

Margaret Carpenter: Professional Narrative

In my roles as Library Media Specialist, Coordinator of GATE (gifted and talented education), Social Studies Teacher and Curriculum Collaboration Team member, I have worked to apply a strong interest in pedagogy to school-wide curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students in grades preK-12. For much of my career, I've had the great fortune to work in outstanding college preparatory American International Schools in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa where technology has been essential to accessing resources and developing in students 21st century skills for learning as is relevant in a globalized society. I share below specific ways that I activate my teaching philosophy with students and as a team player with colleagues.

a) Project-based learning: Students learn more by doing, so I promote project-based learning in curriculum development and co-curricular activities. At HKIS, I set up a student newspaper and coordinated its student reporters. Working with the instructional technologist, I produced 2 video broadcast series for which students scripted, acted, filmed and edited. Under my direction, an ecology group educated our community about green living and implemented ecological practices at our school. To make democracy "experiential," I have helped student councils write their constitutions and coordinated a month's worth of activities in Mock Elections at TAS, AIS-R and AIS. To respond to the Southeast Asian Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, poverty in China, as well as the increasing pollution problems in Hong Kong, our "Beads for Needs" and "Read to Feed" fund raising reflected a commitment to project-based learning. Like our "Green Dragons" ecology group, those efforts were multidimensional in the way they channeled children's anxieties and compassion. I involved children in making and selling crafts, developing videos for broadcast, reading and researching, making graphs to measure fund raising results, writing articles for the newspaper, and giving oral presentations to share our goals and the results of a community-wide effort.

b) Service learning, Civic-mindedness and Compassion: I am driven to help students think critically about the world and to participate in its problem-solving. Toward that end, my curriculum-writing efforts have encouraged a study of current events, global warming, world cultures and democracy-building. Combined with the PBL efforts mentioned above, I help forge a connection between our students and the world around them.

c) Multi-culturalism: I have spent most of my career overseas because I have wanted for myself and for my family to learn from people around the world. I have studied and taught history, and worked to build relevant library collections, book recommendation lists, and learning experiences that offer cultural insights. These efforts contribute to building curriculum that is inclusive and sensitive to a variety of world outlooks. Honoring the identity of individual students, and celebrating the mosaic of cultures represented in international schools has given real meaning to a personal mission to improve inter-cultural understanding and promote peace-building dispositions and skills.

d) Motivation: The brain is social. I am sensitive to individual needs as well as group dynamics and how important it is to establish a sense of belonging to nurture positive risk-taking within a school. With the training I've provided, students employ De Bono's Six Thinking Hats and are empowered with skills that help them to enjoy and participate effectively in group learning activities. They interact productively to dive deeper into learning in online classrooms I have put on the internet with online classroom spaces such as Moodle and OLC. I've sought and found "real and wide" audiences for their work through newspapers, literary magazines and online publications.

e) Inquiry and Questioning Skills: In the learning activities that I facilitate and reinforce in online media, students developed a good "questioning toolkit" that guru Jamie McKenzie would celebrate. I helped TAS to adopt and integrate a K-12 inquiry oriented research process based on the Big6 that I support via our 21st century information literacy curriculum. Students demonstrate increasing confidence, skill and efficiency as we layer upon each new year carefully articulated instruction. Students develop skills to access, evaluate and use high quality, 21st century resources for their learning. I am proud that collaborative work such as this permeates the school, skilling teachers as well as students for independent research and lifelong learning. I am comfortable in running parent workshops and presentations to share our strategies with parents who are our important partners in learning.

f) Imagery: Given that many learners in international schools are acquiring English as a second language, and that most people are visual learners, I have learned to create learning tools such as videos, web sites and multimedia slide shows that are abundant in imagery (pictures of *our* students, their artwork, graphs and time lines.) Those tools hook learners and help them to incorporate new

learning much faster than print alone does. (See my article from *Multimedia and Internet @ Schools*.)

g) Technology and Information Literacy Skills instruction is driven by learning needs that arise from the curriculum. I have creatively integrated and articulated info lit skills instruction in my collaborative work because of my commitment to cross-grade level conversation, documentation of resources and curriculum mapping that applies UbD principles. Empowered students demonstrate their 21st century skills in impressive research and technology products published in a variety of media online and in school.

h) Habits of Mind (Art Costa, et.al.) training has offered me a vocabulary for helping students express how they are “learning how to learn.” I champion the integration of Habits of Mind in unit development and I reinforce developing the habits on bulletin boards, in school publications, and in lesson plans used at our school. With the technology changes that learning communities face, habits essential for independent and continual learning must remain at the forefront of our curriculum work. While a faculty collaborates to skill children for working with technology, we must select our technology applications sensibly in order to enhance rather than undermine the development of deep understanding and habits for lifelong learning.

i) Individualization/Differentiation: I am a teacher-librarian who is highly interested and involved in curriculum development, documentation, improving an awareness of resources, and providing workshops to help teachers become more confident and effective users of them. By providing access to a broad range of library and media resources, the teacher-librarian can offer the learning community improved control over learning experiences and choices over how learning is designed for and assessed. Students are motivated when they or their teachers find materials that suit both their learning styles and ability levels. I work with collaborative teams to provide assessment choices and “assignments without ceilings.” (See the article I co-wrote for *Learning and Leading with Technology*.) Given choice and high standards exemplars that we can document with our curriculum mapping tools, students generally impress when an increasing variety of products for assessment are made possible to them and as a school strives to differentiate for special populations and a variety of learning styles.