

NEWS

Volume 18 / Number 2 >>> WINTER 2016

NESA



In this issue:

- >> **FLC and FTI photos**
- >> School news from around the NESA region
- >> **Emotional intelligence for a compassionate world**
- >> Conversation in the 21st Century
- >> **WTI and SEC previews**
- and much more...

Fall Training Institute 2015 — Dubai

NESA's fourteenth annual Fall Training Institute took place November 6-7 at the American School of Dubai, UAE, a NESA member school. Almost 500 educators attended one of nine two-day institutes, gaining in-depth professional development.

Topics included: Elementary Literacy & Effective Feedback | Assessment - Redefining Fair | Introduction to C3 - Inquiry and Concept-based Social Studies | Common Core - Mathematics (5-12) | Teacher as Data Coach | WIDA Symposium for EAL/ELL Teachers | Digital Storytelling | Mathematics Through Play in Early Childhood | Next Generation Science Standards.

NESA thanks Superintendent Brent Mutsch, Curriculum Director Michelle Kuhns, and the faculty and staff of the American School of Dubai for all of their on-the-ground support and organization that made this year's FTI such a resounding success.

We'll see you at next year's FTI at
the American Community School
of Abu Dhabi, November 4-5, 2016

FTI photo galleries at
www.nesacenter.org



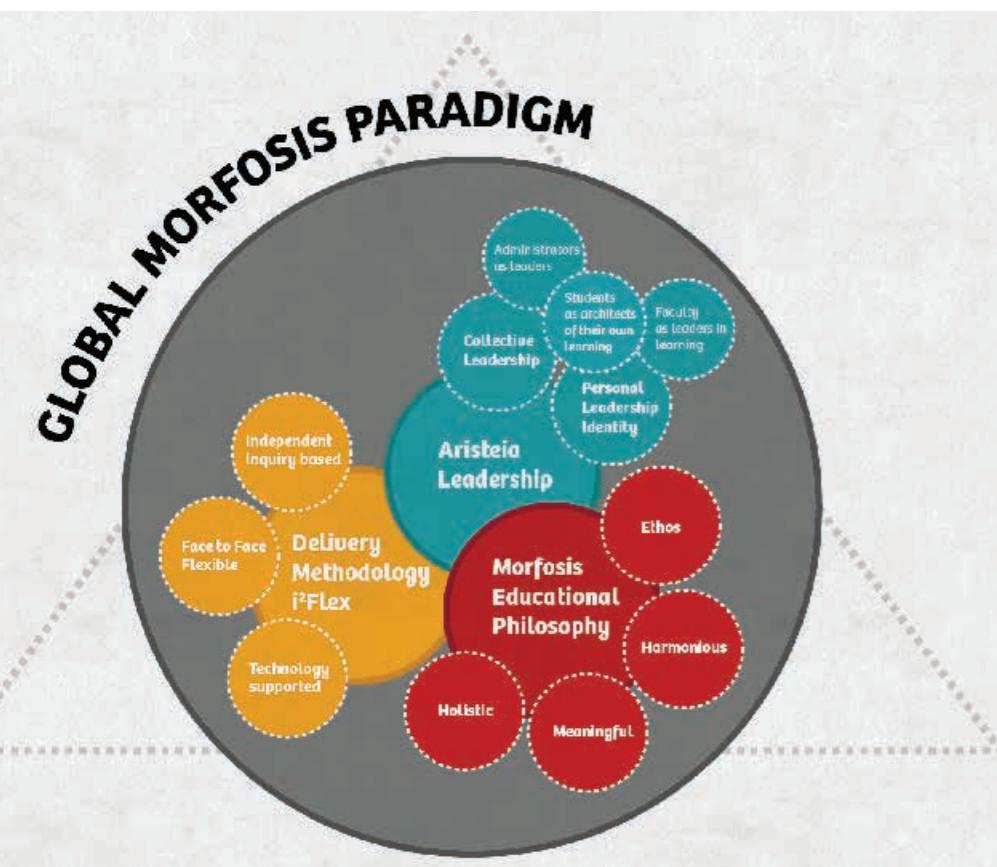


Leading Innovation from the i²Flex Classroom: ACS Athens Educators Show the New Pathway for K12 Blended Learning

By Dr. Maria D. Avgerinou, Director of Educational Technology & eLearning, and Dr. Stefanos Gialamas, President, American Community Schools of Athens, Greece

Fourteen faculty, the Director of Educational Technology and eLearning, and the President of ACS Athens presented with great success at the 8th International Conference in Open and Distance Learning (ICODL) held in Athens, Greece, November 7-8, 2015. It focused on Innovation and Research in Open and Distance Learning and on Information Communications Technology.

This prime academic event in Europe was supported by the Hellenic Open University, the Hellenic Network of Open and Distance Learning, Educational Content Methodology and Technology Laboratory, the Journal for Open and Distance Education and Educational Technology, the GLOKALde e-Journal of UDEEEWANA-United Distance Education for Eastern Europe Western Asia Northern Africa, the Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education (TOJDE), the International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications (IJONTE), and the International Women Online Journal of Distance Education (int.WODJE).



The ACS Athens team presented in panels and individually under the Best Practices and Research themes, but all of them highlighted the i2flex blended learning methodology of the new Global Morfosis Paradigm (see gMp graphic) and its classroom manifestations in PE, Mathematics, Science, Second Language Learning, Humanities, etc. These ACS educators, in addition to their teaching responsibilities, take the time to engage in their own Action Research projects, review the extant literature, attempt new interventions, systematically collect data, evaluate the learning outcomes in their classes, and share their findings with other practitioners and researchers in such venues as the ICODL conference.

These ACS faculty members have documented their research by contributing chapters to a forthcoming book, *Revolutionizing K-12 Blended Learning through the i2Flex Classroom Model* [edited by Drs. Avgerinou and Gialamas]. Scheduled to be released in early 2016 by IGI, the book reflects collective and diverse work conducted in order for the Global

Morfosis Paradigm to become reality. It presents the theoretical framework of the i2Flex classroom model as a new pathway for K12 blended learning, and what it takes to successfully implement it from the perspectives of leadership, instructional design and implementation, and evaluation. The final section of the book is dedicated to the above practitioners' voices who share their i2Flex experiences and trail-blaze a new education trajectory right from the trenches!

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A Solar Urban Design at Al-Hekma International School - Bahrain

By Rasha Al-Najjar, Science Coordinator and STEM Team Leader

Al Hekma students charging up on their new "Solar Urban Design".



Grade Six students at Al-Hekma International School (AHIS) in Bahrain designed their own tech-friendly urban design. The new "Solar Urban Design" is a place where students can rest while simultaneously charging their tablets. It blurs the distinction between pleasure and work and recasts power generation as an integrated and distributed public activity. It can also be used for outdoor classes.

While working on this STEM project, students were introduced to the types of renewable energy resources by engaging in activities that helped them understand the transformation of energy into electricity. Students also explored the different roles of engineers who work in renewable energy fields, as they had the opportunity to create a sustainable environment -- an environment that contributes to greater health, happiness and safety.

Students were involved in the design and creation of this STEM project. After extensive research, they originally suggested building a Solar Lounge Chair, but then this idea developed to the Solar Urban Design.

While the students searched for sponsors to help them finance the idea, they also worked on several sketches for their project. They gave the sketches to 101 Design, a company that offered to sponsor. They merged all the designs into the final concept we have now.

The next step was finding a sponsor to provide the wood pallets. Again, the students successfully found a manufacturing company to sponsor. The hardest part was finding a reasonably priced solar cell. Students researched online, but decided in the end to purchase it from Bahrain. IG-Electrons fell in love with the idea and gave students an excellent price for the cell (12v, 50 W), which measures 60cm x 55cm.

The last step was putting the project together, and for this part, students were supported by the school's Maintenance Department. The last touch was planting greenery in the middle.

Al Hekma students now have a good understanding of energy, and can harness renewable resources to create electricity for use in their everyday lives. The objective of the project [led by the author] was to help provide students with a comprehensively balanced education based on technology and academics, and also to aid in creating confident and motivated lifelong learners who are global citizens that can make a difference locally and internationally.

The project has been a success, and what we mostly enjoyed was the educational process. Science consists mostly of experimentation, and this project was pleasurable and beneficial in equal portions.

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NESA Exec. Director David Chojnacki gives the keynote at "Mini-NESA".

Mini-NESA Delights, Educates, and Challenges

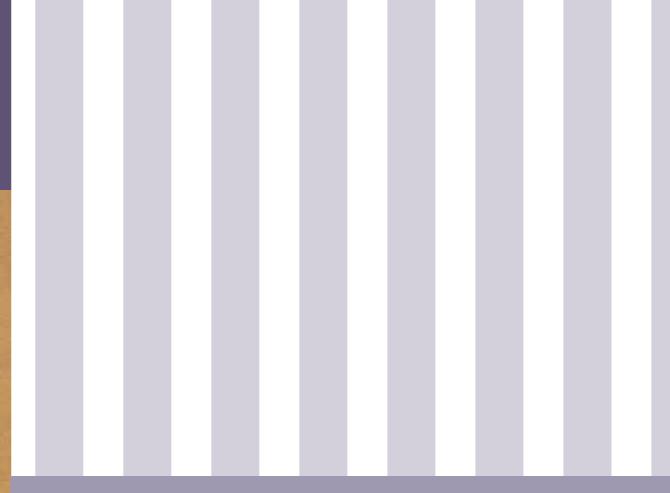
By Maha Al-Azar, Director of Communication, American Community School at Beirut, Lebanon

Excerpted from an ACS Beirut website post, November 17, 2015.

ACS Beirut's annual "Mini-NESA" conference took place on November 13, 2015, on the school campus, offering educators and staff alike professional development opportunities, through which they could learn about and share research-based practices in education, by attending and/or presenting workshops.

Teachers and education students from 58 different schools and the top universities in Lebanon attended the mini-NESA conference, in addition to dozens from the ACS community. Despite the instability in the country, the opening ceremony gathered about 300 participants, which organizers considered an impressive success. A minute of silence was observed out of respect for the victims of the terrorist attacks on a southern suburb of Beirut, which had taken place a day earlier.

Keynote speaker David Chojnacki, NESA's Executive Director, shared a series of inspirational quotes and ideas with participants. "Learning is uncomfortable. It takes you to the edge of your comfort zone, so you can be challenged," he said. "Education is a transactional business. You cannot say you taught something, if the person did not learn it."



Below: "Mini NESA" opening plenary.



Above: Delegates in a health workshop.

Topics covered by the all-day event ranged from strategies for enhancing learning and devising fair evaluation standards, to inspiring curiosity among students, and much more. Other sessions trained attendees to enhance their communication skills and build rapport, detoxify their bodies, or even conduct self-breast exams for early cancer detection. Teaching Arabic received much attention in this year's Mini-NESA, with at least three sessions offering tips on how to make Arabic attractive to students.

Middle School Arabic teacher Ruwaida Khalid Kaed Beyh shared some exciting technological tools that she had adapted from English into Arabic. These included websites such as spiderscribe.net, tagxedo.com, todaysmeet.com, eduplace.com, and myhrw.com, all of which could be used for a variety of subjects.

Emotional Intelligence for a Compassionate World: An Online, Anytime Course Offered by the Charter for Compassion International

Facilitated by Barbara A. Kerr, Ph.D.

Q: What does Emotional Intelligence have to do with Compassion?

Emotional Intelligence skills and competencies can become the fertile ground for a more compassionate world. The skills that contribute to the various components of Emotional Intelligence may be viewed as pre-requisites to the development of compassion—in individuals, in families, in the workplace, in communities, and in the interconnected societies of people throughout the world.

During this "anywhere, anytime access" course, you will discover your own EI strengths and have an opportunity to learn ways to add to your Emotional Intelligence competencies. These skills are essential to building empathy and compassion, qualities that are much needed in our current world climate. Together, we can make a difference and bring about a more compassionate world.

Q: What is the time commitment for this course?

"Emotional Intelligence for a Compassionate World" opened for learning on October 19, but you can sign-up at any time and begin the course at any point — what we call "open access." We understand that you have many tasks and responsibilities, so the course has been designed for your convenience. You may start and stop as your own schedule dictates. You can go through all seven lessons in a marathon of learning session (we don't advise this), or you can sign-in to the course for ten minutes at a time for as long as it takes to complete the course!

We're all Just Walking
Each Other Home—
Ram Dass



CHARTER
FOR
COMPASSION

Q: How can I learn more about the course?

Read more about this course and about other courses to be added soon on the Charter website (charterforcompassion.org). Share your ideas and perspective with others around the world who care about cultivating compassion for all people, all creatures, and our Earth. We hope to "see" you online!

Q: Where do I sign up? And what is the fee?

Enroll now: <http://charterforcompassioninstitute.org/courses/12/enroll>. The fee for the seven-lesson course is \$149. A limited number of scholarships are available for those who cannot pay this amount but want to learn about how Emotional Intelligence skills can help bring about a more compassionate world.

We hope you will join us in this engaging, online experience! contact@charterforcompassion.org

NOTE: Marilyn Turkovich, Executive Director of the Charter for Compassion International, will present a two-day workshop at NESA's Winter Training Institute in Muscat, Oman, February 5-6. For details, visit: www.nesacenter.org/page.cfm?p=1568. See also page 18 of NESA NEWS.

The Benefits of Global Teacher-to-Teacher Engagement

By Genny Beckman Moriarty and Karen Ingraham

Excerpted from *The Exeter Bulletin*, Fall, 2015, Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, New Hampshire. www.exeter.edu

Jared Harris, High School Principal — Cairo American College, Egypt

Little more than a year ago, Harris was principal at an international school in Santiago, Chile, where he worked closely with Exeter Math Instructor and Bates-Russell Distinguished Faculty Professor Tom Seidenberg and other Exeter faculty to help his teachers successfully adapt Harkness methods into their classrooms. Below, Harris talks about his "mission to bring student-centered learning to the entire international school community."

Q: How did you first learn about the Harkness method?

Harris: In my first years as an educator, I was baffled by the overall passive nature of the learning process. . . One thing was clear: Students needed to be more engaged, to talk more. . . I found a 2009 article written by Exeter instructor Meg Foley and [then instructor] Lawrence Smith about using Harkness in a history class. After I read the article, I would never think the same way about teaching again.

Following a random search of Exeter faculty emails, I sent off three notes. To my disbelief, within about five hours I received a warm and welcoming response! A few months later, Tom Seidenberg was leading interdisciplinary Harkness discussions with our faculty at the International School Nido de Aguilas. The next year we had our first three Harkness tables. Within four years — with student, faculty and parent support — we had rolled out more than 20 Harkness tables.

I left Nido in June 2014, en route to Cairo American College (CAC) in Cairo, Egypt. One of the most desirable factors in relocating was the openness and dedication that the students, faculty and administration showed toward student-centered methods during my interview visits the previous year. . . I left several copies of the Exeter faculty-written book, *Respecting the Pupil*, for the CAC faculty to read.

Q: What do you see as the greatest strength of student-centered learning pedagogies like the Harkness method?

Harris: Creativity is important, collaboration is important, critical inquiry is important, but they all rely on communication. This is what Harkness does. It requires thinking, reflection, flexibility, empathy and being comfortable with uncertainty; but it all comes back to communication. . .

I heard in Chile, and am now hearing again in Egypt, "Dr. Harris, I love the new tables. They make me feel important



Cairo American College HS Principal Jared Harris with a Harkness table.

and smarter." This is the greatest strength of the Harkness method. [It] is empowering, and it gives voice to our youth, irrelevant of nationality or languages spoken.

Q: What has been your approach to educating faculty about student-centered learning?

Harris: It's dialogical leadership — leadership through conversation. . . I tried to shelter the faculty from the "initiative-of-the-month club," carefully keeping our focus directed at transforming our classrooms into truly student-centered environments. Desks were moved into horseshoe arrangements, then into circles, then into ovals. The first Harkness table arrived, and the energy it created among the faculty was remarkable.

Q: Why is having Harkness-like tables in the classrooms so important to you?

Harris: What the table does is transformational. Unlike desks, the table cannot be taken apart to go back to traditional teacher-centered habits. It provides a connective energy, while the white space that remains between students when desks are placed in a circle creates a subtle barrier.

Q: How have you adapted the student-centered model for your school communities?

Harris: I have very strategically involved students and faculty in the process of implementing student-centered teaching in Santiago and in Cairo, and I never "mandated" the approach. . .

Due to our international schools' transient populations, and the large and somewhat prescriptive nature of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, there is a time and place for other instructional methods, including limited direct instruction and other more traditional teacher-centered methods. I have empowered those amazing lecturers to keep lecturing, but to also inject a healthy dosage of Harkness.

In Chile, each year that we committed more to Harkness, each indicator on our school quality indicator improved: Test scores went up, student interest increased and college acceptances to elite institutions increased. . . Our schools around the world need student-centered methods, and our children deserve it.

For the entire piece, please visit: www.exeter.edu/exeter_bulletin/12984_17986.aspx



NVSF Training in Rome: front row (l-r): David Ratner (WBAIS), Fatima Shaw (ISOI-Pakistan), Valya Leaton (AIS Riyadh); second row (l-r): Jodi Ramos (AOSR-Italy), Jill Briand (AIS Kuwait), Lisa Hellman (ISG Jubail-Saudi Arabia), Dr. Gabriela Jonas-Ahrend (Hochschule Hamm-Lippstadt, Germany), Susan Trifman (WBAIS-Israel), Dr. Eric Brunsell (University of Wisconsin); back row (l-r): Dr. Randy Spaid (Middle Georgia State University), Jimmy Leeper (AS Doha-Qatar), Dr. Stuart Fleischer (WBAIS-Israel), Brian Wright (AS Doha-Qatar).



2015-2016 NESA Virtual Science Fair Update

By Dr Stuart Fleischer, WBAIS, NESA Virtual Science Fair Project Director and The GAIA Project Director (Global Awareness, Involvement and Action)



ITEMS OF INTEREST

- **How Playing an Instrument Benefits Your Brain**
A TED-Ed Original lesson in animated video form that looks at the neurological wonders behind playing a musical instrument: <http://ow.ly/SDkts>

- **How Handwriting Trains the Brain**
Forming letters is key to learning, memory, ideas. In *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct 5, 2010, by Gwendolyn Bounds: <http://tinyurl.com/mz943o6>

- **Viewpoint: How Creativity is Helped by Failure**
When it comes to creating a great work of art, practice makes perfect, writes Matthew Syed. BBC News, November 14, 2015 (Magazine section): www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34775411

The 13th Annual NESA Virtual Science Fair training meeting was held in Rome, September 25-26. Dr. Beth Phenl of the American Overseas School of Rome graciously hosted our international team of science educators. We look forward to AOSR joining our elite cadre of science educators from NESA.

At the Rome meeting, Dr Randy Spaid (Middle Georgia State University) and Dr Eric Brunsell (University of Wisconsin) shared how the NVSF "Ask-A-Scientist" forum (A-S-S) aligns with the Next Generation Science Standards: asking questions, developing hypotheses, testing models, making evidence-based arguments and learning other skills real scientists "use all the time"; and how students also meet a variety of language arts and literacy standards as they perform background research, write a research paper, maintain a laboratory notebook, create a display board, and demonstrate argumentation skills as they communicate with school science fair judges. This component of the NVSF was educationally crafted and led by Dr. Spaid.

The "Ask-A-Scientist" forum (A-S-S) - a feature of NVSF 4.0 – is a clever way to promote the history of science to NVSF teams. It allows middle school students planning their science fair projects to ask Sir Isaac Newton, for example, for help understanding force and motion. The topic "experts" include Louis Pasteur, Marie Curie, Rachel Carson, Isaac Newton, Leonardo da Vinci, and Caroline Herschel. Behind-the-scenes, a cadre of university research scientists provides expert feedback in the "voice" of the well-known scientist. Students learn about these scientists by taking their biography quizzes and earn electronic badges for a high score, plus more badges by completing topic quizzes at each A-A-S forum.

The NVSF Fifth grade project also adopted the A-A-S forum and renamed it "Ask Dr. Eric". Dr. Eric Brunsell will host this new forum. The NVSF 5 teachers under Jimmy Leeper's (ASD-Doha) guidance also created a quiz bank that will challenge the students.

For more information about the NVSF, please contact Dr Stuart Fleischer: sfleischer@wbais.net

Are We Losing the Ability to Converse In Person?

In this *New York Times* review of Sherry Turkle's just-published book, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, (Penguin Press, 2015), author Jonathan Franzen says the book, "is straightforwardly a call to arms: Our rapturous submission to digital technology has led to an atrophying of human capacities like empathy and self-reflection, and the time has come to reassert ourselves, behave like adults, and put technology in its place."

The digitally-addled people Turkle interviewed for her book, says Franzen, "have adopted new technologies in pursuit of greater control, only to feel controlled by them. The likably idealized selves that they've created with social media leave their real selves all the more isolated. **They communicate incessantly but are afraid of face-to-face conversations;** they worry, often nostalgically, that they're missing out on something fundamental."

In-person communication is what's being supplanted, says Franzen, and we must find ways to regain it: "Conversation presupposes solitude... because it's in solitude that we learn to think for ourselves and develop a stable sense of self, which is essential for taking other people as they are. . . Through the conversational attention of parents, children acquire a sense of enduring connectedness and a habit of talking about their feelings, rather than simply acting on them... **When you speak to people in person, you're forced to recognize their full humanity, which is where empathy begins...** And conversation carries the risk of boredom, the condition that smartphones have taught us most to fear, which is also the condition in which patience and imagination are developed."

Turkle's book makes the case that **face-to-face interactions shape children's development at home, improve learning in school, and enhance employees' workplace performance.** And achieving a measure of liberation from digital technology also has political and economic implications, says Franzen: "The young person who cannot or will not be alone, converse with family, go out with friends, attend a lecture, or perform a job without monitoring her smartphone is an emblem of our economy's leechlike attachment to our very bodies," he says. "Digital technology is capitalism on hyperdrive, injecting its logic of consumption and promotion, of monetization and efficiency, into every waking minute."

"Left to Our Own Devices" by Jonathan Franzen in *The New York Times Book Review*, October 4, 2015, <http://nyti.ms/1Gu5iMY>. From *Marshall Memo 609: A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education*, October 26, 2015, www_marshallmemo.com.

See also Sherry Turkle's article, "Stop Googling. Let's Talk", *New York Times*, September 26, 2015, adapted from her book reviewed above. tinyurl.com/o562rjf

NESA Middle School Network Plans 2nd Annual Conference March 4-5, 2016 — Chennai, India

The NMSN (NESA Middle School Network) Steering Committee met in Abu Dhabi October 21 prior to this year's Fall Leadership Conference to further develop a sustainable framework for collaborative efforts and make plans for the Second Annual NMSN Conference hosted this year by the American International School of Chennai, March 4-5 (please see flyer on next page).

The network was formed to advance dynamic middle level education through collaborative efforts within the NESA region. Resources, initiatives and the collaborative network are available to all middle level educators within the NESA region.

A nine-member steering committee leads the NMSN initiative. The 2015-2017 steering committee is comprised of the following NESA member schools: ACS Abu Dhabi, ACS Amman, AIS Chennai, AIS Dhaka, AIS Riyadh, American School of Doha, American School of Dubai, Cairo American College, and TAISM Muscat.

For those interested in being involved in NMSN, please contact the following NMSN Steering Committee members:

NMSN Conference in Chennai, March 4-5, 2016, contact:

- Alan Phan, MS Principal, American International School Chennai: palan@aisch.org, or
- Jason Hicks, Secondary Associate Principal, AISC: hjason@aisch.org, or
- Ms. Aziz, MS Admin Assistant, AISC: sazizunnisa@aisch.org

To be added to the NMSN email list or for questions about NMSN Google Folder Resources contact:

- Jason Hicks, Secondary Associate Principal, AISC: hjason@aisch.org, or
- Nick Mitchell, MS Associate Principal, American School Doha: nmitchell@asd.edu.qa

For NMSN general information contact:

- Susan Lacy, MS Principal, American International School Dhaka: slacy@aisdhaka.org



NESA Middle School Network

Promoting Exemplary Practice

NESA Middle School Network Conference 2016

Location

American International School Chennai

Date

Friday and Saturday, March 4th & 5th

Registration Deadline

Friday, January 22, 2016

Theme

Best Practices in the Middle

Accommodation

Park Hyatt (<http://bit.ly/1j7bLC4>)

(Please say that you are with AISC to receive the conference rate.)

Transportation

Transportation will be provided to and from hotel.

Keynote Speaker

Sugata Mitra

Mitra is widely known for his innovative educational ideas. His May 2013 TED Talk "Build a school in the Cloud" has been viewed 2.4 million times.



Sign Up Here

<http://bit.ly/1LkP4Rs>



Sign up for local trips in the Registration Form

Visa Process

<http://bit.ly/1ydlcIX>



A new, easy online process

AISC CONTACT:

Aziz, sazizunnisa@aisch.org

STEERING COMMITTEE CONTACT:

Alan Phan, palan@aisch.org

Agenda

Optional School Visit on Thursday

Keynote Welcome

Keynote Speaker: Sugata Mitra

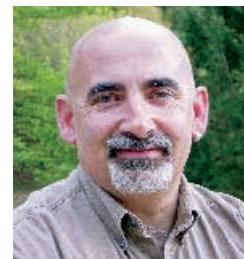
Conference Sessions

- Sharing Middle School Best Practice
- Advisory
- Teacher Leadership Initiatives
- Student Leadership Initiatives

RISE Event: Friday, 4:00 p.m.

(ticket price included in the registration fee).

Rise brings innovative thinkers and performers to AISC to enrich the discourse and exposure around big ideas and global issues.



Dylan Wiliam on Crafting Effective “Hinge” Questions

(Originally titled “Designing Great Hinge Questions”)

Dr Wiliam was a Keynote speaker at the 2015 NESA Spring Educators Conference in Istanbul.

“Every teacher I’ve ever met knows that no lesson plan survives the first contact with real students,” says assessment guru Dylan Wiliam (University College, London) in this *Educational Leadership* article. “And yet most teachers plan their lessons as though they’re going to go perfectly. They plan them on the basis of assumptions they know to be false.” The result is that learning problems arise during the lesson and the teacher finds out only when grading the papers that night. “And then,” says Wiliam, “long after the students have left the classroom, you’ll have to try to get their learning back on track, in writing, one student at a time.”

The solution, he says, is to “build plan B into plan A” by designing lessons with a “hinge question” somewhere in the middle. The benefits of doing this are “huge,” says Wiliam. “It means that you can find out what’s going wrong with students’ learning when they’re right in front of you and that you can put the whole class’ learning back on track right away.” Of course checking for understanding is nothing new, but writing hinge questions is harder than it appears; he’s found that teachers typically take more than an hour to design a good one. Here are the key steps:

A ‘hinge question’ means that you can find out what’s going wrong with students’ learning when they’re right in front of you and that you can put the whole class’ learning back on track right away.”

- **Design questions that elicit the right response for the right reason.** Students shouldn’t be able to get the correct answer for the wrong reasons, or vice-versa. The key is plausible distractors that attract students with incomplete understanding. Another technique for making it more difficult for students to guess the right answer is to have multiple right answers and ask students to identify all of them.
- **Get responses from every student.** Some kind of all-class response system is essential – fingers on chest, colored cards, dry-erase boards, Plackers, clickers, etc. The technology used is far less important than the quality of the question, says Wiliam.
- **Make the check for understanding quick.** All students should be able to respond within two minutes, and the teacher should be able to collect and interpret the responses within 30 seconds.
- **Based on students’ responses, decide whether to go forward or re-teach.** If few students have the right answer, going back is the obvious choice. If most have it correct, moving on makes sense, perhaps with a side conversation with those who are confused. If similar numbers of students get the answer right and wrong, the teacher can get students debating in pairs (“Convince your neighbor”) or have an all-class debate.

Assessment purists might argue that one question can’t possibly assess mastery of a concept – for that you need up to 30 questions. But Wiliam says this matters only if the teacher is using the question for high-stakes decisions. With hinge questions, the teacher is trying to make a quick, low-stakes decision for the whole group. “If the response of a student to a 30-item test provides a reasonable basis for drawing conclusions about that student,” he says, “then the responses of 30 students to a single question probably provide a reasonable basis for drawing conclusions about that class.”

“Designing Great Hinge Questions” by Dylan Wiliam in Educational Leadership, September 2015 (Vol. 73, #1, p. 40-44), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/1NXSVEq>. From Marshall Memo 602: A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education, September 7, 2015, www.marshallmemo.com.

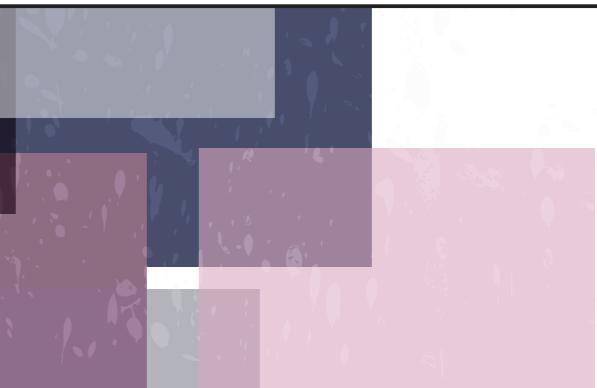
NESA Virtual School Project - 2015 Abu Dhabi: Focus on Readiness

By Kenny Paynter, NESA Virtual School Project Manager & World Virtual School Project Facilitator

The NVS Project, now in its fourteenth year with 23 participating schools, has always held academic continuity of operations during any sort of protracted school emergency as a core value. What has been continuously changing over the life of this project, however, is the means by which this objective can be achieved.

Originally, only a well-established learning system, such as Blackboard, which we originally adopted in 2002, had both the horsepower and the bells and whistles needed to adequately support an academic program online. We migrated towards Moodle, which also had these capacities, in 2010 when it had matured enough to be readily managed by a typical K-12 school technology department. What has happened even more recently is that the steady increase in available bandwidth combined with the migration of many school services to online hosting has led schools to conduct much, if not most, of their daily processes, including blended instruction, via the internet, through a variety of tools.

However, familiarity and capacity does not necessarily mean competency in an emergency. The NVS Project recognizes the seriousness of supporting schools well during an emergency, and so we have now put particular focus on indicators of emergency readiness. This approach came out of our annual World Virtual School (WVS) meetings at JOSTI (Jefferson Overseas Technology Institute) in Fairfax, Virginia, this last summer (<http://global.wvsgeo.org/>). We used our NVS meetings in Abu Dhabi, October 20-21 prior to NESA’s 2015 Fall Leadership Conference, to refine and adopt this approach as a central premise of project membership.



These readiness indicators will be presented to school directors across all eight of the international school regions to be considered by the respective schools’ emergency planning teams. Our intent is that by focusing on principles and practices of readiness, the NESA Virtual School Project and the corollary groups in the other regions can be flexible and inclusive in their membership and methods, but also responsible and effective in providing means for emergency academic continuity of operations.

Finally, aside from our core agenda, there also is a wonderful and synergistic informal value to the NVS meetings. We truly enjoy each other’s company, and we engage in active and informative discussions about emerging technologies, best practices, trends in the field, and perplexing questions. I continue to feel privileged and grateful to be convening this group through these many years.

nvsproject@gmail.com, <http://nesa.wvsgeo.org/>



The NVS Consortium in Abu Dhabi, October 2015.



Reciprocal Professional Learning at the WIDA Symposium

By Jon Nordmeyer, International Programs Director, WIDA at Wisconsin Center for Educational Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison

In the past decade, new approaches to organic, place-based and reciprocal professional learning have emerged based on what we know about effective adult learning. One such approach, the WIDA Symposium, is bringing together international educators around the world to exchange ideas about how to build on the assets of English language learners.

The Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence suggests that effective professional development for teachers of ELLs should:

- Facilitate learning and development through joint productive activity among leaders and participants;
 - Promote learners' expertise in professionally relevant discourse;
 - Contextualize teaching, learning, and joint productive activity in the experiences and skills of participants.

Participant-driven learning events incorporate the needs and contributions of educators by building a shared agenda to capitalize on the energy, needs and expertise of participants. This engagement can increase the chance that educators actually change their practice.

The WIDA Symposium: WIDA designed the Symposium as a reciprocal learning opportunity to support its growing network of close to 200 international schools. Established in 2002 as part of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, WIDA designs assessments and curriculum tools describing the academic language ELLs need to be successful in 21st century schools. Many international schools have joined the WIDA International School Consortium and use the WIDA standards and assessments as part of a comprehensive system for serving English language learners. (wisc.wceps.org/Home/Members)

Each WIDA Symposium features a unique agenda based on the contributions and needs of participants. During the weekend, educators deepen their understanding, examine new tools, share practical solutions and showcase school-based innovation using WIDA resources.

In November, the NESA Fall Training Institute in Dubai featured this year's first WIDA Symposium. Upcoming opportunities include:

- Budapest, Hungary (January 16-17) at the American International School
 - Bangkok, Thailand (February 6-7) at NIST
 - Santiago, Chile (March 19-20) at Nido de Aguilas



The WIDA Consortium group led by Jon Nordmeyer at
FTI 2015 in Dubai.



WIDA Symposium participants have shared their learning experiences:

- I loved the world cafe where we were able to meet with other teachers and talk about things that were important to us. I got a lot of ideas and took a lot away from these sessions!
 - We are really impressed with the idea that we need to move WIDA into the curriculum. While the tools shared to do this are helpful, it was just as valuable to hear the experiences of other schools.
 - The opportunity to learn more about other schools and their EAL programs was a powerful part of the Symposium weekend.

The WIDA Symposium recognizes that learning from one another is not only powerful but necessary. Learning Forward observed that effective professional learning, "cannot happen unless educators listen to one another, respect one another's experiences and perspectives." Finally, Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves have written about professional capital built on reciprocal professional learning: "Use the group to change the group. And this isn't just about intra-school collaboration, it's about inter-school and inter-district collaboration. It's about the whole profession."

jon.nordmeyer@wisc.edu, www wida us, wisc wceps org. *WIDA advances academic language development and academic achievement for linguistically diverse students through high quality standards, assessments, research, and professional development for educators.*

Reference

- Bransford, J.D. et al. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. US National Academy of Sciences.
 - Fullan, M. and Hargreaves, A. (2013) *The power of professional capital: With an investment in collaboration, teachers become nation builders*. Journal of staff development, June 2013.
 - Rueda, J.R. (1998). *Standards for professional development: A sociocultural perspective*. Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence. University of California.

Shifting Students from a Fixed to a Growth Mindset in Math

In this article in *Education Week*, Evie Blad reports on how students' mindsets can have a direct impact on achievement in mathematics. "A blend of family attitudes, cultural ideas, and frustration often leads students to believe that math ability is a fixed trait like eye color," she says. "They believe they are either born with the skills necessary to succeed in math class or they're not." Researchers say teachers can attack this deep-seated problem in three ways:

- **Explicitly teaching the growth mindset.** Students need to be told repeatedly that math is no more difficult than other subjects, that mistakes are a normal part of learning, and that they haven't failed if they can't quickly solve a problem using a prescribed algorithm. Stanford University's Project for Education Research That Scales (PERTS) has released a series of online courses about mindset for teachers and parents with videos, exercises, and sample lesson plans (www.mindsetkit.org). A key mindset-shifting concept is that if something feels hard, that's a sweet spot for learning, and persevering through the difficult part will yield big gains. "When you just focus on getting to the answer," says Palo Alto teacher Mari Montoy-Wilson, "you really rob kids of grappling and working on that sweet spot. You don't want to scaffold or carry the load too heavily for your kids."

- **Teaching math differently.** An essential companion to weaning students from the fixed mindset is presenting problems in a way that develops conceptual understanding versus speedy solving of problems using memorized algorithms. This dovetails nicely with the Common Core emphasis on sense-making, abstract reasoning, developing strategies to use math concepts, and critiquing others' reasoning. This kind of math helps students escape the I-got-it-wrong-and-therefore-I'm-dumb-at-math syndrome and prepares them for success in the upper grades – as well as for using math in their everyday lives. An example: a traditional perimeter problem asks students to find the perimeter of a rectangle 10 inches long and 6 inches wide. A conceptual problem asks students to draw two rectangles that have a perimeter of 32 inches and explain how they arrived at their answer. Another “open” problem for high-school students: figure out how many baseballs it would take to fill a classroom.

A key mindset-shifting concept is that if something feels hard, that's a sweet spot for learning, and persevering through the difficult part will yield big gains.

- **Teachers exploring their own mindsets.** “Teachers love the idea of mindsets as almost a panacea,” says University of Texas professor Philip Uri Treisman, “but they themselves have very fixed ideas of their own learning.” Many learned math the traditional way and need support to shift to a more conceptual approach. Teachers should practice their own sense-making and model it for their students. If math were music, says Treisman, the traditional approach would be learning scales and the new approach would be playing songs.

"Teachers Nurture Growth Mindset in Math" by Evie Blad in *Education Week*, September 9, 2015 (Vol. 35, #3, p. 1, 10-11), www.edweek.org.

*From Marshall Memo 603; A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education, September 14, 2015.
www_marshallmemo_com.*



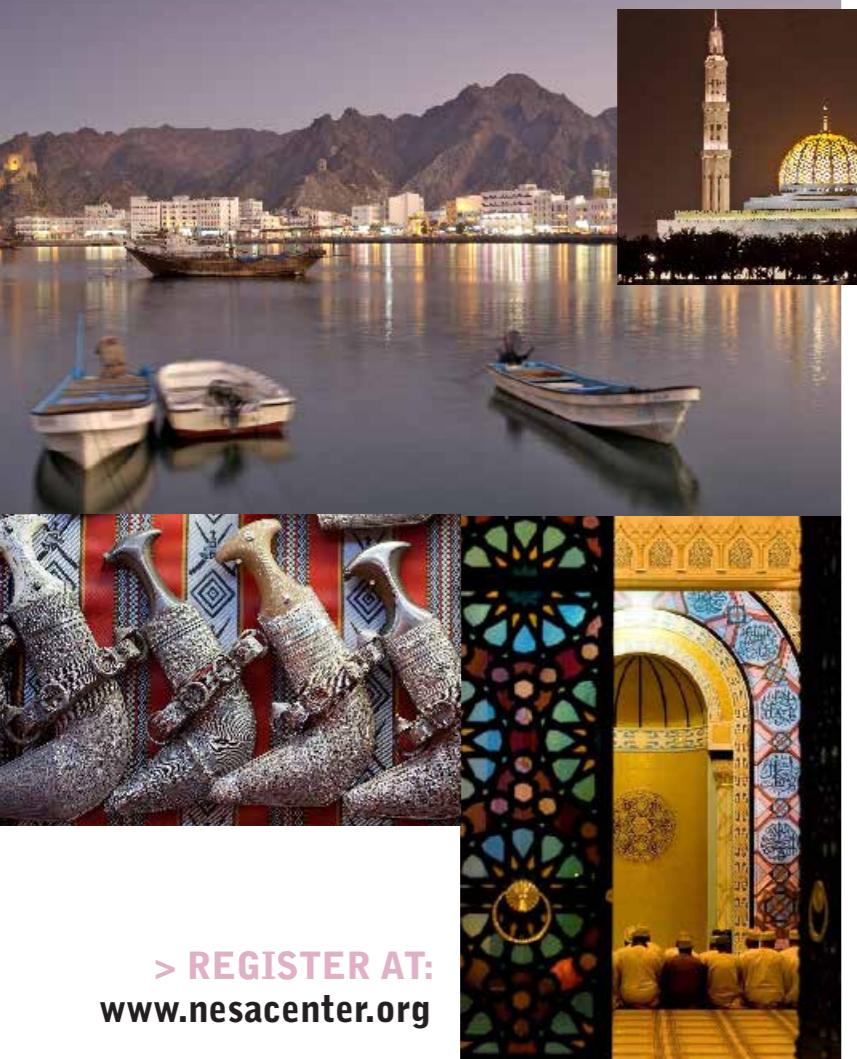
Volume 18 / Number 2 >>> WINTER 2016 >>>>>>

Winter Training Institute

Venue: The American International School of Muscat, Oman



WINTER TRAINING INSTITUTE FEBRUARY 5-6, 2016
Muscat



> REGISTER AT:
www.nesacenter.org

NESA's Winter Training Institute is a specialty conference for educators. The program is based on an "extended institute design" so that delegates are together with the same presenter for the entire two-day conference. This format allows time for skill development, in-depth exploration and the establishment of partnerships/networks.

PRE-CONFERENCE

- February 4:

- Follett Destiny Library Manager Workshop, with the "Destiny Doctor", aka **Larry Gilbert**, at the Park Inn Radisson Muscat, Oman

SPEAKERS & TOPICS:

- **Carol Commodore:** Standards-Based Assessment Literacy for Specialist Subjects – Art, Drama/Dance, Physical Education, World Languages, Music, Media Arts.
- **Krysten Fort-Catanese:** Mindfulness in Education: Teaching with Body, Mind, and Heart.
- **Laurie Henry:** Disciplinary Literacy in the Secondary School (MS/HS - All Content Areas).
- **Shannon McClintock-Miller:** Librarians Institute: Be The Change Within the Library, Education and the World!
- **Marilyn Turkovich:** Charter for Compassion - Perspective Consciousness and Compassion.
- **Vicki Vinton:** Teaching Grammar in the Writing Workshop, Grades 3-8.



Spring Educators Conference



SPRING EDUCATORS CONFERENCE APRIL 1-4, 2016
Bangkok



When: April 1-4, 2016
Where: Royal Orchid Sheraton, Bangkok, Thailand
Who: Educators of all grade levels, subjects and disciplines
What:

- Keynotes
- 4-hour specialist workshops and multi-day offerings
- Teacher-presented workshops
- General interest sessions
- Social Events: Welcome Reception and Gala Evening
- Professional Learning & Personal Renewal

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- **STEVE BARKLEY** – "*Creating a School Culture of Coaching*": Executive Vice President, PLS 3rd Learning; international consultant on coaching, mentoring and professional development. www.BarkleyPD.com
- **KATHERINE BOMER** – "*Harnessing the Common Core: Higher Standards of Reading & Writing*": Author of *Hidden Gems* and *Starting with What Students Do Best*; co-author (with Lucy Calkins) of *A Writer's Shelf*; former professional developer with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project.
- **RICK WORMELI** – "*Assessment Challenges in the Differentiated Classroom*": Author of *Meet Me in the Middle: Becoming an Accomplished Middle Level Teacher*, and *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessment and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom*

> Hotel room reservations: Book directly with the Royal Orchid Sheraton via the NESA website. Go to www.nesacenter.org for a link to a room reservations form.

> **REGISTER ONLINE:**
www.nesacenter.org
Early bird deadline: March 1

2-DAY AERO PRECONFERENCES:

March 30-31



AERO Common Core Plus Pre-Conference Workshop in English/Language Arts: Practical Strategies for Authentic Assessment for ELA

CINDY CUMMINGS, Assistant Professor, Lamar University, & KATRINA THEILMANN, Elementary Literacy Coordinator, American School of Doha, Qatar.

An aligned standards-based curriculum includes a strong match between standards, assessment tools, and instructional strategies. Without clear alignment between instructional strategies and assessment, both student motivation and learning can be compromised. Using the backward design process, during this two-day session you will create authentic assessments that allow students to demonstrate achievement of clearly communicated learning outcomes. Learn the steps to create authentic assessments that inform instruction and effect student learning.

You will have the opportunity to:

- Review AERO Common Core English/Language Arts Standards.
- Review performance assessment, including purpose and use of formative and summative assessment.
- Identify and apply appropriate Depth of Knowledge levels to the assessments.
- Using identified standards, develop rigorous assessments that focus on student learning and provide information about the learning to the teacher and the student.



AERO Common Core Plus Pre-Conference Workshop in Mathematics (HS): Learning Tasks to Engage Students in Mathematics

ERMA ANDERSON, Science/Mathematics Consultant at the US State Department's Office of Overseas Schools.

This AERO Common Core Plus Workshop will be a follow-up to the recent two-day institute on practical strategies in the high school for strengthening formative and summative assessment of mathematics learning at the 2015 NESA Fall Training Institute in Dubai.

You will explore examples of rich mathematics tasks that engage students in mathematics and employ established criteria to adapt and build rich tasks, and develop rubrics to assess student understanding. Using rich tasks and the Thinking Through A Lesson Protocol, you will collaboratively plan, critique, and revise a "concept based" lesson.



AERO Introduction to the Next Generation Science Standards Preconference

CAREY JOHNSON, Middle School Science Teacher & CHRIS CHARNITSKI, High School Science Teacher, The American International School of Muscat, Oman

The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) were developed from the Framework for K-12 Science Education published in 2012 by the National Research Council. With a focus on the practice of science and engineering, the NGSS will fundamentally change the way science is taught, learned and assessed. Gain a deeper understanding

of the NGSS and the resources available to assist in implementation of an NGSS based program. [This is an introduction to the NGSS and not a curriculum writing workshop.](#)

You will have the opportunity to:

- Familiarize yourself with key ideas and features of the Framework for K-12 Science Education and the Next Generation Science Standards.
- Explore the three dimensions of the NGSS: Disciplinary Core Ideas, Science and Engineering Practices and Cross Cutting Concepts.
- Deconstruct Performance Expectations to understand their three dimensional foundation.
- Engage in model NGSS activities and discuss what instruction might look like in an NGSS classroom.
- Consider issues related to a school's transition to NGSS.

SPECIAL OFFERINGS (multi-day workshops):



3-Day Literacy Workshop: An Introduction to Reading Workshop, K-2

CHRISTY CURRAN, Literacy Consultant; former staff developer at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project.

www.coachactually.wordpress.com, @christy_curran

This workshop is for the teacher who wants to understand how to teach reading workshop. Not only will it discuss the philosophy behind the work, but it will also give practical ways in which to get started, how to plan a year-long curriculum, and the structures and methods which are essential, including some assessment tools. You will walk away feeling empowered and excited to teach reading in this way.



3-Day Literacy Workshop: Building Strong, Resourceful and Skillful Readers, Gr. 6-8

VICKIVINTON, Literacy Consultant and co-author of *What Readers Really Do: Teaching the Process of Meaning Making* (with Dorothy Barnhouse) and *The Power of Grammar* (with Mary Ehrenworth). <http://tomakeaprairie.wordpress.com>

This hands-on workshop will take a deep look at the structures and components of a Reading Workshop. We'll explore how to implement and use those components to help students become thoughtful and skillful meaning makers and readers. And along the way, we'll touch on topics such as feedback, assessment and developing growth mindsets. Please bring with you a children's or YA book you've been wanting to read.



5-Day "Adaptive Schools Certificate Program": March 31-April 4

ROBERT GARMSTON, Co-developer of Cognitive Coaching and the Center for Adaptive Schools (now Thinking Collaborative), and CAROLYN MCKANDERS, Consultant in individual, group and organizational development & a Director of Thinking Collaborative. www.thinkingcollaborative.com

For international schools to effectively respond to the press for accountability and provide quality learning for all students, they must simultaneously address two perennial goals: the professional development of individual educators, and the development of the organization's capacity to learn and be adaptive. Both build the capacity for school improvement, without which reform efforts will fail.

In this Center for Adaptive Schools Foundation Training, learn how to build strong collaborative and caring work cultures, in which results-oriented faculties work together for continuous school improvement. Explore the latest practical findings in organizational development, team learning and navigating the currents of change.

PLUS...

- **EMILY DeLIDDO:** 3-Day Literacy Workshop - Foundation Course in Reading, Grades 3-5
- **MARK CHURCH:** 3-Day Workshop on Visible Thinking
- **RICHARD DETWILER:** 2-Day Administrative Assistants Institute

REGISTER ONLINE BY MARCH 1:
www.nesacenter.org

SPECIALIST SPEAKERS (4-hour workshops):



Social Entrepreneurship: Student-Run Businesses That Can Change the World

WARREN APEL, Co-founder, Scholastico; former Director of Educational Technology, American Embassy School in New Delhi, India. www.warrenapel.com

Start a business with your students! Go beyond bake sales by launching a real online company that can turn your student's creations into money. Then use the profits to support meaningful development projects that make the world a better place. Learn how to facilitate a student-run business in your classroom, giving students a meaningful, real-life challenge.

Programmable Robots and Coding in the Primary Classroom

WARREN APEL

Take a deep dive into the world of coding and robotics! You will learn to use a simple drag-and-drop programming language to control robots. We'll go beyond fun and games, and solve actual math and science problems, making robotics a truly integrated part of your existing classroom curriculum.



Reading for Social Justice

KATHERINE BOMER, Author of *Hidden Gems* and *Starting with What Students Do Best*

Katherine Bomer began her consulting career over fifteen years ago as a professional developer with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, and co-authored *A Writer's Shelf* with Lucy Calkins. As a frequent speaker, she combines a teacher's practical advice, a writer's love of language, and a powerful plea for social justice. She will present on critical literacy - inviting students to read with important social ideas in mind and write with the purpose of making the world a better place. Developed through years of classroom experience with diverse learners, her sessions will explore how the largest purposes in education connect to the details of teaching.



KEYNOTE: Creating a School Culture of Coaching

STEVE BARKLEY, Executive Vice President, PLS 3rd Learning. www.BarkleyPD.com

The outcomes we seek for our students require educators to be team members, collaborating and innovating to create empowered learners. Coaching among school staffs opens the door to continuous improvement in teaching and learning. In many ways a coaching culture among staff models the practices that we want among students in our classrooms. How responsible are you in creating the coaching culture in your school?

WORKSHOP: Coaching - Knowing why teachers would want a coach and should be a coach

STEVE BARKLEY

Coaching must be everyone's responsibility. Examine coaching feedback structures, identify the rewards of coaching, the resistance to coaching, and how to create the necessary trust. Explore types of coaching and create a plan for implementation as well as define the coach/principal partnership and the link between coaching and student achievement. An interactive session you won't want to miss.

WORKSHOP: Coaching Conferencing Skills

STEVE BARKLEY

Effective coaching is built upon communication/conferencing skills that engage the teacher in dialog and self-reflective practice. In this workshop, you will observe, study, practice and reflect upon the critical coaching/conferencing verbal skills. Questioning and paraphrasing skills as well as feedback strategies are included. Opportunities to practice and be coached will be embedded throughout. Bring scenarios from your coaching experience.



Designing Rubrics for Classroom Use, K-12

SUSAN BROOKHART, Educational Consultant, author and adjunct faculty member in the School of Education at Duquesne University.

Rubrics are coherent sets of criteria for students' work that include descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria. They are thus an excellent means for connecting formative assessment and summative assessment (grading). Learn how to create or select effective criteria for rubrics; how to write performance level descriptions for rubrics; and how to distinguish rubrics from checklists and rating scales.

Using Rubrics with Students, K-12

SUSAN BROOKHART

Rubrics are an excellent vehicle for involving students in their own assessment. This fosters student self-regulation of learning and helps develop students' lifelong learning capabilities. Learn how to co-create rubrics with students; how to use rubrics to share learning targets with students; and how to use rubrics for student self-assessment and goal setting.



Assessment Challenges in the Differentiated Classroom

RICK WORMELI, Author of *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessment and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom*

Nationally recognized as a leading authority on middle-level education, innovation, differentiation, and teacher professionalism, Rick Wormeli has spent over 30 years in teaching. He is widely published, and sought-after as a speaker. His latest work, *Fair Isn't Always Equal* addresses the inherent challenges around assessment in a differentiated classroom. It asks, 'What's both fair and leads to real student learning?' This question will be the focus for Mr Wormeli's sessions at the SEC, offering the latest research and common sense thinking that teachers and administrators seek when it comes to assessment and grading in differentiated classes.



The Power of Teacher Language, PreK-8

KERRY O'GRADY, Senior Responsive Classroom consultant for Center for Responsive Schools (CRS), www.responsive-classroom.org

Language is one of the most powerful tools available to educators. Learn how the words and tone K-8 educators use every day can have a significantly positive impact on students' learning. In this interactive workshop, you'll learn about the 3 R's of teacher language—reinforcing, reminding, and redirecting language — and how this language can support students' academic, social, and emotional learning.

Create a Positive and Inclusive Climate for Learning, PreK-8

KERRY O'GRADY

Discover how to create a learning environment throughout your school that is joyful, inclusive, respectful, and engaging by using the Responsive Classroom approach to K-8 education. Gain a broad overview of this research-based approach and learn how the four domains of effective teaching—positive community, engaging academics, effective management, and developmentally appropriate practices—can enhance teaching and learning throughout your school.



Unlocking the Power of the NGSS (Workshop #1: ES; Workshop #2: MS/HS)

PAUL ANDERSEN, Educational Consultant on Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), educational technology, blended learning, and effective classroom design. bozemanscience.com

The NGSS represents the largest conceptual shift in teaching science in decades. The addition of engineering design and an increased emphasis on the practices of science could revolutionize science education. However, this revolution will only occur if teachers understand the standards and make changes in their classrooms.

These two separate workshops (ES and MS/HS) will guide you through the standards while giving you concrete examples that can change science classrooms immediately.

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2016-2017 NESA EVENTS

- **Fall Leadership Conference:** October 20-23, 2016
(venue: The Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Doha)
- **Fall Training Institute:** November 4-5, 2016
(venue: American Community School of Abu Dhabi, UAE)
- **Winter Training Institute:** January 20-21, 2017
(venue: Riffa Views International School, Bahrain)
- **Spring Educators Conference:** March 31-April 3, 2017
(venue: Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel, Bangkok)

>>>>>>>> www.nesacenter.org

Contribute to NESA NEWS!

NESA members and affiliates are invited to submit articles, news items, announcements and events.

Specifications: 500 words maximum, photos as high resolution (300dpi) jpg or pdf files with captions.

Deadlines: March 1 (spring - online only), June 1 (fall), November 1 (winter). Email to Laura Canelloupolou: laura@nesacenter.org.

See past issues at: www.nesacenter.org.

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