee set up to ensure best practice

A working committee of the International Task Force on Child Protection (ITFCP) is re-examining recruiting practices, in consultation with law enforcement agencies around the world. Its emerging recommendations address recurring recruitment challenges cited by international school leaders. The ITFCP Recruitment Committee is a volunteer group of recruiting professionals including 12 recruiting agencies/organizations and heads of 6 international schools who are collaborating to achieve the following objectives:

- assess processes used by international schools and recruiting organizations to screen educators seeking positions,
- analyze what measures need to be put into place to ensure or improve their effectiveness, and
- recommend a set of effective practices for adoption by schools and recruiting agencies.

Reviewing a number of recruitment-related communications between heads of school shows that they generally fall into two categories:

1. checking in with colleagues about candidates under consideration, and
2. warnings to colleagues about candidates they believe should not be working with children – for a variety of reasons ranging from poor performance to serious allegations of misconduct.

A number of school heads have posted on leadership forums, expressing frustration at the lack of one central ‘clearing house’ for candidate screening, some of them referring to the work of the Task Force and wondering how we can help. Others are advising caution about ‘do not hire’ or ‘please contact me’ messages that lack specific detail about the reasons behind the warnings.

The question of defamation of character arose during a general session at the Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE) conference during a presentation by the International Task Force. As part of the Q&A session, a head of school asked: ‘In writing references for teachers, there’s an apprehension about legal repercussions. Has language been developed as advice for those writing references?’ In response to this request for guidance to address concerns about the legal obligations of school

leaders, the Recruitment Committee has held its own healthy discussions on topics such as writing references, making referrals and calling to verify references as part of the hiring process. While the scope of our work is to address child protection challenges, there are broader areas of learning that are timely to share.

It is safe to write that all of us are concerned at the significant number of international hires which are seemingly being made without verification of references or direct contact with international peers. What makes this doubly frustrating is that this is one area over which we CAN have complete control and for which each school has absolute accountability. One head approached me at a recent conference with a plea that we remind everyone to make these calls. He reported that he had 19 teachers leaving last year, yet he and his leadership team were contacted by only three of the schools that hired them.

In our capacity as recruiters, we must all exercise due diligence as part of the selection and hiring process. What, however, is ‘due diligence’? Do we understand the meaning of negligence and how to avoid being negligent? How do we avoid defaming someone when the circumstances are unclear?

Negligent hiring, according to UK/US law, is defined as:

*‘a claim made by an injured party against an employer based on the theory that the employer knew or should have known about the employee’s background which, if known, indicates a dangerous or untrustworthy character. Pre-employment background checks, employee drug testing, and employment physical exams are some of the ways negligent hiring claims can be avoided.’*

Three examples of potentially negligent referrals and the resulting legal implications can be found in an article published by the Pepperdine University Graziadio School of Business and Management. The full article, Defamation vs Negligent Referral, by Linnea B. McCord, JD, MBA, can be found at their website (<http://gbr.pepperdine.edu/2010/08/defamation-vs-negligent-referral/>). The article refers to three types of potentially negligent referrals which, in certain circumstances, could make an employer/referee subject to litigation.



Siva Kumari, Director General of the International Baccalaureate (right), pictured signing the International Child Protection Task Force recommendations, with Jane Larsson

- Providing a 'good' reference which presents a candidate too positively (i.e. omits important information which may be viewed as negative)
- Providing a 'bad' reference which unjustly presents the candidate too negatively
- Providing a 'neutral' reference which does not provide enough important information one way or the other

As employers, we can be charged with 'negligent hiring' if someone we hire harms another at our school or organization and it is subsequently proven that due diligence was not used when screening the candidate. The article goes on to illustrate how one can be charged with negligence if the employer (or former employer), when contacted as a referee, does not reveal factual evidence that someone is a danger to others:

*'Former employers can be sued for negligent misrepresentation or negligent referral if the employee is involved in some incident at the new workplace that might have been predicted based on prior behavior. Negligent referral or misrepresentation includes the failure to disclose complete and accurate information about former employees.'*

Within the international school community, questions of performance and character are often resolved through non-renewal of contract. The truth is that no one enjoys conflict (or very few of us do). Non-renewal of contract and the provision of a neutral (or no) reference are frequently chosen as the easiest and most expedient means of dealing with poor performance or behavior. This approach does not release us from our obligation to the law nor from our moral obligation to society as a whole.

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## In our capacity as recruiters, we must all exercise due diligence as part of the selection and hiring process. What, however, is ‘due diligence’? Do we understand the meaning of negligence and how to avoid being negligent? How do we avoid defaming someone when the circumstances are unclear?

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Returning to the purpose and focus of the International Task Force on Child Protection, one of our key findings is the need for school leaders to recognize that it is law enforcement’s job to track child abusers, so that educators don’t have to. In order for this to happen, we have a collective responsibility to report suspected or known abuse (or other potential criminal activity) to professionals who are trained as first-responders to investigate potential crimes.

When, how and where should we report suspected or known abuse? Many schools have asked for advice and counsel on this topic. To address this need, the Task Force developed a partnership with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), where reports of abuse can be made from anywhere in the world. Our collaboration with ICMEC has led to tangible results, including the establishment of a web-based resource center on child protection education, an Education Portal of resources to support international school communities as they address child protection challenges. We intend that our collaboration with ICMEC will have high impact, combining resources and training with an international reporting point for suspected and known abuse through the Tipline (<https://www.cybertip.org/>). Staffed by professionals trained as first-responders to assess reports, provide counseling and with direct-line reporting to national law enforcement agencies to investigate crimes, they are a valuable resource for international educators dealing with suspected abuse.

While these results are significant, we continue to have much work ahead of us. We are now seeking counsel from suitably trained experts in the field, to guide us through our questions and concerns of suspected or known abuse as we continue to gather and share expertise and resources with school communities.

The International Task Force Recruitment Committee’s findings emphasize that, ultimately, accountability and responsibility for hiring lie with the school. Recruiting agencies have many different business models and in the marketplace, schools can select agencies that meet their needs, ranging from a fully out-sourced screening approach including background checks and validated credentials, to a mass-market approach with no screening whatsoever.

The Committee has determined that key elements of effective screening must include:

- Candidate profile review

- Collection and verification of references
- Identity and credentials verification
- Background checks:
  - Criminal Records
  - Police Records
  - Offender Registries

We believe the resulting work of this committee will serve to enhance effective screening practices overall, addressing pervasive recruiting concerns which continue to arise each year.

Members of the two key committees described above, who have devoted their time as volunteers, are as follows.

### **ITFCP School Recruitment Committee**

- Bridget McNamer, Senior Associate at Search Associates (Co-Chair)
- Chris Akin, Secondary Principal at Colegio FDR (Co-Chair)
- Paul DeMinico, Vice-President of ISS (Task Force Liaison to the Committee)

### **International Task Force on Child Protection**

- Colin Bell, Executive Director, Council of British International Schools
- Deb Welch, Executive Director, Academy of International School Heads
- Christine Brown, Regional Education Officer for Europe, U.S. Department of State, Office of Overseas Schools
- Yolanda Murphy-Barrena, Executive Director, Association for the Advancement of International Education
- Paul DeMinico, Vice-President, International Schools Services
- Jane Larsson, Executive Director, Council of International Schools (Chair)
- Kevin Ruth, Executive Director, ECIS

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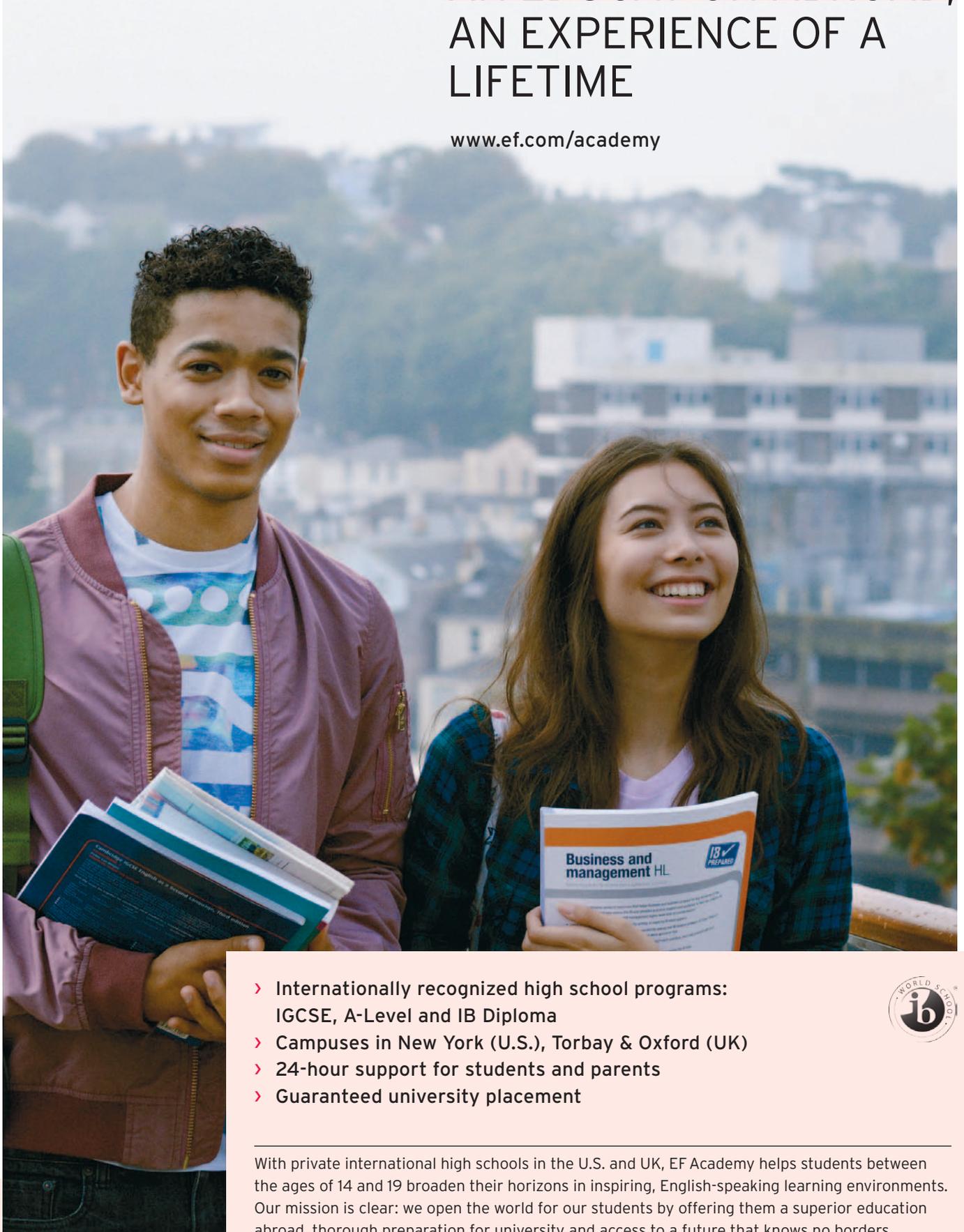


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# Are we facing the security challenges raised by terrorism?

John Bastable on the key issues to consider

International schools in Jordan are only 100km from Damascus and 300km from Baghdad. Jordan is at the centre of a region in conflict. Yet they are probably safer places to be than are international schools in many other countries. Having rigorous security measures in place, security forces on full alert, a tribal system in Jordan which provides fast and reliable intelligence, and armed gendarmes on patrol, international schools in Jordan appear better prepared than many schools elsewhere in the world.

As an open security environment an international school will always be a relatively soft target, so ways are needed to make it as safe as possible, yet still fit for purpose. In addition to the brutally obvious consequences posed by terrorism, we must consider the negative second order effects it can have on the recruitment and retention of staff and student enrolment, whilst remaining cognisant of the impact a fortress mentality can have on the teaching and learning environment and on student performance. Yet many international schools have given insufficient thought to this new and growing threat.

## Why your school is at risk

Many of the most recent terrorist atrocities have taken place in capital cities, the very centres where international schools are located. Most such attacks have been carried out by ultra-violent self-radicalised individuals, often well-educated and from middle class backgrounds. Many experts anticipate this threat will increase as large numbers of seasoned fighters return to their homes throughout Europe and the Middle East. In the aftermath of the Bardo museum attack, several writers concluded that more attacks of this kind were sadly inevitable. The subsequent atrocity against western holidaymakers on the beach in Sousse, Tunisia, proved them sadly right. Since then further dreadful attacks in cities including Paris, Brussels, Istanbul and Baghdad underline how great a threat we are facing.

International schools are particularly vulnerable as a result of their clientele: the children of rich, influential, westernised parents, many of whom have direct or indirect royal, political or diplomatic relationships and a high profile in the community. The curriculum and ethos of western

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liberal pedagogy often taught by expatriates exposes these schools still further. Schools in Nigeria have been attacked and subject to high profile kidnappings simply for offering a western curriculum. (Boko Haram means 'Western education is forbidden')

International schools are also vulnerable because their teachers are mostly 'westerners' and frequent the same places as their wealthy employers and western tourists. Such was the case when 202 people were killed in the Bali bombings of 2002, a number of them teachers from International Baccalaureate schools attending an IB conference. The terrorist organisation calling itself ISIS, or Daesh, has stated online that teachers are legitimate targets.

### **Additional concerns for school security**

As well as facing the threat of being targeted by terrorists, there is the danger of being caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. Domestically, for example, political upheaval can quite unexpectedly make your school population a target for extremists. Additionally an 'own goal' can be scored if you overlook the fact that the culture or the curriculum of your school might antagonise some groups and provoke an unwanted reaction. Motivation for an attack might be the presence within your school of a group viewed as legitimate targets, as tragically occurred in Pakistan in December 2014 when children were massacred because their parents were linked to the military. Similarly the education of female students can be used as justification for attack, as witnessed in Afghanistan. Sadly the list of those deemed by terrorist groups to be legitimate targets has grown to become almost exhaustive.

Labelling this an 'Islamic' problem is dangerously misleading; in 2011 a right wing idealist, Anders Breivik, murdered 69 participants on a Workers Youth League summer camp in Norway. It would be unwise to believe your school is safe because it is long way from the Middle East. An attack on an international school could happen anywhere and come from any number of sources. The radicalisation of children is going on in war-torn countries far from your borders, as well as on the internet within your own school population. We have all seen on TV chilling attacks on schools – particularly in the US, often referred to as 'active shooter' incidents – where a member of the community, radicalised or otherwise, attacks students and teachers with devastating effect.

### **The growing threat to schools**

Until comparatively recently, the most obvious form of terrorist attack was a bomb, and modern terrorist groups had tended not to target schools. Sadly, the days when schools were off limits came to an end in 2004 with the Chechen Beslan School Massacre, where 777 children were taken hostage by Islamic fundamentalists and 385 people died when the school was stormed by security forces.

Now disgruntled students as well as terrorists have brought into schools not only IEDs (improvised explosive devices), but also automatic weapons. This phenomenon of 'the lone wolf attack' is perhaps even more difficult to defend against than the terrorist 'bomber' of previous times who wished to escape and remain operational. The radicalised terrorist who believes that martyrdom is praiseworthy may care less about escaping with his life. Staying alive may also be less important to the crazed student settling scores and

intending eventually to take his own life. This makes finding ways to keep such dangerous people out of your school even more important.

### **How can a school be made safer?**

Faced with these problems as a school leader, one's first thought is to turn the school into a fortress – fences, guards, cameras, scanners, whatever it takes – but this comes at a cost not only to your budget but also to how your students and parents feel about their school.

A school does not want to have the appearance of a prison. A learning community does not want parents frightened to come into school events or students viewing adults on the campus as potential threats; concerns such as these will lead to anxiety which will in turn affect teaching and learning. Yet it is imperative that terrorists think twice about attacking your school and instead turn their attention to another target. Before a terrorist attack there is always reconnaissance and information gathering. The terrorist wants to be effective and cause maximum damage. If your school can thwart the reconnaissance stage, the terrorist will probably move on to an easier target. If the school looks difficult to enter because security measures can clearly be seen to be in place, then the assailant may choose to look somewhere else.

Considering the following points may well be helpful:

**Situational awareness:** understanding the threat, and understanding what you look like to an attacker.

**Visible physical security measures:** which provide protection and have a deterrent element. Even a determined suicide attacker will think twice if unable to enter the target easily, and may look elsewhere.

**Systems and procedures:** including organisational culture, training in critical event management, and good communication systems.

**Curriculum, community and culture:** minimising drawing unwanted attention to some aspects of what the school does; keeping a comparatively low profile.

The core message here is that, rather than only taking the straightforward solution that would be recommended by a normal security consultancy – target hardening – in addition, an international school can greatly improve its security through:

- Staff training
- Organisational culture
- Situational awareness

Leaders must avoid finding themselves up a date palm with no safety net and no visible security. Make plans to put increased security precautions in place at your school now!

***John Bastable is retired from leadership of international schools in the Middle East, and is Managing Director of Bastable School Solutions, providing innovative and sensitive solutions to the challenges of security and culture in the international education sector.***  
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# Security: some simple do's and don'ts for the international teacher

Tom Marshall offers some essential advice

Security is probably one of the most misunderstood of all the sciences. Security a science? Yes – a science. If you don't believe me, Google GCHQ, Quantico or Langley and you will enter a world of 21st century technology. From the laptops, tablets and smartphones that allow us to be tracked down to within two metres of our location, to the security codes in our car keys, our world is full of technologies that help to keep us safe. Most of us live in a world where security isn't second nature and, although we may be aware of the security that surrounds us on a daily basis, we largely take our personal security for granted. Whether we like it or not, security has become as essential a part of our lives as food and drink.

How much care do you take in protecting yourself against harm? When you applied for your current job, what questions did you ask at interview? Class size, curriculum, and personal development yes – but was security on your agenda? If it wasn't, it should have been.

*“Schools must be safe places of learning and development for all children. They should be zones of peace. Those who attack schools and hospitals should know that they will be held accountable.”*

*(UN Secretary General's 10th Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, 2011)*

Sadly a host of people don't recognise this statement. From terrorist organisations including The Taliban, IS/ISIS and Boko Haram to the lone perpetrator, schools, colleges and universities are seen as easy high-profile targets. It's not always a terrorist group that carries out the attack, and a school can become collateral damage in a war zone.

An international study published in 2015 by Diya Nijhowne, Director of Research at The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, showed that between 2009 and 2013 there were 9,600 attacks on schools and colleges in 70 countries. Then there are hundreds, possibly thousands, of other incidents of violence directed at educational institutions, teachers or students across the world which have not been reported. In drawing on research carried out by a coalition of United Nations agencies, human rights groups and aid organisations, the report showed that these attacks on pupils, teachers and buildings were not accidental or random incidents. “They are bombed, burned, shot, threatened and abducted precisely because of their connection to education”, said Nijhowne. Also in 2015, a

school in Oregon USA saw nine people shot dead. Away from the context of education, the wider world saw attacks in Paris kill 130 in November 2015 and 31 murdered in Brussels in March 2016. Acts like this are not confined to so-called third world countries.

By their very nature, schools, colleges and universities make easy targets, since to make them attack-proof is virtually impossible. In an article published in the *Guardian* on 20 January 2016, Jason Burke wrote “Why would terrorists attack such targets? One obvious answer is because they can. Schools are usually unprotected. Embassies, military bases, even hotels are, after a decade and a half of rolling waves of terrorist violence across the world, now harder to hit. But there are other reasons, too. Terrorism aims to undermine the legitimacy and authority of a state. In many parts of the world, the local school is that state's only tangible presence. Another goal is simply to stall education, of both girls and boys, though the former tends to prompt a greater reaction. In 2012 the Pakistani Taliban tried to kill a 15-year-old schoolgirl, Malala Yousufzai, who went on to become an international icon”.

But even with the inherent dangers of teaching overseas, thousands of teachers move around the world each year, seeking out new challenges, making new friends and having life-changing experiences. And of course most do so in relative safety.

Like most things in life, security is simple. It can be broken down into a series of simple tasks and further broken down into simple sub-sections. Broadly speaking, security can be divided into two: the physical (home, work) and the technical (phones, computers etc). A useful pre-deployment/employment check is as follows:

1. Check out your intended country using, for instance, the UK Embassy website. You don't have to be a UK citizen to gain access to [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice). Most governments have similar sites that you can access. Remember – research and research again.

2. Check out the school using sources such as International Schools Review. While this can be seen as a site for the disgruntled, if you uncover repeated adverse comments some of them may be based on fact. Networking and personal contacts are important. Check with your current and previous lecturers, tutors and colleagues: there is nothing better than a first-hand recommendation from someone who either works, or has worked, in the school you're considering.

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(16-19 year-olds)

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(16-19 year-olds)

- Provides academic study and practical skills development
- Enables students to apply knowledge in real-world scenarios
- Leads to higher learning, apprenticeship or employment



(11-16 year-olds)

- Promotes active learning, international mindedness, empathy
- Develops the ability to pursue meaningful and purposeful lives
- Offers assessment that leads to student certification



(3-12 year-olds)

- Develops the whole child as an inquirer
- Prepares children as life-long learners; active, caring and respectful
- Provides excellent foundation for future studies

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3. If you sign up with a recruitment agency, only use reputable companies with solid track records. Remember that they may work on a commission basis, and some are more scrupulous than others. Remember – research and research again.

4. Ask relevant security-related questions at interview, such as

- Where will you live – will your home be on a secure compound, or school-owned property or in the public sector? What are the security arrangements – both in school and at your home? Google the location: the school and your accommodation might not be where you think they are, and you might have a long or even hazardous commute to work.
- What restrictions does the country's government put on your work visa? Some countries in the Middle East operate the Kafala system, which means you can't exit the country without your employer's permission, while some countries place internal travel restrictions on migrant workers. Again, remember to research and research again.
- Check whether your employer intends to hold your passport. While technically illegal, this is a widespread practice designed to ensure that employees don't leave their contracts early. Don't let your employer keep your passport beyond the work permit stage; if you do so, you will effectively be a prisoner in that country.
- Make sure that your employer has suitable health insurance in place for you and your dependants, and ensure that it covers repatriation to your home country should that become necessary.
- Don't move to your new job without a signed contract.

5. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) no longer operates its LOCATE service, but if you're a British national it's still worthwhile making contact with the Consular Service section at the Embassy. If you're not a British national, check in with your own Embassy on arrival so they are aware you're in-country.

6. Always ensure you have enough money to buy your exit ticket home.

Once you've been successful in your job application and you are in country, you should:

- i. Access a site such as the UK Government website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). You will receive regular updates on the threat level of the country / countries you're in.
- ii. Be aware of local dress codes, religions, traditions and customs. You're a guest in someone else's country; respect their ways.
- iii. Once you arrive at your accommodation and school, check out the usual health and safety issues:
  - a. Safe access/egress, firefighting equipment etc. The landlord or school should provide you with a list of emergency protocols.
  - b. Your place of work should have a crisis management / evacuation plan; get a copy.

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## If you sign up with a recruitment agency, only use reputable companies with solid track records.

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c. Place the important phone numbers in your mobile: the Embassy consular services, emergency services, maintenance contractors approved by the school or landlord, the school's senior management team and human resources. Also place these numbers in a prominent place in your home. (Ours are on the fridge door)

d. If you have chosen to work in a high-risk location, ensure you know where the safe rooms/havens are: in your classroom, school and accommodation.

e. Observe simple home protocols. You may find this website of use: [www.locksmiths.co.uk/faq/security-advice](http://www.locksmiths.co.uk/faq/security-advice)

f. Make sure you carry out regular evacuation drills. Understand the difference between an emergency evacuation and an attack.

iv. Don't be a hermit; but until you know the ropes keep a low profile.

v. Always carry with you copies of your work permit and passport.

If you're an experienced expatriate teacher and you have been on the international school circuit for a while, most of the above may well be second nature to you – but it's still well worth double-checking to make sure your school keeps its security details up to date.

This article only provides a broad-brush view of security, and due to space restrictions has not covered IT and cyber security. It is not aimed at putting you off. Far from it – go and see the world, and meet great people. But be aware that not everyone is your friend, and not everyone wants you in their country.

### Some useful web sites:

- [www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-checklist](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-checklist)
- [www.state.gov/documents/organization/19795.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/19795.pdf)
- [www.nerc.ac.uk/about/policy/safety/procedures/procedure-oversea/](http://www.nerc.ac.uk/about/policy/safety/procedures/procedure-oversea/)
- [www.slideshare.net/NCPC/school-safety-and-security-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/NCPC/school-safety-and-security-presentation)
- [www.locksmiths.co.uk/faq/security-advice](http://www.locksmiths.co.uk/faq/security-advice)

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# Being ready for an earthquake – and the lessons learned

Dennis Stanworth shares some painful memories and the benefit of experience

The *Japan Times* of 12 March 2016 reported as follows:

*'At 2:46 pm Friday, millions of people observed a moment of silence across Japan as the country marked the fifth anniversary of the March 2011 quake and tsunami that devastated coastal areas of the Tohoku region, killing at least 19,304 and leaving an additional 2,561 still unaccounted for. The anniversary comes as around 174,000 evacuees from disaster-hit areas are still living outside their damaged hometowns.'*

The Yokohama International School (YIS) community also paid its respects. Many, including myself, still have indelible memories of that day. There were a number of outcomes from this tragic event that affected our school, notably the development of ongoing service projects to support the victims and, importantly for our community, a complete review of all procedures for responding to events of such magnitude should they ever happen again.

Emergency procedures to cope with fire, earthquake, lockdown, intruders and pandemics have always been of a high priority at YIS, with regular drills practised and reviews of



*An evacuation drill at Yokohama International School*

procedures taken. Despite one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded in the archipelago, 11 March 2011 did not catch us off-guard. We seemed to be as prepared as we could be. The crisis management team, including all members of senior leadership, acted with great fervour, zeal, indefatigability and resilience, and with amazing support from all teachers and the community. The students themselves acted with a sense of purpose and responsibility that could not have been better scripted. With no access to transportation, around 150 students were homestayd that night by volunteer families living near the school. The community spirit and togetherness unquestionably shone through. Everyone was safe and unscathed without a single physical injury and without structural damage to any of the buildings. Our spring break was brought forward and lengthened by a week. This gave a chance for families to regroup and reflect. Some decided to leave in the short term, some for much longer. A number of families did not return at all, a phenomenon observed across all international schools in the region. The true spirit of togetherness on a global scale came through as each one of our IB Diploma Programme students whose families decided not to return were readily taken in by other international schools across the world, to allow them to continue their studies, preparations and registrations for external examinations. So what did we learn from the occurrence of this natural disaster, one of the worst in Japan's history?

After the event we revisited every aspect of procedure followed on that day and re-examined our preparedness with a fine-tooth comb. Would/could we have done anything differently for a school our size (around 650 students)? Upon reflection, our actions (and I include here those of all members of the school community) were truly stoic and exemplary. All those on campus were quick to respond, immediately taking up earthquake positions under nearby tables and desks as rehearsed. No-one panicked and ran

out of the buildings; they simply stayed as calm as possible and did what they were supposed to do as rehearsed in drills. During the time of intensive shaking, my own voice could be heard through the sound system across the school, giving out calm messages and trying to ensure there was no sudden uncontrollable fear or anxiety. The drills had paid off and no-one could be faulted. However, a review process was needed. Through that process, we were able to identify the need for some improvements which are worth sharing.

In the aftermath of the shaking, it was noted that there were some slight communication hold-ups before we were able to be absolutely sure that everyone had been accounted for on campus. Our appointed wardens, as part of their remit, speedily brought to the operations control room (central office) names of students from all the different classrooms and learning spaces on campus, but the actual collating of this information proved somewhat time-intensive despite the abundance of office personnel helping in this part of the process. There were also some bottlenecks in communicating with individual parents to let them know their children were safe. Certain channels were available, others weren't. It was with these reflections in mind after what became known as 3/11 that we set out to review all our emergency procedures in the lead up to, during and after any such disaster/emergency – and, in particular, earthquakes. The four 'P's came under the microscope: Proaction, Preparedness, Procedures, and Post Operations.

With the above in mind, we considered a number of areas (some new), refining and/or consolidating others where necessary as a result of the 3/11 experience in order to compile a more thorough comprehensive emergency procedure document entitled 'Emergency Policies and Procedures'. It was understood that not all circumstances or eventualities would or could be covered and that, in a number of circumstances, people would need to 'think on their feet'. Extracts from the 'Emergency Policies and Procedures'

document are included below, identifying changes made following 3/11. Not included are our triage procedures and a pandemic response matrix which are in place and have not necessarily changed.

### **Emergency contacts and release permissions**

It is now an absolute requisite of all families that they provide the school with relevant details of a contact person in the case of an emergency, should parents be unreachable.

### **Student release in emergency situations and YIS Homestay Families**

This has been reviewed and updated. If, for whatever emergency reason, students need to be held at school, the child can only be released to a parent/guardian who comes directly to the school for collection, or at such time as communication with the parent/guardian has been established and it is determined safe to release the student on his/her own. Added since 3/11, and likely to be of immense support, is that parents can now designate emergency contacts or nearby YIS homestay volunteers, so long as these are registered with the school and it is clear that permission has been granted.

### **If an emergency occurs while students are commuting to/from school**

This procedure was added after 3/11 to cover all eventualities. Students should take shelter at the nearest safe location and follow the same safety advice as at school. If travelling on public transportation at the time of the earthquake, students should follow the instructions given by the transportation authorities or police (this would usually be given in Japanese, but English translation would be available). Students should also make contact with parents as soon as possible.

### **School-parent communication in an emergency**

This aspect of emergency procedures was considered very carefully. Due to disruptions to utilities and communications services, making contact with individual families after the quake proved extremely time-intensive, though essential. This was formalised by building in the following steps: first priority would be to communicate to the school community as a whole through the use of website news posts, social media posts, and email, before trying to reach out to parents individually by email or telephone. The US Embassy would be a point of contact using emergency radio if all else failed. They in turn would alert radio stations, public safety authorities and other embassies. Once communications were restored, individual parents would be contacted.

### **Mobile phone Emergency Notification Service**

Since 11 March, the three Japanese multinational telecommunications and Internet corporations have enabled individuals to post text, email and/or voice messages via their mobile phones regarding whereabouts and safety in the event of a disaster. Despite disruptions to normal mobile telephone service, it would become possible to utilize packet communication to enable delivery of messages. This information is now shared regularly with the parent community, with visiting speakers delivering workshops on an annual basis. Links to these 'big three' are posted for

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**We revisited every aspect of procedure followed on that day and re-examined our preparedness with a fine-tooth comb.**

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further information and sign-up instructions regarding these services.

### **Emergency preparedness resources**

All families are continually updated on earthquake preparedness and advised on the maintenance of emergency supplies at home. Disaster preparedness resources include guidance from the City of Yokohama, Tokyo Metropolitan Government, US Embassy and WaNavi. The latter is a non-profit organisation that provides international residents and their families with critical information and support for living comfortably and confidently in Japan. They provide workshops, networking, navigation, research, consulting and 'Help Card for Kids', a wallet-size card with useful information and phrases in both English and Japanese that children can carry with them and use in an emergency situation. Since 3/11, YIS has invited WaNavi annually to the school to make a presentation to our parent community.

### **Emergency kits in every classroom and learning space**

As an initiative taken after 3/11, easily identifiable emergency kits are prominently placed in each classroom and learning space. The kits contain a regularly updated list of all staff and students in every grade level throughout the school. In addition, the emergency kit contains a 'Stay in Place Emergency Attendance Procedure', together with an Emergency Procedures handbook detailing (i) the emergency response team with contact details (ii) emergency services numbers (iii) overview (iv) earthquake (v) fire (vi) severe weather (vii) external danger (viii) intruder (ix) weapons/hostages (x) bomb threats (xi) sector assignments – those in charge (xii) maps of evacuation routes, line-ups, overnight/short term shelter area off campus (xiii) torch (xiv) tape (xv) notepad/pen.

We have indeed learned a number of things since the Great East Coast earthquake struck over five years ago, and our school has been unequivocally resolute in making sure that the learning from that experience has been infused into our proaction, preparedness, procedure and post operations, in order to face all types of disaster. We are extremely confident of what we have in place and yet cannot, of course, afford to be complacent. We always remain alert as we live our comfortable lives in this beautiful land of the rising sun.

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# Increasing resilience in international school communities

Angie Wigford looks at what we can all do to improve individual and community strengths

Today's challenging times present an opportunity to identify and increase emotional strengths in our schools and communities. Schools are critical environments in which individuals can foster resilience – the capacity to bounce back from adversity, and to adapt to pressures and problems. Traumatic events such as wars, accidents, terrorism and bereavement can create anxious environments in which individuals are faced with stressors beyond their control. For some, this anxiety can produce long-lasting psychological disorders and inhibit the return of normal functioning – a phenomenon that has been described as post-traumatic stress. Numerous positive psychologists and philosophers, however, have proposed that some people who undergo significant trauma and suffering not only recover from the episode but also go on to surpass the level of functioning they had before the traumatic event occurred (Hefferon *et al*, 2009), a concept known as post-traumatic growth.

There is some truth in Nietzsche's optimistic saying "That which does not kill us makes us stronger". It is clear that the more nurtured and supported students are, the better they are able to adapt and withstand trauma. However, children who experience repeated trauma tend to become more vulnerable and sensitive, particularly if they have not been nurtured and/or are not provided with the support they need. The same point applies to the adults around them.

In the current climate of risk-assessment and threat, it can be argued that there is a need to be proactive and to focus on strengthening resilience in the whole school community, recognising that the people best placed to support the community are those who are already members of the community. The better prepared everyone is, the more resilience is evident; the more able will be the community and individuals to "bounce back" when crises occur.

## The International School Context

International schools have both advantages and disadvantages in this respect. It could be argued that international school students and communities are often already quite resilient and experienced in being challenged and adapting to change. For many individuals and families, changing country and schools provides challenges several times over. Schools may also need to accommodate high turnover in staff and students. Such situations tend to help with the development of positive coping strategies.

The need for belonging to a community at more than a superficial level is, however, a vulnerability many may feel. When bad things happen, people often want to "go home" – but that home may not be an actual place, and a parent's concept of home may not be the same as that of their child. In addition, it is possible that many international schools are educating students with attachment issues, such as those who are being mainly raised by maids or nannies, some who are adopted, or those whose parents are away on a regular basis. These children are likely to be particularly vulnerable in a crisis. International schools would do well to review their practices in developing resilience, drawing on current research and sound theoretical perspectives. Some examples include the following.

## Research and theoretical models to support action

- In the Resiliency Wheel, Henderson & Milstein (2003) describe the conditions necessary for the development of resiliency in six key areas, based on reducing risk and building adaptive responses to trauma by:
  - o increasing pro-social bonding: for example through group challenges.
  - o setting clear and consistent boundaries: through clear communication of expectations and consequences that are enforced.
  - o teaching life skills: such as cooperation, conflict resolution, resistance and assertiveness skills, problem solving and decision-making skills and health stress management.
  - o providing caring support: for many students, a caring environment is critical to providing the foundation for academic success. In addition, a specialised nurture class can provide the additional security needed for some particularly vulnerable children.
  - o setting and communicating high expectations, which are realistic. The use of SMART targets can help to ensure goals are appropriate and are achieved.
  - o providing opportunities for meaningful participation: the whole community benefits and is positively reinforced through such activities.
- It is always useful to keep in mind Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a basis for understanding human needs; every staffroom should have a copy. (For an update see



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Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Debate around the proposal that each lower level needs to be met before one can move up to the next often stimulates fruitful discussion as well as reminders about our basic needs and priorities for nurturing our students.

- Seligman’s most recent contribution to the Positive Psychology literature (“Flourish”, 2015) provides fantastic advice on how to make the best of what we have now. Seligman describes how to appreciate the world and increase our emotional wellbeing through increasing positive emotion, engagement/interest, self-esteem, optimism, positive relationships and resilience.
- Cooperrider & Srivastva’s Appreciative Inquiry (1987) is a positive approach to institutional development whereby staff are asked to “discover, dream, design and deliver” more of the best of what they have. This can be a highly affirming, creative and community-building approach to school development, which is designed to create a stronger, more resilient staff.
- BASIC Ph is a model of coping and resilience developed by Israeli psychologists Lahad et al (2013) that describes the range of human coping strategies and advises on how to identify and develop them. These principles can be used to develop teaching and discussion materials for PSHE lessons.

Some examples of potential proactive intervention approaches based on a strengths perspective can be seen in the table below.

There is much we can do to develop our individual and community strengths, which will provide benefits – whether or not we experience the major trauma we all dread. By taking initiative in this way, the potential for positive outcomes of our challenging times can be nurtured.

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|                      | <b>Pre-trauma</b>   | <b>Post-trauma</b>   |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Whole School         | Train a Critical Incident Team.<br>Use the Resiliency Wheel and BASIC Ph to inform curriculum development and activities.<br>Provide mindfulness courses.<br>Embed restorative approaches to conflict resolution throughout the school.   | Use your Critical Incident Team to lead an appropriate response, starting by identifying the most vulnerable in the community. |
| Parents              | Provide Positive Psychology and strengths-based literature and workshops on coping, bereavement and trauma.   | Provide information and guidance   |
| Staff                | Organise an Appreciative Inquiry exercise.<br>Arrange twilight sessions on children’s emotional development (eg. how to talk to children about bereavement).<br>Provide emotional literacy training for teaching assistants (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Network training) so they become able to provide appropriate emotional support for students. | Provide psychological “first aid” from trained staff.<br>Offer psycho-social support and group counselling.                    |
| Students             | Develop the emotional literacy curriculum (such as SEAL: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)<br>Offer adventurous, experiential learning activities such as Duke of Edinburgh.  | Organise assemblies and lessons as appropriate to inform and reassure  |
| Small student groups | Develop a Student Assistance Programme (SAP)<br>Provide Emotional Literacy education / ELSA<br>Identify vulnerable groups and provide appropriate support (eg. Nurture)   | Provide psychological “first aid” from trained staff.<br>Offer psycho-social support and group counselling.                    |
| Individual students  | Provide counselling and Emotional Literacy/ELSA sessions  | Offer counselling and Emotional Literacy/ELSA sessions   |



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# The security blanket

Peter Kenny on the importance of cyber-security

Not addressing cyber-security with children is akin to leaving your child unattended at home or in the classroom, unsupervised with the door ajar and a sign on the door reading “Child alone”.

As educators we understand that children require physical and emotional security. Children crave security and, in loco parentis, we strive to provide and sustain it. Yet we rarely address this directly in our teaching with young children, or evaluate our success and failure in providing security as educators and institutions.

Security as an issue dominates media and dictates our lives, from personal protection to trans-national trade and foreign policy. Security pervades life and, as such, has direct relevance to curriculum and school operations. Personal, home, family, national and international security can, and should, be a recurring issue and element in our planning. How best to teach and how best to assess? Beginning with our profiles and the values we espouse, security should sit in our mission statements and be a central feature when providing education from early years through to teacher training.

## You are in the Cloud

What is the Cloud? If, like millions of educators and parents, you struggle to understand what this ‘Cloud’ is, then simply think of the power grid. Instead of generating your own electricity, you are connected to the grid. It’s convenient and efficient, but you are reliant on an external provider for your electricity. The Cloud is simply delivering computer

services (storage, programs, software) via the Internet. Files and software once stored on your own computer can now be accessed through “the Cloud”. This service is provided without the user knowing where the data are stored and who controls the data. If you and your school use social media, apps and mobile technology, you are in the Cloud.

The term “Cloud” is misleading and leads to misunderstanding. The “Cloud” really means data centre. Warehouses now store the data, software and services you once held on your hard drive. The Cloud reduces costs and provides convenience and access for our educational communities. Educators and schools are no longer limited by hard drive space or the need to manage and maintain their own servers on site. However, the rigour of security at these data centres ranges from poor to adequate. So, what Cloud companies are you using? What happens if your Cloud company changes ownership? What security do they provide for your data if you stop paying? Who controls or has access to the Cloud company? Where is the data centre located? These are the questions we must be asking to take control of our security. (See Yahoo explains the Cloud: [www.yahoo.com/katiecouric/now-i-get-it-cloud-computing-the-cloud-weve-all-123378579448.html](http://www.yahoo.com/katiecouric/now-i-get-it-cloud-computing-the-cloud-weve-all-123378579448.html))

School apps, Facebook pages, Twitter, parent portals and websites effectively put your and your child’s information in the public domain. What are the implications? In many schools we actively promote and provide children with device access, internet-based reading programs, digital portfolios and social media pages. We aim to equip children with digital skills to

## Security

enhance learning and enable them to collaborate with peers, educators, parents and guardians. In many schools social media competencies are high but computer/digital literacy is poor. What risks are we taking? Children know the rules: "Don't put a fork in the toaster", "Don't go out of your depth in the pool", "Don't speak to strangers" and "Keep the front door locked". Cyber security needs to be integrated from Early Years education just as our water safety and 'safe behaviour' programs are. It is our responsibility as educators because we are actively promoting digital learning, we are using these services and we demand parents and students provide and submit data to us. Online behaviour and understanding has to form part of a responsive, relevant and responsible Early Years curriculum. Experiential learning in the digital realm will lead to understanding by children. Focusing on 'security' as a concept can drive inquiry and ensure it is addressed in a developmentally appropriate manner. Units of study, projects and play can expose children to responsible and safe behaviours in the digital world. Educators can develop curriculum and design units to promote activities and lines of inquiry that are experiential while reducing bullying, providing greater personal security and creating a better and more relevant learning environment.

Today's toddlers will in future be navigating a digital realm that even their older siblings will not yet access. How we as educators and parents behave online in regard to security and content will impact how these children see the digital world. I suggest that educators and parents begin to engage with children in their early years about the online world. There are numerous ways to begin this learning and understanding without the need for a device, and our schools are full of great educators who can design appropriate and engaging learning opportunities and provocations that will lead to understanding security. It is the off-screen, offline and real time that is most valuable. Teachers need to design learning where children experience how data can be shared, how ownership is lost and how the rules of decent behaviour apply to the online world too. Cyberbullying is still bullying and credit card fraud is still theft. It isn't a virtual world without consequences: what happens online impacts lives.

The highly competitive environment of international schools and the corporatisation of education can lead to unnecessary risks. International schools predominantly use the online environment to market themselves, and often the digital access and 'education' portals are more about marketing than about authentic education. Websites and the online public face of a school are aimed at driving admissions and enhancing school status. This is simply a reality.

I invite you to do as I did. Select a school website, app or social media page and see what information you can glean. I chose an international school managed and operated by a global education corporation. Without any sign-in or vetting I was able to gain information about a forthcoming student trip. I now knew the exact destination of the international trip, when they were departing, their arrival location, the age of the students and the accommodation address. I knew how many would be travelling and what supervision would be provided, and I had a good estimate of the financial status of the participants and their families. A terrorist or criminal entity in possession of such information might use it to gain recognition, obtain financial gain or inflict acts best

not described. A marketing initiative exposes all participants and effectively sabotages all security measures for the teachers and students involved. Our behaviour needs to be consistent with the context of the world in which we live. With some basic security measures in place we can reduce threats significantly. Would you publish a field trip permission slip in the newspaper? Perhaps a sign board on your own front door with your schedule and location? I assume a comprehensive risk assessment had been carried out for this trip. Unfortunately, it didn't include the most relevant and public. Check your own website and see what unnecessary details are provided about children, teachers and the facility. Better still, ask your students to investigate and report back.

The internet is not a private place. Remember that once you are online you are effectively in the public domain. Your children going online is effectively like them taking the family car out for a drive before learning to ride a bike. Before they enter the information highway (now there's a term from the 1990's), give them driving lessons: provide an environment in which they can make mistakes, practise regularly and their behaviour can be monitored. Given the global relevance, personal impact and our shared responsibility, 'security' as a unit of study, a personal project and/or an integrated 'scope and sequence' across the curriculum would enable educators to implement both academic rigour and personal protection measures for all community members. Security – and especially cyber-security – needs to be addressed holistically for all children, understood by educators and parent/guardians, and adequately evaluated by our chosen accreditation bodies.

### In short:

- Never share location, logistics or calendar of events. Never share your personal information or reply to unsolicited communications.
- There are no free Apps, free Wi-Fi or free trial software. Your personal information is valuable to others. Understand what you're gaining and losing with your personal information. Once it's online, it's not yours.
- Act online as you would in public. There is no privacy online. Role modelling continues online. Never share photos that are not yours: always ask permission of those in the photo.
- Keep your security and anti-virus software up to date. If your device heats up and the security software fails, hacking may be occurring. Shut down.
- Don't open or send sensitive data when using public or 'free' Wi-Fi.

### Further reading:

[childmind.org/article/teens-and-social-media/?gclid=CPbT4MW8hs0CFlcuGwod5AAF3w](http://childmind.org/article/teens-and-social-media/?gclid=CPbT4MW8hs0CFlcuGwod5AAF3w)

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# International school admission and growing competition

Heather Hoerle reports on the enrollment challenges facing schools

The meteoric growth of international schools – from 2,584 to 8,218 in just 16 years (ISC Research Ltd) – has given rise to an important question: are existing international schools prepared to address the growing competition?

Last year, The Enrollment Management Association (formerly the Secondary School Admission Test Board, SSATB) – a US-based non-profit membership organization for

The first ever global survey of international school admission operations published by The Enrollment Management Association (formerly SSATB) was created in partnership with:

- ISC-Research
- ECIS
- EARCOS
- NESA
- COBIS
- AISA

independent school enrollment management professionals and purveyor of the SSAT admission test – reached out to numerous international school associations and professionals to disseminate a survey that would lead to its November 2015 International School Admission Industry report.

This first-of-its-kind survey aimed to discover more about:

- admission personnel, processes, and operations within and among international schools;
- the cost of tuition and the degree of financial aid offered at international schools;

- the challenges international schools face in terms of recruitment and selection of students; and
- key issues relating to governance and decision making.

A total of five regional international school associations partnered with The Enrollment Management Association to encourage their members to respond to the survey, which was completed by 296 international school admission officers. Survey participants were widespread geographically, as well as over segments of interest to the international school admission community. Not-for-profit (34%) and for-profit schools (66%) responded to the survey, with the majority of schools enrolling between 301 and 500 students (23%) or more than 700 students (39%). 94% of responding schools are accredited institutions. The full report may be viewed via [www.enrollment.org/intladmission](http://www.enrollment.org/intladmission), and some key findings are highlighted below.

## Word-of-mouth marketing is king

Unlike independent/private schools in North America, only a small proportion of international schools are actively engaged in outreach activities designed to attract and refer students to their schools. 64% of respondents say they make no visits to the human resource offices of the companies with whom they are closely tied, though larger schools and those in China are slightly more likely to do so. 63% do not visit any corporate relocation companies, and that same proportion make no visits to sending schools.

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## The greatest perceived challenge facing admission at international schools is competition from other international schools in the area

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The survey results indicate that international schools regard referrals from current and previous families and school tours as the most effective recruitment tools. Perceived effectiveness is much lower for campus videos, relocation agents, HR managers, social media, and viewbooks/newsletters/magazines. Given the role of the school tour, it is not surprising that, according to survey respondents, at least seven in ten applicants visit the school before acceptance.

### Rolling admission and assessing English language proficiency make for unique challenges

Today's international school admission leader must understand data analytics. Heads and boards are building budgets and hiring based on tuition revenue. Therefore, the admission leader's ability to understand enrollment data and accurately forecast yield is critically important for the school's financial sustainability.

Unlike most of their North American counterparts, who utilize fixed application deadlines, 89% of international schools have rolling admission deadlines. Rolling admission can create more challenging situations for admission professionals, as application volume can vary in inconsistent ways. This requires admission offices to capture month-over-month funnel metrics and more nuanced data analyses when looking at yield projections and forecasting. The most frequently used application components are grades/formal records (98%), candidate interviews (76%), teacher recommendations (71%), standardized test scores (60%), parent interviews (55%), writing samples (55%), and in-house assessments (53%). Despite the commonalities of application requirements, use of a universal, standard application is not evidenced in the data.

The greatest applicant assessment challenges at international schools are assessing special education needs (29%), determining the level of English language proficiency (25%), assessing behavior/character (22%), and differentiating the relative strength of the student's current academic program (21%). Given the global community's great interest in international schools, it is no surprise that more than three-quarters of international schools (77%) require an English proficiency test. Yet nearly half of the schools reporting (43%) use an assessment that was created in-house.

### The #1 challenge for international schools is competition from international schools

The greatest perceived challenge facing admission at international schools is competition from other international schools in the area. Also of great concern are marketing the school effectively, pressure from boards/heads to meet enrollment numbers, dealing with economic decline in the area, and enrolling a diverse student body. Despite the growing competition, 53% consider the outlook for their

enrollment growth to be very good/favorable; 27% consider the outlook good; and only 20% consider it fair or poor. Competition will surely remain the main challenge, as the demonstrated global interest in international schools will invite even more entries to the market.

Some international schools must adhere to enrollment restrictions from local governments. However, nearly two-thirds of international schools (63%) report that no enrollment restrictions are imposed by their host countries, while others have restrictions on the number of in-country passport holders (16%), don't allow in-country passport holders at all (7%), or have some other restriction (14%). Restrictions are most widespread in Asia (57%).

Quotas, on the other hand, are developed by school boards and are typically designed to limit nationality/language group dominance—thereby creating diversity and advancing schools' missions. Admission officers who operate with quotas must balance those parameters while still driving demand for the school. In this survey, a relatively small proportion of international schools responding (22%) have a quota system for students from particular countries or language groups.

### International school admission professionals are not making final enrollment decisions

As one of the world's leading resources and advocates for admission and enrollment professionals, SSATB feels that today's admission leaders are the school's chief revenue and relationship officer – a role much larger than merely collecting applications. Yet, despite the fact that international schools are even more tuition-dependent than independent schools, data reveal that for those leading the admission and enrollment function in international schools, 59% are not considered senior administrators, 60% have no role in setting tuition, 47% have no role in setting the financial aid budget, and only 20% regularly attend board meetings. Finally, only 29% of the admission leaders responding to the survey make the final decision about which students are admitted to their schools.

These data indicate the international school admission professionals may be charged with the responsibility of meeting enrollment/budget goals, but perhaps lack the authority to admit students. SSATB looks forward to working more closely with admission and enrollment professionals around the world to create an environment where the responsibility and authority associated with the admission and enrollment office meets that of our higher education counterparts.

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# International education in early childhood – what does it look like?

Nicola Weir on the importance of the early years

Much of the research and literature on ‘international education’ or ‘international mindedness’ indicates the importance and value for learners of displaying a mindset and disposition of ‘global mindedness’, if they are to be successful and positive contributors to a world that is increasingly a global village (Haywood, 2007). For our children, the expectations from parents, school and society as a whole are high; parents want their child to be skilled and intellectual, while possessing qualities such as cultural understanding, good communication, people skills, multiple languages, and so much more.

At Yew Chung International School (YCIS) Kindergarten in Hong Kong, we constantly reflect and ponder on what ‘international education’ means for an early childhood setting. We ask ourselves: can young children experience education that enables them to develop understanding

and a disposition of ‘international mindedness’? We discuss and question: how does a child who is still developing the very basics of ‘cultural identity’ also develop ‘intercultural understanding’? Is it possible for a young child not only to develop a personal identity of who they are as an individual, but also to develop the ability to connect with another individual who possesses different language, looks, and mannerisms?

Working in an early childhood setting, looking at ‘international education’ and linking it to well-known theories of early childhood education, we explored the theories of Erikson (1980) and Vygotsky (Daniels et al, 2007) whose research suggests that young children learn from both the physical world and the social world around them. They explain that children are ‘imitators’, learning and mimicking the behaviours, thinking processes, and experience-related

## Features



responses they have observed from others. Children's development of culture, and the understanding of how to 'belong and behave' within a social setting, develop through interactions with their physical and social environment. The messages those around them send, their experiences, and the meaning-making from those relationships, build within the child his/her 'cultural identity'. Erikson argues that the quality of a child's cultural and personal identity depends on the quality of the connection between the child and his/her primary care-giver, as well as the quality of relationships in the first few years of their life between the young child and those significant adults. He explains that children need to experience a healthy emotional connection with their care-giver(s) in order to develop trust; trust that will be needed in order for children to make effective and optimal connections with the world around them, both intellectually and socially.

Relating recent neuroscience discoveries to Vygotsky's and Erikson's theories on child development, it is evident that children learn best from real-life experiences and interactions with others. Findings from latest studies suggest that the brain in a young child has more active synapses than at any other time in its development. Studies show how supple a young child's brain is, and that every experience and interaction with another person – especially a person of significance to the child – affects a child's brain development and intellect, negatively or positively. The more repetitive the experience, the stronger the connection and synapse– this eventually develops instinct within the child. Neurological research has also discovered the pruning process of the brain, where any synapse not being utilized, dies. To truly benefit from the opportunity to develop an instinctual ability of cultural awareness and sensitivity, Erikson says a child needs to establish trust: trust in those around them, and trust in their environment. Without this established trust, a child will feel

anxious and fearful, resulting in compromised growth and development of intellectual and social learning, keeping the child from adopting a healthy understanding of the 'bigger world'. A young child's first experiences of interactions with significant others both at home and school thus play a vital role in his/her forming of 'international mindedness'.

Early childhood is the first experience for a child in expanding their 'world' from a small context (home) to a larger social context (school). The implication of this is that a child between the ages of birth and two, who has been predominantly with family – forming those close emotional bonds and adopting the behaviours and mannerisms they have been experiencing and observing at home – upon entering the school environment is now exposed to a new world of 'culture', where different people are not acting and sharing the same mannerisms and behaviours as home. Understanding this new era of a child's development brings with it the responsibility of catering for the child's first home culture, while establishing a wider school culture.

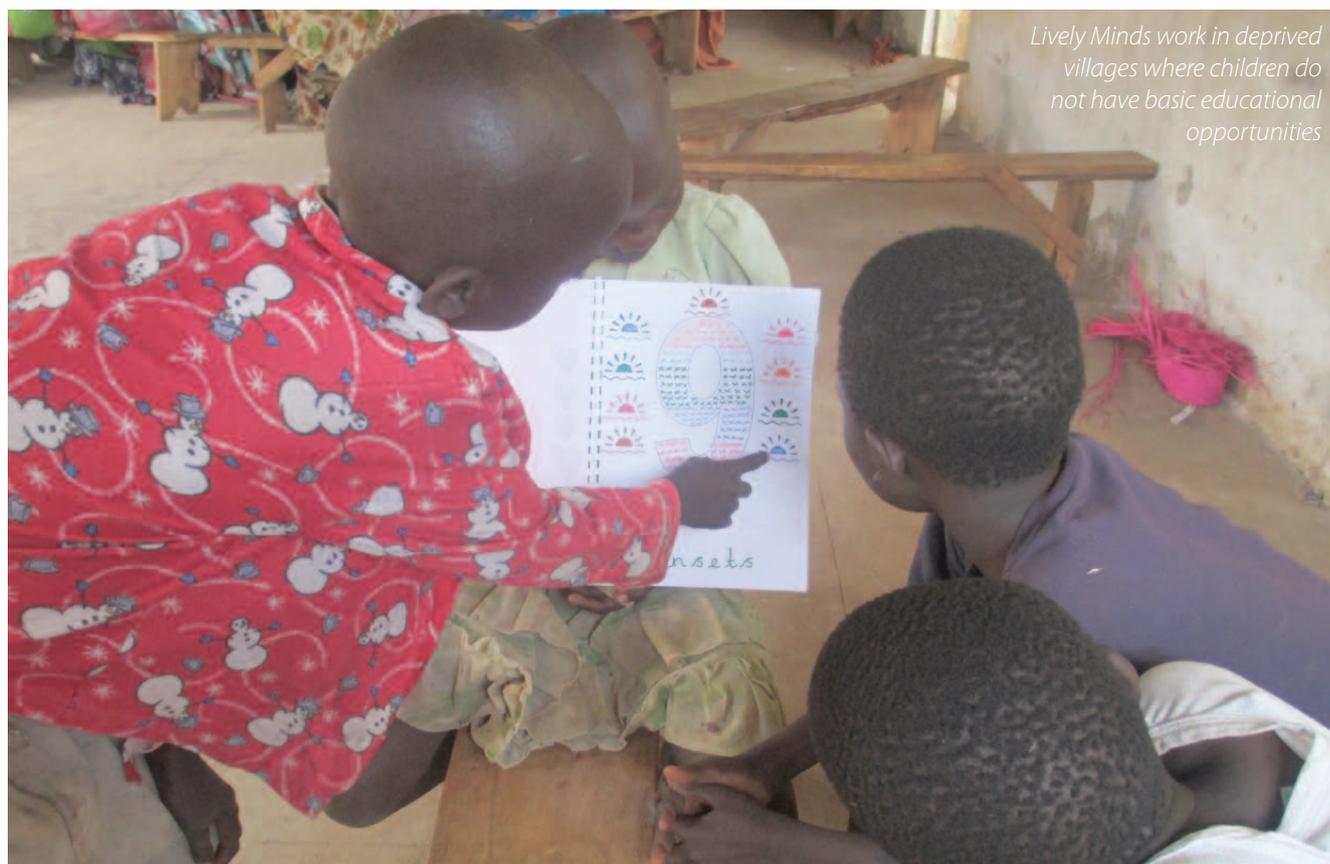
At YCIS Hong Kong, co-teaching is practised within the early childhood setting, whereby one teacher from Hong Kong whose first language is Cantonese, and a second teacher from another country whose first language is English, work collaboratively in establishing one programme for the learners. These two teachers come together with their unique 'east' and 'west' perspectives, and passionately work towards building quality relationships with the children, each teacher sharing with the children his or her first language, culture, different looks, and unique perspectives; providing children with first hand experiences of building deep and meaningful connections with two significant adults who are different from each other. Children within the programme, also varying in culture and ethnicity, come together in friendships as classmates, and share with each other their uniqueness while also learning and becoming subconsciously aware of differences and diversity amongst the members of the classroom and school. Our hopes are that this opportunity provided to young children for building trusting, quality and interactive relationships, where they are free to explore their own unique perspectives, behaviours and intellectual interests while experiencing diversity with others, will ensure that the children will begin their journey of 'international education' in a positive way.

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*Lively Minds work in deprived villages where children do not have basic educational opportunities*

# Get students engaged, inspired and involved

Alison Naftalin explains how schools can help tackle poverty in rural African villages

In choosing workshops for their students from the many possibilities available, teachers working in international schools may find it difficult to select the one that is right. Workshops should be educational while also providing students with the opportunity to do something practical and active.

An increasing number of teachers now accept offers from international and local charities to visit their school and deliver a half-day or one-day workshop, during which the selected charity provides information about its work and actively involves students through small activities that contribute to the charity's projects. The aim of these workshops is to raise awareness of the charity and its work. More importantly, the workshops serve to involve the students in the charity's projects and to show that it does not take much to make a difference and to help their beneficiaries directly.

Lively Minds is one of a number of charities that work with primary and secondary schools through our Imagine Life Elsewhere workshop. We work in deprived rural villages in Ghana and Uganda where children do not have basic educational opportunities. Without these they will, like their parents before them, never have the chance to break out of poverty. Our community-run educational play schemes reach children at a crucial stage in their development, giving them a better start in life and a chance for a brighter future.

Our Imagine Life Elsewhere workshop consists of two parts: First, we deliver a presentation which lasts around 20 minutes, followed by an activity where students make games and books that will be used at our play schemes. The workshops are delivered free of charge; all we ask is for schools to fundraise a minimum of £500 over the school year to support our work. We provide a fundraising pack as well as



on-going support to help the school reach this target.

For the workshop to take place, the school only has to provide a projector, as well as paper and coloured pens. The workshop begins with a presentation, which describes to the students what day-to-day life is like for children and their families who live in the poorest and most deprived communities in Africa, in particular in Ghana and Uganda (where we work). During the second part of the workshop, students have a chance to get creative, and make games and books that will be used in the charity's play schemes to teach young children key numeracy and literacy skills.

The Imagine Life Elsewhere workshop helps students understand what life is like for poor children living in villages in Ghana and Uganda, and the role that education can play in creating a brighter future for them. By making books and games, students are directly involved in improving the lives of these communities. During the workshop, students

tend to react in a very thoughtful way, are engaged and are eager to contribute their thoughts. They particularly enjoy the creative part of the workshop, as it provides them with a platform to make a practical difference to the lives of the children at our play schemes.

For international schools and their students, taking part in this kind of workshop helps students to learn about a specific topic related to a charity's work and to get involved in small projects themselves. More and more charities are offering to lead workshops at primary and secondary schools, and teachers and school leaders increasingly understand the value these workshops can bring to the classroom.

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# Forthcoming Conferences

September 30-October 1: EARCOS-CIS Institute on Higher Education Admission and Guidance, Bangkok, Thailand.

October 6-9: IB AEM Conference, Barcelona, Spain.

October 7-9: COBIS Student Leadership Weekend, Madrid, Spain.

October 16-19: AISA Educators Conference, Johannesburg, South Africa.

October 27-29: EARCOS Leadership Conference, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

October 28-29: COBIS/King's Group Student Leadership Weekend, Madrid.

November 4-7: FOBISIA Heads and Senior Leaders Conference, Bangkok, Thailand.

November 18-19: ECIS Educators Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark.

# Love your country: some thoughts on patriotism

George Walker joins a national debate

The ill-tempered argument about the United Kingdom's future relationship with the European Union (EU) has brought an old fashioned word into the heart of the debate – patriotism. The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, described his 'big, bold patriotic case' for remaining within the EU while his cabinet colleague, the Justice Secretary Michael Gove, insisted that leaving the EU would be an 'empowering moment of patriotic renewal'.

One definition of patriotism is 'the emotional attachment to a nation which an individual recognises as their homeland' and arguably the key word in this definition is emotional. It reminds us that while patriotism has rational roots in a shared history, culture and citizenship, there is also an irrational element comprising nostalgia and pride, and a dangerous element that appears when patriotism turns into nationalism.

Is patriotism a virtuous quality deserving of encouragement in programmes of education or does it remain, in Dr Johnson's words, the last refuge of the scoundrel? Let us examine some examples of this controversial concept.



## Love your country

The early morning tram to the International Baccalaureate office used to take me past the spot where Geneva's most famous citizen, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was born in 1712. A supermarket has replaced the original house, and written incongruously in large script on its shiny tiled façade are the words of advice given to Jean-Jacques by his father, Isaac: 'Jean-Jacques, aime ton pays'. Rousseau's 'pays' was the protestant republic of Geneva with a population scarcely equal to that of a small market town, and Isaac went on to describe the close human relationships that should underpin his son's patriotism:

*'The Genevois are your friends and brothers; joy and harmony reigns in their midst. You are Genevois and you will meet other people, but even if you travel as much as I have you will never find their equals'.*

Rousseau was proud to be a citizen of Geneva and so describes himself on the title page of his famous political treatise, *The Social Contract*. In 1762 he chose Geneva's democratic governance as a practical model on which to build his theory of an appropriate relationship between the individual and the state. Rousseau wrote:

*'I feel happy whenever I meditate on governments, always to discover in my researches new reasons for loving that of my country.'*

But his patriotism won him few friends. *The Social Contract* was deemed seditious, copies were burned in the streets of Geneva and he spent the last quarter of his life in exile, surrendering his precious Geneva citizenship.

Rousseau did love Geneva and he retained strong memories of that conversation with his father – 'My father, embracing me, was shaking so much that I can still feel and share it today' – but only in the sense that he loved what Geneva stood for. Rousseau was a loner with an awkward, unattractive personality who attached little importance to the 'joy and harmony of friends and brothers'. Patriotism for him had little to do with the day-to-day association with his fellow citizens, but rather a sense of pride in a system of governance designed to protect their freedoms within the structure of a modern state. He never allowed the love of his country to weaken his criticism of what he often saw as its shortcomings.

## Features

### Patriotism is not enough

As the process of globalization erodes the formal borders of nation states, so the object of one's patriotic feelings can become harder to define. This is not a new problem. At 7 am on the morning of 12 October 1915 the British nurse Edith Cavell was executed by a German firing squad. Her 'crime' – which she had made no attempt to conceal during her court martial – was to help British and French soldiers escape from German-occupied Brussels, and she was found guilty of treason, an offence which carried the death penalty. On the eve of her execution she told a visiting Anglican chaplain 'Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone', words that are engraved on her memorial statue near Trafalgar Square in London. Her death provoked widespread revulsion and condemnation, especially in the United States. As she acquired the status of martyrdom, her execution proved to be a propaganda disaster for the German government.

Nurse Cavell was already working in Brussels when war was declared between Britain and Germany in August 1914. The hospital of which she was matron was taken over by the Red Cross, operating in German-occupied Belgium under the terms of the 1906 Geneva Convention. Cavell's action in smuggling allied soldiers – around two hundred in total – back to the safety of the Netherlands contravened those terms. Cavell's famous last words are a moving statement of a very brave nurse insisting there shall be no distinction between friend and foe in her hospital; each shall be treated according to his medical needs. What they do not describe, or attempt to justify, is her decision to flout the Geneva Convention by putting the immediate needs of her compatriots above the long-term protection guaranteed by the Red Cross. Patriotism was indeed not enough if it was to put at risk the work of an international organisation that was committed to protecting the basic human rights of all those who found themselves exposed on the battlefield.

### Education for patriotism

In his book *Schools Across Frontiers*, Alec Peterson, founding director general of the International Baccalaureate, insists there need be no conflict between education for patriotism (as might be promoted by a national curriculum) and international education. On the one hand Peterson applauds the role of patriotism in offering 'a countervailing force to the atomistic threats of isolation inherent in so much of modern life' while, on the other, he draws our attention to the impact of mass migration and the growth of regionalism, often the birthplace of terrorism. Here, says Peterson, is a need for another countervailing force – international education, which is designed to foster international mindedness – to oppose the adverse forces of jingoism and nationalism that are sometimes encouraged by patriotic education.

Peterson called for 'a more subtle and sophisticated form of education for patriotism'. A generation later we are in a better position to suggest a number of possible components of such an education. For example, educators should encourage their students to:

1. Feel comfortable with multiple loyalties, derived from a range of different affiliations, in order to avoid an obsessive concern with a single issue that can lead to extremism.

2. Understand how the use of social media can summon groups to register their (often short-term) loyalty to a person or to a cause. Flags and national anthems cannot compete with the persuasive power of the digital media.

3. Recognise that in some parts of the world loyalty to religious groups that cross territorial boundaries is more powerful than patriotism towards a particular country.

4. Reflect on the meaning of pride which is often associated with patriotism. Can one be proud of someone else's achievements? Can we prevent wounded patriotic pride turning to destructive vengeance?

5. Understand the impact of globalisation on patriotism.

### In or out?

How can two senior ministers of the same government, sitting around the same cabinet table, use the concept of patriotism to support diametrically opposed positions on Britain's relationship with the EU?

Michael Gove's position, contained in a speech on 19 April 2016, was almost Shakespearean in its emotional appeal:

*'For Britain, voting to leave will be a galvanising, liberating, empowering moment of patriotic renewal ... We will have confirmed that we believe our best days lie ahead, that we believe our children can build a better future, that this country's instincts and institutions, its people and its principles, are capable not just of making our society freer, fairer and richer but also once more of setting an inspirational example to the world.'*

David Cameron, on the other hand, in a speech delivered on 9 May 2016, insisted that going it alone was not a realistic option. Britain's greatness was best sustained through collaboration with others:

*'If you love this country, if you want to keep it strong in the world and keep our people safe, our membership of the EU is one of the tools – one of the tools – that helps us to do these things ... We love this country and we want the best future for it.'*

Using Rousseau's phrase – love this country – Cameron argues that patriotism needs protection: pride in being British has to be understood in the context of the economic and political environment of the European Union.

On 23 June of the same year the British people voted narrowly, but decisively, in favour of leaving the EU. Time alone will judge the wisdom of that decision but, in the meantime, let us remember that 21st century patriotism comes with the label 'handle with care'.

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# The tourist teacher

Hedley Willsea looks at the nomadic lifestyle of international educators

I spent one summer in Thailand and, as I sat on the beach with nothing more than a cold beer, I began to wonder what life would be like living there. Being based in Moscow with its long winters and heavy traffic, the attraction of Thailand is a real temptation. Later that day, as the sun went down and the smell of after-sun lotion reminded me I was truly on holiday, I picked up a copy of the Bangkok Post. Brighton College was to open a school in Thailand and, in an interview, the headmaster commented: 'One of the problems in international schools (in Thailand) is that you get teachers who head to Southeast Asia because they want to have a nice two-year holiday and want to enjoy the sunshine in a different culture ... We want them to move to our school because they care about teaching'

I saved the newspaper article and as I now re-read the quote, I think it's an understandable concern for an

administrator: the teacher who does a year here and two years there, never being held accountable for his/her students' exam performance and perhaps not having enough time to embrace the school's mission statement. But I can't help feeling it's also a generalisation which doesn't do justice to the landscape of international teacher recruitment, of which Thailand is inevitably a part. I left the UK as an English teacher sixteen years ago and my first international school was in Kuwait. Lured by the idea of travel and something different, I intended to give it a go for a year and save some money, with the vague idea of returning home and continuing teaching or finding a new career. Well, fifteen years later I'm still teaching overseas. In that time I've worked in four international schools, which averages at around four years per school. In fact, I spent five years in Kuwait, two in Portugal, two in Oman and I'm now into my seventh year in Russia. I was in

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**While staff continuity and stability are major advantages to any school, I don't see an automatic connection between the length of time served at a school and the quality of teaching – but I do think there is a point at which a teacher feels invested in the school and the progress of his/her students on a basis that becomes yearly rather than termly.**

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Portugal when I heard the term 'tourist teacher', and having just turned thirty and going to the beach straight after work every day, I was quickly becoming one. However, my life has changed considerably since those two-year stints, which explains why I've 'settled down' and stayed for over half a decade at my current school: I'm now married to a Russian national and we have a two-year old son.

I found my first international teaching posts via the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) and as an inexperienced teacher unaware of potential pitfalls, I was dependent on the TES forum and the International Schools Review (ISR). While contributors to these media offer invaluable advice based on years of overseas teaching experience, such sites are also open to abuse: for those who have negative experiences, satisfaction can be achieved by leaving subjectively negative reviews and comments. I found my most recent posting through a team of recruitment consultants and education specialists who match schools and educators by acting as intermediaries in the interests of both parties. Teachers join by providing several references, after which they are given access to a database containing impartial and objective reviews of all of the associated schools, which are visited personally by the consultants. The essential point is that both teachers and schools are vetted. In other words, they are measured against the criterion of suitability.

While staff continuity and stability are major advantages to any school, I don't see an automatic connection between the length of time served at a school and the quality of teaching – but I do think there is a point at which a teacher feels invested in the school and the progress of his/her students on a basis that becomes yearly rather than termly. Different schools naturally have different retention averages, and the time spent at any one school can depend on a number of factors such as cost of living in relation to salary and savings potential, travel and accommodation costs and allowance, health insurance provisions, cost of education for dependants, the political situation, the quality of life in and out of work and the potential for professional growth.

International teachers on the move undoubtedly enjoy amazing opportunities for travel and growth, both personal and professional. However, we also face risks: political situations and working visa requirements can change dramatically, and in the event of a contractual dispute the legal representation and support offered by unions in national contexts is generally not available. More than once, I've been the teacher who has had to pick up and carry extra classes for the rest of the year when a colleague has left mid-contract. It's frustrating, but I've always taken the attitude that in international schools nothing is fixed: in interview a teacher is expected to make a life-altering decision involving not only a change of employer but also a change in living conditions and cultural norms. When all is said and done, a teacher's length of tenure at a school cannot be criticised if he/she has fulfilled their contract.

Looking back at my own record, I don't know why I stayed for only two years in Oman because I loved the school and I loved the country. All I can say is that I know when it's time to 'move on' because it feels like a switch is being flipped in my head. It sounds completely irrational, but that's the only way I can explain it. Any administrators may shake their heads in dismay at reading this, and all I can do by way of appeasement is offer the following quotation from Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*:

*'Life inevitably became rather dull and niggly, and they began to imagine that this was therefore the fault of the worlds they'd settled on – none of them was entirely satisfactory: either the climate wasn't quite right in the later part of the afternoon, or the day was half an hour too long, or the sea was exactly the wrong shade of pink.'*

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# How to choose new technologies for your school

Drawing on lessons learned as both business consultant and salesperson, David Pitchford offers a commonsense approach to adopting new technologies

Fear not, this is not a technical article. Instead it's about reclaiming your confidence when confronted with new, hypnotising technologies that claim they will revolutionise your world.

A suggestion from the outset: don't fret that you are being left behind by technology. Much of the technology industry has a curious start-up mentality, as captured in Al Ries and Jack Trout's first Immutable Law of Marketing: "It's better to be first than it is to be better". The point here is that the latest technology is not necessarily good technology. Or it may not have matured to the point where it is good. A handful of products and services have indeed changed the world, but it was rarely the first version that made the grade. Remember

Atari, the Sinclair C5 and Alta Vista search? They all preceded PlayStation, Tesla and Google by several years – but where are they now?

So don't dive into the first option, and don't believe the hype. Take a measured approach and take control.

## First steps

For whatever purpose you are contemplating technologies, turn the telescope around. Start with what you need; don't start with the technology. I strongly recommend, as a first exercise, asking yourself which aspects of your school are the most demanding, frustrating, time-consuming and expensive. Then ask your staff the same question. You

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**Ask yourself, too: do we really need it? It's easy to be dazzled at this stage. Don't be. Try to think through the advantages and disadvantages.**

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could perhaps use a free online poll such as Survey Monkey to gather the answers. Don't bother to mention that the exercise has anything to do with technology.

I have seen international companies ask the same questions of themselves, and the output has been invaluable. One MD of a French technology firm I worked with called the results "gold dust", largely because they highlighted problems that no-one realised were common throughout the organisation. An added benefit was that the staff appreciated being asked.

Once you have your answers, start considering possible solutions. Again, don't think technology yet. Consider the more pedestrian options. The structure is often the problem, not the tools or process. For example, someone being overworked in doing an unavoidably manual task might simply need to share the load with another colleague. No new technology or change in procedure will make a difference.

But technology often helps. And to decide where it might apply, you need to find a technically-inclined person – yourself perhaps, or a colleague – to start Googling the options. A suitable search phrase could be, for instance, "Technology to help children with reading difficulties". You may well find a category of technologies that apply. Each category can then be whittled down to a manageable number of possibilities.

It is also wise to check what other schools in your group or membership organisation (e.g. COBIS, FOBISIA, ECIS) already use or offer. Can you share with them or, as helpfully, learn from them?

Ask yourself, too: do we really need it? It's easy to be dazzled at this stage. Don't be. Try to think through the advantages and disadvantages, viz:

- How much time, money or peace of mind might the incoming technology save?
- Would it usefully impress parents, students, staff and/or prospective staff?
- Do you already have technology that does roughly the same thing?
- How much training and process change would the incoming technology require?

#### **Whittling down the list**

Having contacted your technology companies you will

invariably be offered a demo or sample. With physical samples – a text-reading pen for instance – the key is to test it with the people who will use it, students included. It might seem amazing to you but make no sense to them, and they may know of a good alternative. Then check the "Questions to ask" list below before proceeding.

Software demonstrations are invariably impressive. That's because the salesperson chooses scenarios that show the product in its best light, sidestepping snags that may interrupt their flow. Now, those snags might be small to you (for example, you can't change the date from an American format to a British one) or they might be a showstopper (if, for instance, you can't insert dates from the past). And it's very much in your interest to find out what they are. Two approaches in particular will help:

- Prepare. 15 minutes of reflection could help to avoid an expensive mistake. List questions which directly address the problems you want this thing to solve. And come with real-life scenarios in your head. As the demo proceeds, try to imagine how they might unfold.
- Drive the demonstration. Challenge the paths you are taken down. Ask, for example, "Can you change that from 12 days to 3 months?", "Show me how I find that person from the main dashboard", "Will I be automatically notified about this change?", and so on.

Few prospective customers do either of these things, and I have seen them suffer as a result. Please – learn from their mistakes!

#### **Five standard questions to ask**

Beyond the obvious product-specific questions and basic checks about the integrity of the company, ask the following – and ensure that significant answers are covered in any contract. Then identify and quiz the company's customers to see if the responses ring true.

1. How much staff/student training is required, how will it be delivered and updated, and in your experience how long does it take until the technology is bedded into the school?
2. What support do you provide and how well does it work for my time zone?
3. Where are you based and what bearing does that have on the commercial/support relationship?
4. How securely do you gather and store sensitive personal information?
5. What legislation applies to this technology (e.g. Safeguarding, Data Protection Act) and how do you address it?

The advice above is only, of course, a starting point. The more energy you devote to choosing new technologies, the more likely you are to make the right choice and the more your school will benefit. Good luck!

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*ZIS students interview the local sheikh in Zawiya Ahansal, a remote valley in Morocco's Atlas Mountains, about the lack of clean drinking water in his community.*

# Applying economic theories to the real world

Jason Welker shares the outcomes of an elective course at Zurich International School

This year marked the third iteration of an elective course offered to Zurich International School (ZIS) students in grades 10, 11 and 12: Environmental Economics. The course was designed to provide students with the opportunity to learn about real world applications and examples of economic theories in relation to the environmental challenges facing society today. For roughly half of the time in the course students engage in project-based learning (PBL), a way of learning that allows them to work in teams investigating, educating one another and the community, and creating action plans around real world topics that interest them.

This year the class of 18 students worked in teams of four or five to develop projects around four real world environmental issues:

- Fairtrade as a strategy for sustainable human development
- carbon offsetting as a means of reducing an organization's carbon footprint

- recycling and waste management in Switzerland
- clean drinking water in the developing world

Projects unfolded in three phases throughout the year, in each of which students had to meet concrete deadlines and produce evidence of their learning to the teacher, classmates and the community. Starting with "Investigation", in which students conducted formal research on their topic and prepared a 15 minute presentation to educate their classmates, projects moved onto the "Awareness" and "Action" phases, in which students taught a lesson on their topics to ZIS lower school classes, and finally organized and enacted a project in or beyond the ZIS community to make a meaningful social impact in the area of their chosen issue.

This year's projects culminated in several successful actions in and beyond the ZIS community, including the following.

- The Fairtrade team worked with the supplier of coffee to our faculty kitchens to investigate the possibility



10th grade Environmental Economics students teaching a lesson to third graders on the difference between Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade products.

of replacing our regular coffee supply with Fairtrade certified coffee. With the support of the school's business manager, Lower School teachers will enjoy Fairtrade coffee this year and, if feedback is positive, we'll roll it out to the whole faculty in the second semester. Additionally, the team worked with the athletics office to replace footballs at the upper school with Fairtrade certified balls – in order to promote the protection of workers in the industries that provide us with our everyday consumer goods through living wages and safe working conditions. The team also created a page for the ZIS homepage (<http://www.zis.ch/page.cfm?p=3483>) to raise awareness of Fairtrade products.

- The carbon offsetting group worked once again with ZIS's carbon offsetting partner to research and identify suitable projects for ZIS to finance in the coming year with money from our carbon offsetting fund. The team then made a video about their project (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8nJnw6PNNgKcjBrNW1hMGVVRTA/view?pref=2&pli=1>) to raise awareness in the ZIS community about the ways in which the school plans to eliminate its carbon footprint in future.
- The recycling group worked with our Admissions team and the Development office to create and publish a handbook to recycling in Switzerland, targeted at new ZIS families. It has been published both on paper and in the online community portal, and has been provided to each campus front desk for ZIS families to benefit from this year.

- The clean drinking water group continued a project from last year, which provided two LifeStraw Community water filters to the community in Morocco visited by ZIS students during the upper school's Classroom Without Walls (CWW) trips. This year's team first sought feedback from the Moroccan community and learned that they required clear instructions on assembling and maintaining the filters, after which they took it upon themselves to develop such instructions in three languages and with images. Two additional filters will be delivered by this year's CWW Morocco group, along with the new instructions, to help bring the benefits of safe drinking water to a remote community in the Atlas Mountains.

The Environmental Economics class will continue during this year, with over 20 students currently enrolled. The effectiveness of project-based learning as an alternative to the traditional classroom experience for both delivering content and developing skills including communication, collaboration and teamwork, has been proven over three years of successful projects in this class. While other classes in all subject areas develop their own PBL experiences for ZIS students, project-based learning will continue to evolve in this elective class open to grade 10, 11 and 12 students looking for a fun and engaging way to learn about and take action on real world issues.

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# Learning is risky business

## Malcolm Pritchard on the task of balancing risk and reward

The safety and wellbeing of every child is the primary concern for parents and educators. Anything that poses a risk to our children is therefore undesirable. Accordingly, schools have become highly sensitive to risk and its management; we have become, to an extent, risk averse. By eliminating uncertainties, we reduce risk and ensure safer learning for our children.

We might ask, however, what do we lose in eliminating risk? It is of course a clichéd truism to state that learning is a process of trial and error. We ask learners to 'try' something and work to eliminate 'error'. The extent to which error is absent in anything our children do is probably the most common benchmark of achievement. A 'right' answer marks success; a 'wrong' answer is undesirable. In one sense, learning is about the elimination of errors, a process that takes a learner from 'wrong' to 'right'. Ideally, learning seeks to be error-free.

Of course, the real world is neither perfect nor predictable. As soon as we inject human agency, or indeed any novelty, into learning, we introduce the possibility of error and the unexpected. Our natural inclination is to limit risk. In order to eliminate risk, however, we need to eliminate uncertainty. In our school, we might optimize certainty by tightening our control over the learning environment: teachers, curriculum, assessment and facilities. To reduce the potential for error, we might also minimize complexities, simplifying learning challenges to a point where learners cannot fail, where learning becomes harmless.

This approach reflects a strong deficit view of risk and

error. Given the complexities of the adult human experience, avoiding risk may not be helpful. Are we really committed to offering a completely 'safe' education that sets up young learners for immediate and devastating failure when they leave the carefully curated experiences of school?

Our capacity to control the life experiences of a learner is finite. Our ultimate goal must be to prepare our children for life beyond the years of formal education, when control is no longer possible or desirable. Through overemphasis on risk aversion, however, we run the greater risk of trapping learners into an artificial world of childish simplicity, ill-suited to developing the skills and understandings that are expected of adults managing the risks of the real world. In seeking safety in the short-term, we remove the opportunity to learn about assessing and managing risk; we deny our children the very experiences that will generate coping skills to recover from mistakes and grow. In effect, we create the very thing we fear the most: we ensure that our children will fail when they move beyond the sanctuary of school and home.

In fact, learning as a process of developmental change cannot be separated from risk. The more interesting and challenging the learning experience, the greater the range of potential outcomes; and the greater the uncertainty, the greater the risk. The truly novel, by definition, lies beyond the learner's existing experiential frame of reference. How a learner responds to a novel learning problem is therefore inherently unpredictable and hence entails risk.

Safe learning is something of a false tautology: it is harmless learning – innocuous, inoffensive, inert, and ineffective. Safety is a state, a place protected from harm; learning is a process of growth, exposed to uncertainty and risk. Errors are an essential part of that growth: they should be embraced as real evidence of engagement in learning. One must 'try' in the trial, before experiencing 'error'; one must risk error in order to succeed. To use a medical analogy, exposure to risk and experience of error is a form of inoculation: we reinforce our mental and emotional defence systems by exposure to controlled and relatively benign risks.

If learning is genuinely aimed at preparation for life beyond the safe harbour of school, our aim must be to encourage trial and celebrate error on our way to success. At the same time, we must be wise in managing the ever-present tension between harmful risk and learning reward.

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**If learning is genuinely aimed at preparation for life beyond the safe harbour of school, our aim must be to encourage trial and celebrate error on our way to success.**

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# Keep calm and scan on

Susana Almeida and Ingrid Kay offer four good reasons for using QR codes in the classroom

In October last year, when preparing our first parent-teacher conferences, we had just finished a new class movie that we wanted to share on that day. We started to think about how we could show it to our parents while they were waiting their turn. We thought of several options – and then we came up with the idea of creating a Quick Response (QR) code that if scanned would link parents to the movie. That way they could comfortably watch it from their phones and save it to watch later!

Since that October conference day we have been researching QR codes and their use in the classroom, and have realised that they are a powerful construct when used sensibly and purposefully. We have found several approaches to using QR codes in the classroom, always using them with clearly defined aims for our learning context.

QR codes are similar to barcodes, but can contain much more information. The information can include, for instance, text, videos, websites or songs. When a QR code is scanned with a smartphone, iPad or computer (if you have a web camera) it links information to you.

We believe there are four good reasons for using QR codes in the classroom:

## 1. Making children's portfolios interactive

At Marymount International School Paris, parent teacher interviews are scheduled three times a year. In Kindergarten this year the interviews scheduled for April would be student-led. The first thought we had (beside panic) was HOW could 5 year olds tell their parents what they have been learning independently? We wanted to make sure that the children would be able to recount effectively what they had been doing and learning, without our interaction and help. We thought that using QR codes would help achieve this.

After the children have completed a task or topic, we ask them several questions related to the things they learned, how they felt, what they liked and what they didn't like. These ideas are recorded and then turned into a QR code that is attached to a work sample. In this way we are enriching the documentation, and for the children it is easier to remember and recount what they have learned.

Tracking learning using QR codes has become a constant in our class, as we have found that we can easily see each child's progress. In literacy for example, as part of our reading program we monitor children's reading by recording them

read the same words several times a year. The children can scan the QR codes and hear themselves progressing with each read. A very similar approach has been used to track the children's number knowledge, as they are recorded reading numbers.

## 2. Complementing children's work with more information on a topic

As well as using QR codes to document children's work individually, we also use them to share class activities, such as movies and songs. These are included in the portfolios as well as in bulletin boards and around the classroom. QR codes are also useful to complement work displays on bulletin boards, as they are a way of providing additional information to our class and to anyone in the school community who passes by and has an interest. For our Science unit on landforms, children learned a song and were videoed singing it. They were also recorded reading the booklet they made explaining landforms. QR codes were created to share both activities.

At the end of every topic the QR codes of group work can be re-used to make hot spots around the classroom, for children to scan and revisit their work. We usually have a developmental time during the week where children can choose an activity of their preference. Lego used to be the favorite, but now it's scanning QR codes!

In Marymount International School we give weekly updates on the school portal on class work. We incorporate bi-weekly class movies as part of the updates. We now have a poster in class that is constantly updated with the latest movie for children to scan during the developmental sessions.

## 3. Allowing autonomous work with self-correction activities and review work

We found that QR codes could help us in our Math lessons, by using them for self-correction purposes and also to differentiate within ability levels. We always give a set activity that is geared at Kindergarten standard. We do, however, have children who are able to work at a higher level, and QR codes enable these children to self-correct their work and then continue with extension work that they can self-correct by scanning, giving us more time to work with the children who need greater attention and support.

In literacy we found that repetition, mainly for letter sound recognition, is useful and it works! Children find it more

exciting to scan and access a movie that shows the sounds and makes them repeat them, rather than individual drilling with the teacher.

## 4. Providing opportunities for independent reading

As part of our reading program, repetition of listening and reading stories is important. By attaching a QR code to a reader, children can listen to the story as often as needed. We find this particularly useful as we have three reading groups in our class. By having a child listen to the story first and reading them at the same time we are scaffolding their reading. A QR code is made with the recording of the teacher's voice reading the story, and is attached to the cover of the book. This could be done with any library book in the class.

Another idea is to insert QR codes inside books on certain pages that children would scan, listen to a comprehension question, answer it and listen to the response. This is a very motivating way of having children self-monitor their reading!

Our experience so far is that children find QR codes motivating and exciting, and they are actually making the most of the activities we have set up for them. Our view is that QR codes can be used effectively at all levels of the school. Making a QR code is easier than you think, and it won't cost you a thing. So why not have a go!

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# A coherent IBDP core – reality or myth?

John Cannings says students need to see more connection with academic subjects

In 2011 Nick Alchin wrote that “Historically there has been little emphasis on commonalities between the core elements [of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma], let alone a central core identity”, and indeed one could question the claims of the IB at that point to an integrated holistic education model. However, since 2011 there has been a concerted effort by the IB to emphasise the role of the core of the Diploma Programme (Theory of Knowledge (TOK), Creativity Action Service (CAS), and Extended Essay) in relation to the Diploma subjects and the coherence between them. The most recent guides for the Diploma core (Theory of Knowledge 2012, Creativity Action Service 2015, and Extended Essay 2017) have highlighted the identity of the core and its coherence. In addition, each individual subject guide provides support for the links with the core as well as some practical examples. The documents argue that the core helps to promote:

- international mindedness
- personal development and discovery of self-identity
- support for and by the subjects

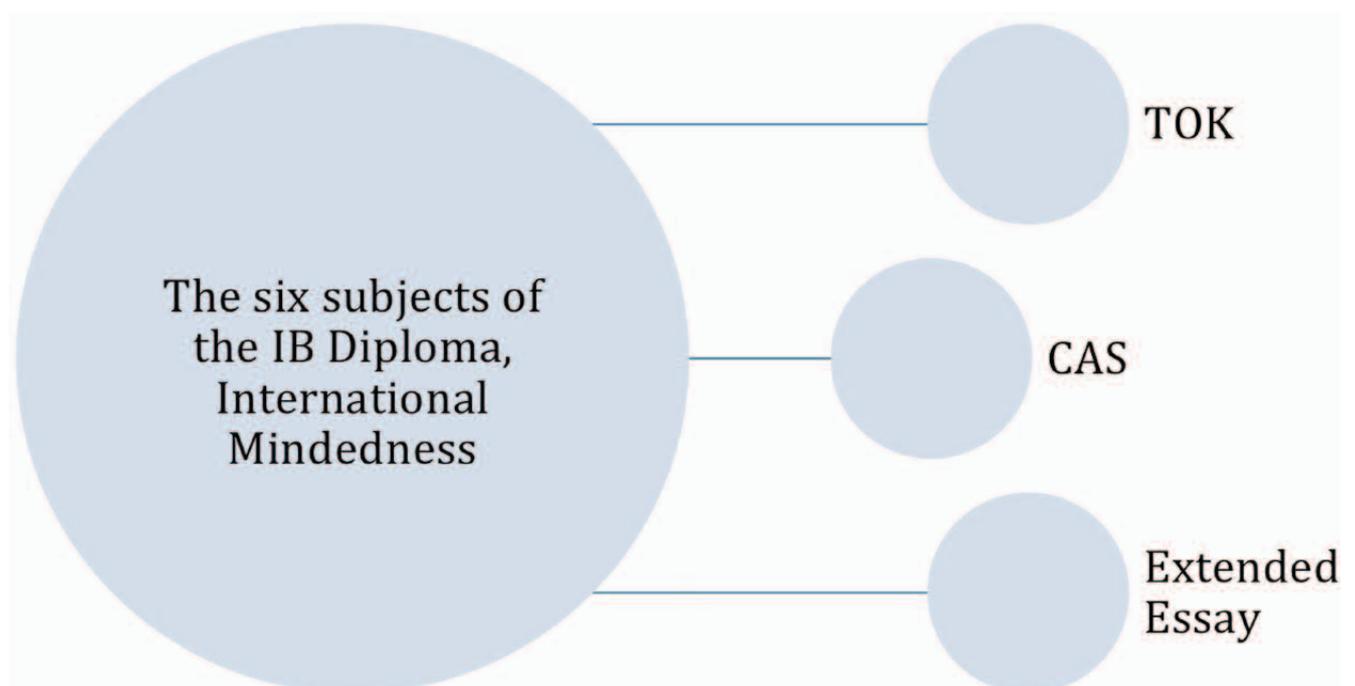
Each of these qualities is developed differently for each part of the core.

The Approaches to Learning (ATLs) also help to support a coherent core. Reflective thinking, an important thinking skill, is key to all three parts of the core. The type of reflective

thinking that is required for TOK is focused on how we acquire and process knowledge, for the Extended Essay on research skills, and in CAS on individuals’ reflection on their personal experience. The ATLs are at an early stage of their use in the Diploma; anecdotal evidence suggests that many of them are already in use in Diploma teaching but have not yet been widely recognised by practitioners.

The new Diploma Programme planners – suggested for use in the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC) – demand that users make links between their subject and CAS. The planners include many good points in making teachers think carefully about how they will deliver the curriculum and assess it. A criticism that has been levelled at the new subject planners is that, while teachers may add a link to either TOK or CAS from their subject area, there will not be much commitment to doing so. Some argue that these links will be completed only to ensure the requirements are formally met.

The IB expects that all staff teaching the IB Diploma will know about each element of the core and contribute to its development in the school. However, anecdotal evidence from participants in both face-to-face and online workshops suggests the contrary. Diagrammatically, on the basis of experience in facilitating workshops, the IB Diploma model can be represented as follows:



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*"I chose to study International Business Administration at Tilburg University because the university has a very well-ranked business department, and a strong Bachelor's program in business. Once I visited the campus I knew: this is home."  
Tomás, Portugal*

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## The IB expects that all staff teaching the IB Diploma will know about each element of the core and contribute to its development in the school.

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According to responses from workshop participants during the last year in the IB Africa Europe Middle East (AEM) region, TOK is an unknown to many, with many workshop participants unable to identify or distinguish between the Ways of Knowing or Areas of Knowledge (AOK). They are also unaware of the AOK to which their own teaching subject belongs. Additionally, they have little idea about how TOK is formally assessed or its value in the 3 bonus points potentially earned from the core.

CAS is still bedevilled with an ‘hour collecting’ approach, with many teachers and some coordinators talking about the 150 hours of experiences that were expected of students in previous guides. The Service Learning approach advocated in the latest CAS guide requires that subject teachers make some links to service carried out by students. The World Studies Extended Essay, meanwhile, is slowly but surely gaining in popularity with schools, but is still a mystery to many teachers. This offers a wonderful opportunity to link a global issue (which could be identified in a CAS experience or project) with an interdisciplinary study. The introduction of the Approaches to Teaching and Learning in the IB Diploma Programme, and also of a unit planner for all subjects – demanding that teachers are able to make links between the subjects and the core, and to identify ATL skills – are strategic moves which bring the Diploma in line with the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Primary Years Programme (PYP).

A number of schools have started to deal with these new developments in the IB Diploma so that they can implement the requirements successfully. One approach currently being promoted by the International School of Zug and Luzern is to establish a core group that drives professional development and staff meetings in the school. This group has held a workshop to identify the ways in which integration can occur, and has been used both to plan and to lead staff meetings. One goal has been to make teachers aware of when they are actually teaching TOK in their subjects, and to see how they can incorporate it into their classes. Another initiative has been to link class activities to a CAS experience (the essence of service learning). On a practical level, organising this is challenging as it means finding collaborative planning time for the IB Diploma staff. Such an approach is being considered by a number of schools who see the implications of the changes in the IB Diploma.

One issue that needs tackling is the way in which schools and teachers understand and undertake their roles. Schools have become departmentalised, like businesses. Each subject is a department and so are CAS and TOK – though the true IB model moves away from that approach. In order for the core element of the Diploma to be successful, teachers need to work collaboratively – first to understand and then to develop and integrate the core elements.

The role of CAS coordinators is a case in point. Their role is to coordinate, but in many schools they are left to undertake

the role individually. How the role is interpreted by individuals varies, but it is a different and distinct role from teaching. Anecdotally, some CAS coordinators take on the role of demanding regular and long reflections from students in the same way they may have thought of homework in the past. This is inappropriate, and can remove the excitement from CAS activities.

So how can schools move forward and make the change to becoming a more IB-style school? Some suggestions are:

1. Work collaboratively to establish a common vocabulary.
2. Consider the areas of the core together: TOK, CAS and ATL.
3. Plan to include these elements in your teaching – meaningfully, not just paying lip service.

What are the advantages of such an approach, and why should you bother? One reason is that, if students are able to see the connections between their academic subjects and the core of the Diploma, they will have a more cohesive academic experience. They will begin to have a greater understanding of how their subjects connect to their everyday lives. They will see that the skills they learn in one classroom apply in another – and outside of the classroom too. If teachers can successfully plan collaboratively and make connections between their subjects and the core, they will also gain valuable teaching time. All of which leads to an improvement in academic success and – importantly – to a greater love of learning for our students.

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### Acknowledgements

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# The practice of including diverse perspectives

Carol Inugai-Dixon looks at what we can learn from different cultures

It was the usual workshop layout: several circular tables with chairs to seat groups of four to six participants around central collections of colourful marker pens and post-its; a power point presentation displaying an official blue and white framed slide; a flip chart to the left; the whole set-up designed to engender the International Baccalaureate practices of team work in constructing shared meanings and understandings from a diversity of perspectives.

And this is how it went:

Shortly into a class feedback of individual group summaries on the value of diverse views, it was suggested that the IB

might still be somewhat Eurocentric. The suggestion drew general agreement, not without some despair, along with some additional narrative as follows.

The IB, it seems, is conscious of its western roots and traditions, and the possibility of consequent bias. In fact, the IB intentionally addresses these biases whenever it can. For example, curriculum review working groups are carefully constructed to include members from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Of course there are constraints. Since the working language of the review groups is invariably English, reviewers must have the necessary language skills

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**International mindedness includes a conscious  
endeavour to consider as diverse a range of  
perspectives as is feasible. When dominant  
voices silence others this becomes impossible.**

---

for participation – which therefore excludes many potential contributors. And then when, for instance, Japanese invitees attend, they don't really participate because they come from a 'group culture' and don't want to stand out as individuals. And there the shared understanding of the challenges the IB faces in addressing its known biases while promoting diversity may have remained, had someone not questioned the Japanese stereotype.

That there is a tension between the need for human beings to express their individuality and their need for social interactions is well documented. In fact the IB Diploma Programme and Middle Years Programme both have a subject group reflecting this; Individuals and Societies includes history, anthropology, psychology, politics, geography and more. How different cultures value and mediate the individual vs group tension varies considerably and is invariably complex, although we tend to make generalisations – such as that Americans value individuality. As already mentioned, the Japanese are recognised for their commitment to, and success in, working in groups or as a team. But to hold this view and then suggest that Japanese do not participate in review group meetings seems contradictory.

A Japanese colleague of mine, who has strong leadership skills and who is quite forthright, recently returned from an IB workshop in South East Asia and confessed to feeling disappointed. He was not disappointed in the workshop, which he said was very good, but in himself – because he had always thought he could actively participate in discussions, yet in this instance had been almost silent. On discussing further it seems that there were several reasons for this. He was the only Japanese member of the group and was using English as a second language, while the others were mostly Caucasian with English as their first language. Apart from the language factor, it appeared to him that, quite often, everyone was talking at once; at other times someone would interrupt another's explanation. Although there seemed to be a drive to be heard, no one appeared to be listening very carefully. There was little attempt at making connections between different views in order to broaden perspective.

All of this was quite a load for him to process and left little time for any consideration of how to respond. Did no one think to ask for my colleague's perspective because they assumed his being Japanese meant he did not want to stand out? (Although ironically I suppose he did, in his comparative silence!)

If each member's diverse input towards the joint construction of shared understandings is really valued, then to dismiss an unexpressed perspective as non-participatory is another contradiction. The useful thing about contradictions, however, is that they can be starting points to examine hidden assumptions and expose anomalies that need to be addressed.

So, if we examine the contradiction that the Japanese, famous for their group work and team work, do not participate in IB group meetings, we might generate some questions for inquiry. For instance, are there factors inherent in the review group meetings that silence Japanese, and maybe other, voices? How are traditional Japanese groups different from IB review groups in their practices and protocols? What can be learnt from Japanese practices that might add to the efficacy of those already in place in IB meetings?

As educators we have a bank of strategies in place to teach our students practices for discussion, participation and inclusion that reflect the attributes of the IB learner profile. The underlying rationale and philosophy for this is the IB mission to develop international mindedness. International mindedness includes a conscious endeavour to consider as diverse a range of perspectives as is feasible. When dominant voices silence others this becomes impossible. Unless every single member has an opportunity to give their view then valuable perspectives are lost and potential resources for creative synergies are wasted. As IB educators we share these understandings. As IB practitioners we should also practise them.

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# Counting the costs and benefits in transition to a digital world

Juliette Mendelovits and Ling Tan compare the results of paper and online tests

We live in a digital age – a truism that applies to much of our day-to-day lives. Education is increasingly moving from paper and print to screen and keyboard. The trend is inevitable and in large part welcome, but as educators we need to understand the impact the digital world is having – both positive and negative – on student learning.

One area in which the change from print to digital is being studied closely is in large-scale learning assessments, especially those that attempt to track progress over time. The biggest international survey, Programme for International

Student Assessment (PISA), has grasped the nettle and moved almost entirely from paper-based to online assessment over the last decade. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is experimenting in a similar direction. Since a key purpose of these assessments is to measure trends over time, it is essential to understand what the impact is on trend lines of changing from paper-based to digital. ‘If you want to measure change, don’t change the measure’ is a byword of longitudinal assessment – but if you must change the measure, you need to investigate the effect of the change.

## Curriculum, learning and teaching

Then you are at least able to make an informed judgement as to whether any changes observed in the results are based on actual changes in achievement (for example, maths proficiency), or have more to do with changes in the mode of testing (in this context, a change from print to digital).

The International Schools' Assessment (ISA) is also faced with this challenge. In response to requests from many international school users, ISA has introduced the option of either paper-based or online testing from 2016 onwards. Ideally, the results would be directly comparable, regardless of the mode of delivery, allowing schools to continue to monitor progress of individual students, classes and whole-schools year on year, whether they choose paper or digital as the mode of delivery. But it would be foolish to assume that this ideal is the actuality.

To test the actuality, therefore, the ISA conducted a 'mode study' in 2014-15, comparing how students performed on the same tasks in paper and online delivery modes. The results not only have a bearing on the feasibility of continuously monitoring student achievement, but also throw some interesting light on the way students learn and provide some indications about how different modes of presentation could have an effect on teaching processes.

ISA offers assessments of reading, mathematics, writing and science. The first three of these were paper-based only from 2001 to 2015. A separate mode study on writing performance is planned for the future. Science was introduced in 2015 as an online-only assessment, so a mode study in science was not relevant in the context of ISA. We focused for the purposes of this study on reading and mathematics in Grades 3, 5, 7 and 9. The students were taking part in the 2015 ISA Trial Test, which is conducted annually on a voluntary basis by participating schools in order to try out the quality of tasks that may be included in the real tests. These students went on to take the main February 2015 assessments a week or so later. In trial test schools that agreed to take part in the mode study, students were randomly assigned to two groups: one group was given a paper-based test, while the other was given an online test comprising the same tasks. The performance of each group on the tasks was analyzed, taking into account their baseline proficiency (judged by their performance on the ISA in previous years), as well as background variables such as gender and mother tongue.

So – what was the outcome?

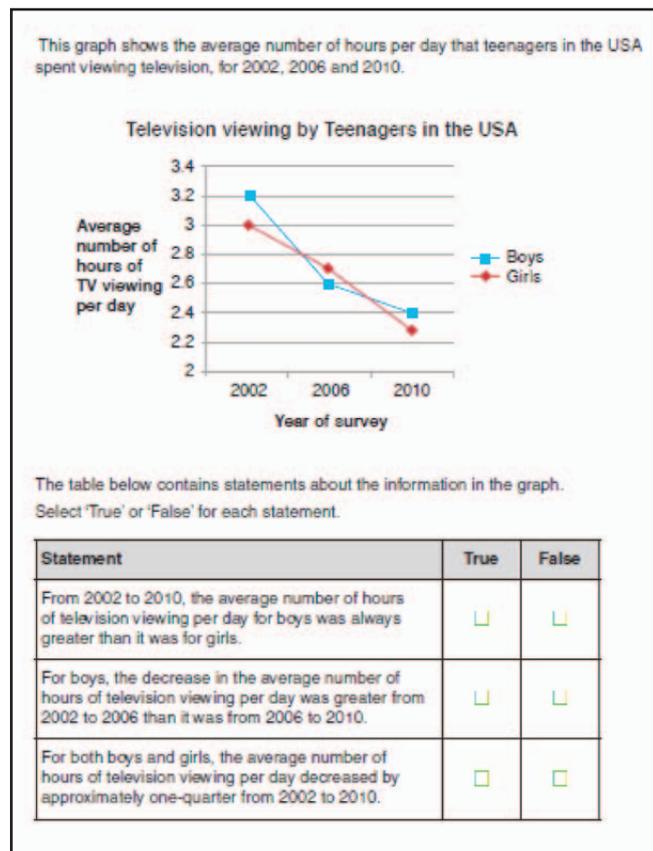
First, the big picture. For reading, results were broadly comparable in the two modes at all four of the selected grade levels. For mathematics, the same was true for Grades 3, 5 and 9, but in Grade 7, students who took the paper-based assessment did significantly better than those who took the online assessment. What might explain this?

Closer examination of performance across the sequence of the Grade 7 maths test showed that the paper-based and digital groups behaved similarly on most of the test. It was only on the last five tasks – the hardest on the test – that the performance of the digital group declined. This did not appear to be through lack of motivation to complete the tasks: in fact, about the same numbers attempted the tasks in the two modes, right to the end.

One explanation for higher achievement on more difficult tasks when working on paper is that, when solving problems in mathematics, it can be helpful to draw on diagrams and

graphs and to make notes – a strategy easy to use when working on paper, but not so easy on a screen. Providing paper for students to work on when they're operating in an online environment is likely to help, but is not the total solution. Tasks that include complex graphs and tables cannot be reproduced by students on their working paper so cannot be annotated in the way they can in paper tests. And transposing working from paper to screen allows an additional opportunity for error.

One of the tasks that showed the biggest difference in performance asked students to interpret a graph about television viewing, in the form of evaluating a number of statements as true or false (see Figure 1 below).



This difficult task was answered successfully by almost half of the Grade 7 students who saw it on paper (as shown in Figure 1), but by only just over a quarter of those who saw it on screen. The difference could be due to two factors: one, the inability of the digital group to annotate the graph, and two, the onscreen reading challenge presented by each of the rather wordy three parts of the question.

There's a lesson here, not only for designers of tests, but also for anyone who wants to convey information, about how dramatically mode can affect our ability to read and deal with complexity. From the more narrow perspective of assessment design, the results showed that this kind of task cannot be treated as equivalent in paper and online versions.

One more example from this study shows that the evidence was not all in one direction: in some cases the digital version was easier than the paper-based one. Another task on the Grade 7 maths test asked students to fit the maximum number of boxes of a specified dimension onto a pallet (see Figure 2 opposite).

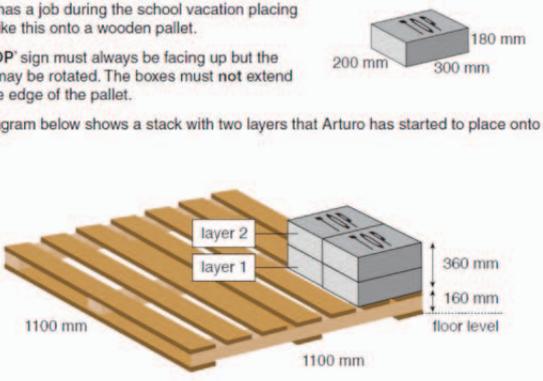
There's a lesson here, not only for designers of tests but also for anyone who wants to convey information, about how dramatically mode can affect our ability to read and deal with complexity.

**Boxes on Pallets**

Arturo has a job during the school vacation placing boxes like this onto a wooden pallet.

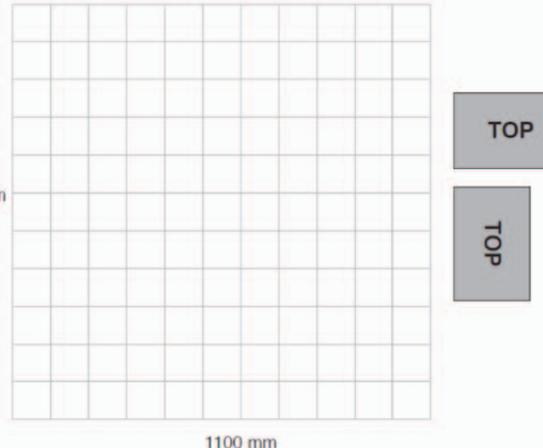
The 'TOP' sign must always be facing up but the boxes may be rotated. The boxes must not extend past the edge of the pallet.

The diagram below shows a stack with two layers that Arturo has started to place onto a pallet.



Arturo discovers a way of placing the **greatest number** of boxes in each layer onto the pallet.

Draw the boxes on the pallet to show how Arturo did this for the bottom layer.



In the paper-based version (shown in Figure 2 above), students were asked to draw the boxes onto the pallet, represented by a grid. In the online version, the students had to drag and drop the rectangular box shape (on two rotations) onto the grid. The online version was much easier – presumably because the drag-and-drop strategy allowed quick evaluation of alternative possibilities, whereas in the

paper-based version students had to visualise and draw the shapes, sometimes erasing before a solution was found. It seems likely that the online version of this task turned out to be easier because of the utility of the drag-and-drop format. In trial tests for other grades, similar spatial reasoning tasks with a drag-and-drop version in the digital mode were also easy compared with the paper-based version.

The conclusions we have reached from this small research study can be summarised as follows.

In terms of learning strategies, we can infer that, where maths problems are complex students are likely to cope better if they can sketch and annotate freely. On the other hand, where spatial reasoning is involved, the ability to manipulate and experiment with shapes – made possible in the digital environment – aids problem solving.

In terms of test construction, the ISA tests and the selection of tasks will be informed by what we have learned about the specific effects of mode and format on students' performance, and the strategies they use to respond to tasks. We have evidence that not all tasks are of equal difficulty in different formats. Where tasks behave significantly differently in the two modes, then for measurement purposes they are treated as two different tasks, so that students are not disadvantaged.

In general we can reassure schools that results on the digitally-delivered ISA tests in reading and mathematics are comparable with those from the paper-based tests, and reporting on trends can proceed.

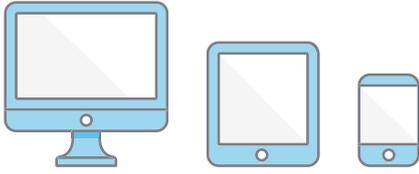
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# Random acts of unprovoked kindness

E T Ranger wonders if there's room for any 'unmeasurables' in a performance culture

The other day a young woman friend – well, certainly a generation younger than me – remarked that she had recently become aware as never before of kindness. At school, at university, in about 20 years working in media-related jobs, she had never encountered kindness as a significant factor in her daily life. Only lately, in a new benign relationship, and working with enthusiastic wholehearted professionals, had she become aware of the power of kindness.

Is it just me? Is it just her? Where have you seen 'kindness' on a checklist recently? How can we put kindness into the curriculum? In the seemingly relentless drive towards measurement of performance we tend only to perform what is measurable. There is potentially a checklist that we can assemble to ensure the proper performance of education, and to measure it on a comparative, competitive scale. But kindness is a gift; where can we find room for the spontaneous feature in our agenda?

That word in the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile, 'Caring', might be the location, but it has overtones of duty, or – from the viewpoint of those who are cared for – of rights. Our attention has become fixed on rights; things we feel entitled to demand, things which are catalogued in an allegedly Universal Declaration. In our rush to develop international standards for a 'world class' education we have constructed models and measures which narrowly specify what is currently expected in our sector of the world. This prescribes how we expect our clientele to emerge from our mould, never mind their ever-growing diversity. In the campaign to standardise humanity there is no room for the random. But kindness itself is not an act to be done, inspected and ticked; it is an attitude which occasionally emerges and brings a warmth between two people which reminds us of the joys of being human. It is a surprise, to be found in that arena in which we are not being judged but are free to give and to receive, voluntarily. It can happen at any time, in any place. Coincidentally I mentioned the remark a few days later to a cousin whom I know well. 'That's funny', she said, 'my mother said just the same when she was widowed. The kindness of neighbours made such a difference to her life'.

I feel sure that many schools have considered such issues, and I wonder how they have dealt with them. Has the formal curriculum absorbed the informal? Is there any room in the day or the week that hasn't been claimed by activities, ambitions, competition? There are many factors in the lives of our families, perhaps most notably the mothers' reasonable expectation of a career, which impose a tight framework on the family schedule, squeezing out whatever is not visibly rewarding. Yet we bring to our conferences

motivational speakers, and pay them large sums to tell us of the inspirational experiences that have happened to them way outside of any curriculum. Why? Should we be inspired to hear that schooling should be taken with a pinch of salt, and that what matters in our later lives comes regardless of formal education?

The question was put by Plato, and by many since: What should schools do? We glibly claim that child-raising is a process of opening doors and inspiring questions, but the truth is that the core agenda is dictated. We design a curriculum, we teach subjects, we pass on a proper canon of knowledge, and we examine what has been retained of this essential grounding. Where does quality come in? How have others risen to the challenge of making 'giving' something more than just another tick box?

I suspect that the answer lies not in what we teach, but in what we model. How do we react in front of students to modern dilemmas, such as democracy meaning that wealthy companies can invest in election candidates, or national loyalty meaning that past immigrants are valued above future ones, or our prosperous community's love of nature taking priority over another community's right to grow food for their family? We have a full-time job explaining the paradoxes of our complex world, and it may be that the greatest teaching aid is ourselves – what we live out in front of the children. Is this the opportunity in the school day for displaying creativity, humanity, and kindness?

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**Should we be inspired to hear that schooling should be taken with a pinch of salt, and that what matters in our later lives comes regardless of formal education?**

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# What's in a name? – adding to the Periodic Table

Richard Harwood looks  
at four new additions

June 2016 saw the naming of four new elements in the Periodic Table. Arguably one of mankind's greatest intellectual achievements, the Periodic Table has seen progressive additions to its lower reaches in recent years. The year 2012 saw the naming of element 114 (Flerovium) and 116 (Livermorium) – now among favourites for general knowledge quiz questions. The gaps have since been filled with this year's updates:

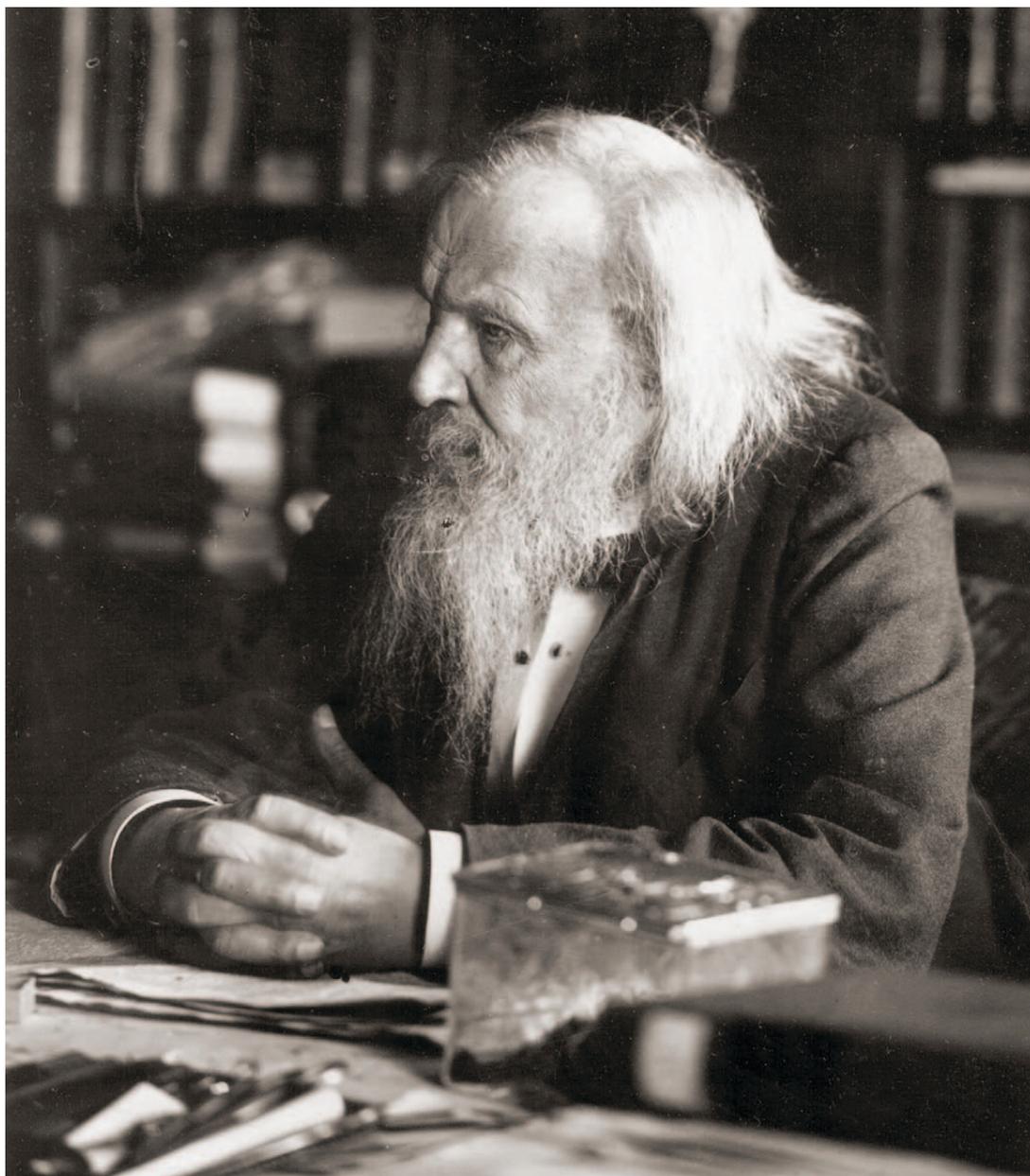
- 113 – Nihonium, Nh (the name derives from the Japanese name for that country, as the atom was discovered at the RIKEN Nishima Centre for Accelerator Science)
- 115 – Moscovium, Mc (named for the Moscow region where the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research is located in Dubna)
- 117 – Tennessine, Ts (recognising the contributions of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Vanderbilt University located in the US state of Tennessee)
- 118 – Oganesson, Og (named for the nuclear physicist Yuri Oganesson who has played a leading role in the search for new elements)

These elements complete the bottom row (or period) of the modern table (see [www.ptable.com](http://www.ptable.com) for an interactive table that now includes them). The new elements are all extremely short-lived, the synthetic creations of scientists using accelerators to bombard atomic nuclei into each other. Uranium (element 92) is the heaviest naturally occurring element on Earth in any significant abundance. Such research is useful in studying the nature of the forces that bind atomic nuclei together, generating an understanding of the properties – such as radioactivity – that stem from nuclear chemistry. Theory predicts that there are 'islands of stability' in this region of the Periodic Table, where certain protons and neutrons should be more readily able to combine and hold together for a relatively longer time.

The naming of these elements is designed to recognise the institutions and individual research scientists responsible for making major contributions to the field. Overall the names of the elements reflect historical, cultural and language developments in human history. One intriguing example arose from the development of porcelain as a ceramic material in the West. Originally brought back from China by Marco Polo, porcelain had become a highly expensive,



*A Ming dynasty porcelain vase, made during the Xuande reign of the Great Ming (1426 – 35)*



*Dimitry Mendeleev,  
deviser of the first  
Periodic Table.*

desired commodity among European gentry. It was then discovered that the key ingredients were a white clay, kaolin, and feldspar. Fused together at high temperature, these minerals give true porcelain its lucidity and toughness.

Soon, wherever feldspar could be found, it was mined. A feldspar mine opened on the island of Ytterby, around 12 miles from Stockholm. For several geological reasons the Ytterby mine was found to be particularly rich in lanthanides (missing at the time from the original Periodic Table devised by Dimitry Mendeleev). As these rocks were studied, new elements began to fall out of them like loose change from one's pocket. Ytterby became immortal in the detailing of the Periodic Table. Seven elements trace their discovery back to this one quarry, and four are named directly from it: ytterbium, yttrium, terbium and erbium. (Details of this story and others linked to the table can be found in 'The Disappearing Spoon' by Sam Kean).

When Mendeleev drew up his first table, many elements were missing, undiscovered at the time. Mendeleev's genius, in part, lay in recognising this and leaving gaps for elements as yet to be discovered.

Over the intervening years, those gaps in the table have been filled as new elements have been discovered and placed in sequence; the links between position in the table and atomic structure being among the most profound and far-reaching 'joining of the dots' in our understanding of the world around us. Less well documented has been the search to fill those gaps and the false entries: dead ends, and errors made in good faith followed by retraction. In fact, there have been more falsely proclaimed elemental discoveries throughout history than there are elements in the current table. Who now has heard of Celtium, Brevium, Florentium and Virginium? The detail and salutary history of these 'elements' has recently been published (2014) in 'The Lost Elements: The Periodic Table's Shadow Side' by Marco Fontani, Mariagrazia Costa and Mary Virginia Orna – a book which is interesting for its insights into the cut and thrust of the progress of scientific discovery; the interplay of proposition and falsification.

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# A revolution in education

Leila Holmyard introduces 'a small venture with gigantic ambitions'

Khan Academy was launched in 2006 with a bold mission: to provide a free world-class education for anyone, anywhere. With millions of learners across the world studying online at their own pace and in their own language, Khan Academy has become the epitome of the global classroom. Following this success, Khan Academy founder Sal Khan has set his sights even higher. The launch of a small experimental research school in California marks the beginning of a new project through which Khan hopes to stimulate a paradigm shift in education towards student-centred learning. This article outlines how the Khan Lab School is pioneering a revolutionary approach to education. Currently catering for children aged 5-14 years, the school plans to open a high school in 2017.

## Self-paced and mastery-based

At the Khan Lab School, a customised learning experience has been created whereby each student identifies his/her unique needs and sets goals that determine the school work they undertake. As one would expect from the creators of Khan Academy, much of the academic learning begins with technology: students watch videos and take formative and

summative assessments using responsive online tools. This is underpinned by weekly one-on-one conferences and small group seminars with teachers that support personalised learning, remedy misconceptions and set goals for the future.

Unlike most schools, in which teachers have a set amount of time to cover a topic, students at the Khan Lab School can take as long as they need to master content and skills before moving on. As one 12 year old student explains, "If I don't think I'm ready, I can schedule [the topic] for a later time. I can make sure I learn the subject fully, not just part of it." Dominic Liechti, Executive Director and President of the Khan Lab School, emphasises that maximizing positive and impactful relationships between students and teachers is key to the success of this model: "Independence is important, but appropriate guidance within a cohesive structure is also very important. One of our learning design principles is to foster student agency [whereby] the teacher acknowledges the student's ownership of learning and trusts the student to disclose challenges that are resolved ultimately by various inquiry-based approaches and modes."

It is through this approach that students achieve fluency in reading, writing, maths, computing and a foreign language,



as well as learning in wellness, the arts, civics, the sciences, finance, global societies, economics and statistics. Liechti describes how the academic curriculum was derived: “We started by looking at what concepts we would like to expose our kids to, starting with conflict, relationships, culture and identity, as well as the skills the workforce is demanding as we move from an industrial age to a conceptual age. There’s no question about learning basic skills like reading and writing, but equally there is no need for memorisation.”

### Architecture for learning

The Khan Lab School consists of one large room with several smaller breakout rooms attached, allowing students of all ages to learn and collaborate together. Mikki McMillion, Lead Teacher, describes the advantage of this design: “As a teacher, it is a wonderful learning and growth environment. I have gained a much wider perspective of student learning as I get to view the learning that happens from 5 to 14 years old. The most beautiful moments are when all the ages are together – the atmosphere feels like a family.”

That said, there are some challenges that come with an open classroom environment, as one student explains: “It can be easy to get distracted when other people are being loud, but if you want peace and quiet, you can go to a breakout room.” The breakout rooms provide a space for students to work independently or in small groups. Groupings are informed by independence level, as opposed to age or academic ability, and this is measured using a rubric that describes a student’s independence path from early childhood to a career-ready young adult. The area of “focus”, for example, begins with staying engaged in a playful activity and culminates in the ability to recognise and get into a

flow state, during which the student is fully immersed in an intrinsically rewarding activity

### Project-based learning

The school aims for students to spend about half their time learning through projects in order to apply content to meaningful real-life and unfamiliar contexts. Some recent examples include designing and making a snowboard, creating a business selling handmade cards and crafts, teaching Arabic to younger children, and teaching underprivileged children how to cook a healthy meal for their families. Other projects are linked to external activities which capture the students’ interests. For example, one student took part in the National Novel Writing Month, setting herself a writing goal of 20,000 words and thus developing both her writing and time management skills. Students exhibit their project work to a public audience several times a year and receive feedback from experts in the fields. One student tells of how she presented a children’s book she had written, and asked the public for donations to pay for illustrations and publishing. After selling the book for a profit, she donated the proceeds to the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF).

Without grades or transcripts, the culmination of a Khan Lab School education will be the production of a graduate portfolio: a compilation of a student’s work which displays mastery across academic and non-academic domains. The school is piloting existing portfolio models to decide how best to display and communicate student work in preparation for the high school opening in 2017. Career and College Director, Erica Cosgrove, envisages that the portfolio will incorporate a range of media, including “a video component where you can see students work in real time and they can talk about

their projects; links to websites they have created; reflections and feedback on their conceptual understanding and competencies; challenges and opportunities; photographs and examples of creations and artifacts; and a log of their internships, volunteering and work experiences”.

**Sharing success**

The Khan Lab School is a small venture with gigantic ambitions. Can it succeed in catalysing a paradigm shift in education? By starting small, Sal Khan hopes to develop and hone an educational model that is empathetic to the needs of students, educators and administrators. Over time, the curriculum, resources and best practices will be made available for use by educational institutions around the world. As Khan explains, “In 10 or 15 years, any student on the planet will be able to get a smartphone and self-educate; Khan Academy can be the resource that liberates the classroom to focus more on experiential learning. We are in start-up mode right now [at the Khan Lab School], but over time the goal is that the Lab School itself will be a replicable model and the facets of the school will be useable by schools in different ways”. Khan wants to bring together the successes of Khan Academy and the educational model of the Khan Lab School to empower educators everywhere to create truly student-centred classrooms.

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***For further information about the Khan Lab School and Khan Academy, see [www.khanlabschool.org](http://www.khanlabschool.org)  
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# Being biracial in Japan

Elin Nakayama examines a cultural issue

Everyone has their own identity, which should not be controlled or suppressed by others. Identity shows who we are and what we value. It helps to develop personal beliefs and opinions, allowing people to fit in with communities. Without identity, people would lose self-confidence leading to depression and there would be no originality in society.

So why is it that biracial people who have one Japanese parent and one foreign parent find it difficult to develop their identity? Japanese society tends to differentiate between 'foreign' and 'Japanese'. This results from the teaching of harmony and unity to Japanese people from a young age, when Japanese children learn the importance of keeping order in society by sharing the same perspectives, values and culture. With unity and harmony, people act together as a whole, keeping peace in the community. However, because of this focus on unity, Japanese people draw a border between themselves and biracial people, or 'hafu'. Many biracial people are distressed about developing their identity alongside the expectations of Japanese society.

Differences in language, looks, and nationality can lead to isolation and friction between Japanese and biracial people. In a society that values unity and harmony, an individual may stand out from the rest in a significant way because of his or her differences. To fit in, he or she must change and suppress their identity. This is not always possible for biracial people. One scenario is when a biracial person feels Japanese, but others do not accept his or her differences. The biracial person is then treated differently from 'normal' Japanese people, even though they have tried to fit in. The gap between self-image and recognition from others does not match in this case, leading to discomfort for the biracial person.

Another difficulty is the expectations other people have of biracial people. Since biracial people have two or more

nationalities, others expect them to be able to speak a second language well. In addition, many Japanese people have a stereotypical image of a biracial person that comes from the media. Two very famous biracial models in Japan are Becky and Rola, who both fit the same stereotype of Japan's idea of beauty: slender with light skin colour and large eyes. Japanese people expect all biracial people to be similarly beautiful. This can lead to disappointment for others if a biracial person does not meet their expectations. Being placed under this pressure can create stress for biracial people and challenge their idea of who they really are.

To help biracial people develop their identity, it is important to include them in conversation. By making connections, biracial people will be made to feel like a part of society and not different from Japanese people. Also, being open-minded about accepting differences will help society to be a more comfortable place to live in, and allow both Japanese and biracial people to improve relationships between different races. This will then lead to multiculturalism for Japanese society and create in Japanese people a better understanding of biracial people and their problems. In this way, biracial people can develop their identity.

Unity is necessary to keep harmony in society, but it is also important to allow some freedom for people to develop their own identities; otherwise, pressure from society can narrow down ideas and smother expression.

***Elin Nakayama is a student at Hiroshima International School, Japan. Though not herself biracial, Elin has many biracial friends and is interested in issues arising from their different backgrounds. Email: [info@hiroshima-is.ac.jp](mailto:info@hiroshima-is.ac.jp)***





A panel of NIST students were invited to plenary session at the AIE conference to consider an important question

# How are students supported to engage with difference?

Julian Edwards reflects on the student plenary discussion of the AIE conference

At the Alliance for International Education conference hosted by NIST International School Bangkok in March 2016, a panel of NIST students aged from sixteen to eighteen were invited to respond in a plenary session to the question:

*'In what ways do international schools support students to engage with difference?'*

Schools can engage their students with a variety of differences, including differences within the immediate community. Students interacting across age groups, with immediate classmates or supporting new students with transition, are all examples. However students can also be the catalysts for engaging with difference beyond school with people from different social and economic backgrounds. The NIST students had a number of thoughts about how this might be supported, and what follows is a summary of key aspects of the ideas they shared.

## Teachers

Jamie argued that 'schools need to support teachers to engage with difference'. They 'need to cultivate teachers' who in turn will find ways to support students who are less eager. Am believed that 'mentors with passion make a real difference in schools' and that, while students may have the nature to become involved with difference through service, schools are still the best place for this to be nurtured. Sarina felt that personality is a key and the variety of schooling experiences that some international students accumulate can also make them more open to engaging with difference. Sarina has attended many international schools and when chances to engage with others outside the school community were not available, she missed them greatly.

## Engaging students

Am observed that, for her, having opportunities at an

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## Many of the students described the positive cycle created when service projects engaged them with people whose circumstances were different but where there was a shared experience.

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early age to engage with others (in her case the IB Primary Years Programme Exhibition) encouraged her to seek opportunities to continue. She asked the question 'How do we ensure that everyone in the community has a means to engage with difference in some way?'. Kengo believed that engaging students with service and encouraging them to connect when younger with people who are different makes it more likely they will grow up to be influential and to lead others. Hyunjie felt that engaging in anything – even sports or with others who are 'alike but different' within the school community – is still positive action. However, when considering compulsory service, such as the IB Diploma Creativity Action Service (CAS) programme with which the older students were involved, opinions varied. Nikhil argued that CAS is a double-edged sword, and that while it may push some people towards engaging beyond their normal experience, it does not guarantee they will continue. However he felt that his experiences through service projects (including micro financing) had had a positive effect on his academics, bringing theory to life and allowing him to see the relevance of his studies. Discussing the same project Hanako questioned whether being evaluated for service can genuinely support a culture where students are motivated to engage with difference.

### The role of reflection

The students had strong views about the role of reflection in encouraging young people to engage positively with different people and experiences. Because reflection is so widespread, Alessandro argued that it is impossible for students to engage with every reflection in the same meaningful way. Nikhil felt that the group reflections carried out by his service group were motivating and purposeful, yet the individual reflections required for CAS were more mechanical. Jamie summarized this as the difference between encouraging and forcing. 'Reflections feel like homework', he argued, 'yet we students do reflection naturally and we would rather move on with our projects than spend time on reflection. In some projects we have gone to communities and, after needs analysis, we've created project plans, which double as reflections'. Kengo supported this view, arguing that a video reflection made on a mobile phone during the return trip from a service project had greater impact than a more structured reflection required by CAS.

### Mutual experience

Many of the students described the positive cycle created when service projects engaged them with people whose

circumstances were different but where there was a shared experience. Alessandro mentioned a project called '2Develop' which aims to develop the members of the school and the partner community in a mutually enriching way: 'We understand the experience of others and we also develop project skills. The group we partner with in the Maeramt region gain support for building their own solutions'. Ann described a project called 'The Dreams We Believe In' which is about developing personal relationships with children who are orphaned and HIV positive; the product is shared experience. Kengo has established the 'STEP programme': 'high school students experiencing working with teachers to learn about the work of teachers, and providing experience for a potential career path'. He believes that the teachers involved also value the partnership.

### Summary

Jamie believed that encouraging student initiative, whether service or otherwise, and cultivating learning can light a spark. Schools can only encourage a first step into service and need to be prepared for the fact that it may not lead any further because mandatory service may have the opposite effect to that which is intended. Nikhil believed that the higher education system puts pressure on students, and the emphasis on test scores results in a disconnect between university entry requirements and education that engages positively with difference. From the discussion a number of key questions emerged, which may be interesting for other schools to explore in their own context:

1. Does the school provide opportunities for authentic mutually enriching experiences between its own students and others that are varied and do not only focus on service?
2. Are there rich opportunities for reflection about real events in forms chosen by students?
3. To what extent is there an understanding that engagement with difference is personal and that any proactive engagement is a positive step?
4. How does the school support passionate and nurturing adults who can be role models and catalysts to support the above?

**Julian Edwards is Head of Learning at NIST International School Bangkok, and facilitated the student plenary discussion at the AIE conference.**  
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# Independent Thinking

By Ian Gilbert  
Independent Thinking Press (2013)  
Reviewed by Anthony Hemmens

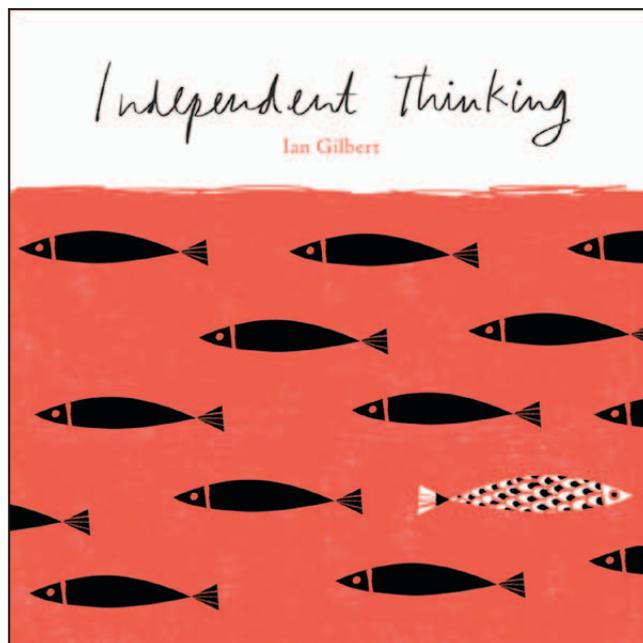
Ian Gilbert offers four good reasons to read this book: to confirm ideas, to inform ideas, to challenge ideas, and to form ideas in the first instance. (Actually, he gives these as good reasons to read any book). 'Independent Thinking' is not a 'how to' guide to mastery of a 21st century cognitive competency. Rather than 'teaching' independent thinking, this book originates from independent thinking. Rather than promoting independent thinking, the book is a veiled call to action; students have, after all, learned various interpretations of the world, but the point that still remains is to change it. The book revolves around that eternal central question – 'what is the purpose of education?'. Viewed through the lens of critical pedagogy, there are two possible responses: indoctrination or liberation. In this educational dichotomy Gilbert makes his position clear: he's on the side of liberation.

The question of the purpose of education is not by extension the same as asking 'what is the purpose of learning?'. Learning, I would posit, is the automatic process of psychological development within and into a social context; it is the natural functioning of the brain facilitated by the collective endeavours of social groups that cultivates the creation of knowledge and understanding. Education, by contrast, is a social – and often political – construct; it is the way in which learning is organised and the mechanisms employed to bring about educational outcome and output. It takes both a formal and informal form, occurring in every realm of human endeavour and in every human relationship – some of these, of course, impacting to a greater degree than others. The most prominent and visible form of formal education is the schooling system, which represents the institutionalisation of learning.

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**Gilbert tells us that he doesn't set much store by way of answers; like all good thinkers he prefers questions. But not all answers are replies to questions; some are solutions to problems.**

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## From indoctrination to liberation

The mechanism that achieves indoctrination is regimentation. Children are 'trained' into a submissive state, accepting of the prevailing social order and the world-view of the brokers of power. Children learn obedience and conformity, and education is marked by control. The strategy utilised to achieve this end is the regimentation of school life and the establishment of schools in accordance with the factory model along the principles of Taylorism; uniforms, bells, walking in line, queuing before being given permission to enter a classroom, permission slips to go to the toilet, elaborate procedures for punishment and reward, the over-use and mis-use of summative assessment, the swamping of curriculum with superficial content. Adult 'experts', rather than enhancing the process and experience of learning, hinder and shackle it in the name of 'education'. In many institutions throughout the world these measures are explicitly and overtly militaristic in their design. The message is simple: be obedient, don't ask questions, know your designated place, fulfil your assigned role. In the so-called 'traditional' (whose tradition?) model of education, students arrive at the classroom as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge from an elder authority figure, a teacher. Once sufficiently stuffed, their memories are tested to measure how much educational 'stuff' has stuck; if there's enough in the mug they are permitted to pass on to the next stage of life, university and employment. This is the 'banking' educational model criticized by Paulo Freire (1970) who instead proposed, promoted and practised a literacy for critical consciousness. Freire practised a transformational style of education in which students acted not as the objects of education but as the subjects of learning, gaining and experimenting with knowledge (Gibson, 1999). Education, therefore, needs to be student-centred with critical awareness following from critical enquiry. Freire sought to create not only a better

## Book review

educational experience for students but also a better world where the educational techniques he promoted represented a way to learn as well as a way to live (ibid).

Play and dialogue are the mechanisms of learning and the most valuable education, I would argue, is that which equips the learner with the essential skills of learning and generates a disposition inclined to learning as a life-long endeavour. In this model, education acts to enable autonomous independent learning and, in doing so, liberates the individual so that he/she can control and direct the successful completion of his/her own development and ultimately be true to his/her own nature; achieving Maslow's (1954) all-important self-actualisation. The nurturing of the individual and support of their learning, through the informal channels of socialisation and the formal institutions of school, is an enabling experience from which agency ensues.

'Independent Thinking' is not a work of original thought, and Gilbert makes no such claim; indeed by page 2 the whole thing's already been attributed to Freire. But it clearly contains the convictions of an educationalist arrived at independently, although not in isolation, free from indoctrination, through the reading of great works written by other thinkers, through life experience, discussion and observation, from trial and error, and from a niggling feeling that the educational model being widely peddled is a concoction from a traveling medicine show.

Gilbert tells us that he doesn't set much store by way of answers; like all good thinkers he prefers questions. But not all answers are replies to questions; some are solutions to problems. 'Independent Thinking' is part of the answer to the problem of education. It's a dip-in or read through text in 'coffee-table-book' form. And that's exactly where it needs to be: on the coffee tables in the staffrooms of every school, to be picked up, flicked through, pondered and put into action where it really counts – in the classroom. It's a book for adults, written and produced with a child-like charm to encourage those adults not to forsake the charms of childhood, and to do the right thing by way of the young people whose learning opportunity, success or failure, is largely in their hands.

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