

Apple Distinguished School Visitors Impressed by EHS Technology



In February, Director of Technology Elaine Wrenn hosted a group of visitors from Springfield, IL School District, a district of around 15,000 students. Like EHS, they are an Apple Distinguished School with an established 1:1 laptop program. The group was excited to visit another Apple Distinguished School, and they were impressed by what they saw.

After receiving background on EHS and its technology program, the group visited the 6th grade science room where students were working on analyzing and presenting data from experiments they had designed. An Illinois science teacher was overheard telling his colleague, "These kids are thinking and doing things at a level that I have a hard time getting my 8th graders to."

In 5th grade classrooms the discussion turned to multimedia projects. Students talked about a variety of subjects including the colonial project they had just completed, the pros and cons of wikis versus Google docs, how they delegate responsibility in a group project, and their use of laptops at school and at home. Immediately upon emerging from the classroom, one visitor stated, "Your kids are so articulate!"

The visitors were anxious to see our usage of iPads. In kindergarten one group of students was using iPads to practice generating and

writing rhyming words. In another group, students utilized laptops to engage with leveled readers, each at a level appropriate for that learner. Our guests were impressed by their sense of comfort and engagement. In 1st grade they saw teachers using iPads and laptops to differentiate instruction as students worked in a variety of different math apps, each individually selected by the teacher to reinforce skills on which the child needed to work.

During lunch, several teachers talked with our guests. Mrs. Aris and Mrs. Henderson discussed using the iPad for differentiation and assessment and shared examples of students using them to create and publish their work. Ms. Alexander provided background on her 5th grade flipped math classroom, the benefits she has seen since the flip, and her plans to extend the model in the future. After lunch, they visited 5th grade math to observe the flipped classroom in action.

Both the visiting Apple representatives and the Illinois educators were complimentary about all aspects of our program. Ms. Wrenn summarized, "The bottom line is, everywhere we looked (and in places where we didn't get a chance to look), impressive things were happening. Thanks to the entire school community for being a part of what makes us an Apple Distinguished School."

Principal Matters



I love fights - hot, sweaty kids, muted by their anger and upset, often mortified that they have been sent to see me. Well, to say I love fights is overstating it a bit. I don't really like to see children

upset. But what I do love is the opportunity that a good fight presents.

Usually a fight that ends in my office is one that has a history . . . misunderstandings, competition, conflict, etc. Once the kids have calmed down enough to share the reasons for their anger, and their often self-righteous points of view, with words rather than fists, a doorway opens. Each child wants to be heard and to be understood and, in my experience, being understood is more important than being "right." When kids are given a chance to share their anger and to be listened to, without interruption, a space for healing opens and resolution is possible.

Each child has at least five minutes of "sit time" - time to cool off apart from one

another, before I get involved. Sometimes I meet with each child separately, allowing the "story" to unfold. I seldom say much. Mostly I just listen, and watch, as the anger dissipates and the ability to consider other ways of handling their fury emerge. It always amazes me how often the "stories" are the same, but from strikingly different perspectives.

Other times I bring the children into my office together. Each gets a turn to explain what happened, again with no interruptions. When one child is speaking the rule is that the other must just listen, as do I. Then roles are switched and the other child has a turn. I am always surprised at how little I need to say during these meetings. Usually I simply validate each child's reasons for being angry, and then remind them that there are more socially acceptable alternatives to deal with conflicts. Occasionally I encourage a child to talk about the emotional side of the story rather than focusing solely on the actions.

Frequently, an almost magical transformation begins to unfold. Once the kids really listen to one another, a surge of compassion bursts forth, and the kids start trying to make

bridges to reconnect. Typical comments include, "I'm sorry. I was just so mad I didn't know what else to do," "I didn't know you felt that way. I am sorry. I won't do that again," and "Are you okay? I really didn't mean to hurt you."

One of the many beautiful things about children is that they do forgive, and forget, much more readily than adults. Sometimes they leave my office hand in hand, or at least shoulder to shoulder, already on to another topic. Other times they leave with a healthy distance between one another, but in a calm, respectful manner. Even in those cases a subsequent fight between those kids is rare. It is as if sharing their pain with one another inhibits future fights. I find this hopeful, and inspiring.

That is why I love fights.

Paula R. Dashiell
Head of School

Paula Dashiell (B.S., Indiana University, M.A.T., Harvard University) has been Head of School at Echo Horizon for 26 years.

EHS Bids Fond Farewells

Sadly, EHS is saying goodbye to two veteran faculty members this year. We are sorry to lose these excellent teachers, but we couldn't be more pleased for them. While 2nd grade teacher Anita Melnick is looking forward to a much-anticipated and well-deserved retirement, 6th grade teacher (and poet) Marci Vogel is going back to school - in a big way!

After 22 years at EHS, **ANITA MELNICK** will retire at the close

of this school year. During her time at EHS, an estimated 400 children benefited from Mrs. Melnick's expertise. She is looking forward to spending more time with her family, traveling, and taking Art History classes at UCLA. However she will really miss teaching here and she feels that "Echo Horizon School will *always* be my home!"



Photo: From the 6th Grade Mentoring 2nd Grade Publishing Activity

MARCI VOGEL, who also came to us in 1990, is off to the ivory towers of academia, but she states that, "My roots will always be at EHS." As reported in the Fall 2011

Roots & Wings, in addition to being a fine educator, Mrs. Vogel is a published author and poet. We are proud to announce that she is one of three poets accepted into the University of Southern California's Program in Literature and Creative Writing. She has also been awarded a Provost's

Fellowship, the most selective level of university-wide graduate support at USC.

We wish them both the very best and thank them on behalf of our community for their dedication and commitment to Echo Horizon School and our students.

We have Two Gifts to Give our Children One is Roots, the Other, Wings.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Echo Horizon School and its Echo Center is to educate children in a collaborative environment that is academically challenging and developmentally appropriate. We actively promote mutual respect, individual responsibility and ethical action. The Echo Horizon graduate is an inquisitive and critical thinker who brings creativity, kindness and self-reliance to the lifelong journey of learning.

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5th Grade's Math Flipped Classroom Gets a Thumbs Up!

Flip and blend. This is the recipe that math teacher Kyla Alexander has used to best meet learning goals for each individual student. Working in collaboration with Assistant Head of School Martha Schuur and Director of Technology Elaine Wrenn, Ms. Alexander recently redesigned her math class to provide more opportunities for differentiation and student-teacher interaction. About a month after introducing the new teaching concept, an anonymous student survey measured students' comfort level with math taught in this manner.

In the new class design, content is introduced at night as homework. This is the flipping concept that allows classroom time to be better spent working with the concepts in small groups. One 5th grader reports, "I like that I can learn at my own speed. I can watch the video again if I don't understand it the first time. They (videos) make math really fun."

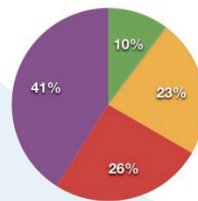
The blending component consists of working with math concepts in a variety of formats through the use of Ms. Alexander's screen-casts, Khan Academy videos and practice at a multitude of levels -- practice on iPad

and iPod Touch devices and problem solving in small groups. This format allows Ms. Alexander time to rotate around the groups, engage with them individually, and evaluate the students' knowledge as well as their ability to use the concepts in multiple ways. "I like learning in small groups with Ms. Alexander because sometimes I need further explanation to fully understand the concept," one student reported, echoing the sentiments of the majority of survey responders.

Overall, the survey findings reflect that an overwhelming majority of our students are more comfortable with math since blending and flipping the class. One student states that "The change I noticed was that I was getting math concepts much faster and I didn't have to think as long to do practice

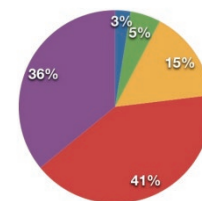
and I didn't have to do as much practice." With the results in, Ms. Alexander feels she has a better understanding of each of her students as her interactions with them have increased.

Flipping a classroom is a challenging shift in mindset for a teacher who basically becomes the coach -- equally as busy during class time but more effectively utilized by virtue of meeting with students in small groups, meeting them where they are with the questions that they have, and challenging them to the next task, to think more deeply as new permutations to the content are introduced. The good news is that Coach Alexander's "team" is responding quickly and well.



What is your comfort level with math since Ms Alexander started teaching math through the use of videos, small groups, and station days?

- a lot less comfortable
- a little less comfortable
- about the same
- a little more comfortable
- a lot more comfortable



Since Ms Alexander started using videos, small groups, and station days, how quickly do you feel you are learning new math concepts?

- a lot less quickly
- a little less quickly
- about the same
- a little more quickly
- a lot more quickly

Evolution of the EHS Arts Showcases



Each year, we watch with wonder and delight as EHS students from Pre-K to 6th grade proudly, enthusiastically and self-confidently strut their stuff during their respective Arts Showcases. Have you ever considered how this exercise in creativity, integrated learning and teamwork came about?

According to Arts Education Coordinator Cathleen Wolff, "A few years ago, it became apparent that while parents do get to see their children sing in our annual Winter Program, they don't really get a peek at the exciting learning that goes on in our Arts Education Program. Thus began our traditional Arts Showcases. Each low-key, infor-

mal performance emphasizes our philosophy that the arts are a process-oriented medium, ever fluid and evolving, and most of all, participatory."

Classroom curriculum is the springboard to bring facts, ideas and concepts alive through the arts. While Kindergartners learn about patterning in math during the fall, they take that learning deeper when they prepare for their Arts Showcase, *Patterns Aplenty*, in the spring. The children create vividly patterned artworks inspired by artist Friedrich Hundertwasser. Seamlessly transferring their knowledge of patterning into music class, they learn songs, chants, movement activities and instrumental accompaniments all grounded in patterning.

By sixth grade, students' understanding of curriculum connection and their creative aptitudes are advanced. They can take their knowledge of ancient civilizations acquired in the classroom and generate an Arts Showcase that compares and contrasts ancient music, theatre, dance and art forms to their contemporary counterparts. The sixth graders play ancient instrumental music

in an Orff instrumentarium and then play the same music in an iPad orchestra. They write and act out original scripts that include ancient scenarios, and modern versions of the same. Students inspect societal norms in ancient civilizations and choreograph modern dance pieces based on their findings. Finally, they learn about the attributes of ancient architecture and incorporate those into a modern set that they design and build. The set reflects not only recognizable features but also the themes of the plays they've written and will perform.

Sixth grade language arts teacher, Marci Vogel, stated it best. "Integrated learning promotes very deep understanding. The process establishes connections in the brain, heart, and mind that truly strengthen the educational experience."

And in the meantime, parents, families, faculty and staff have a wonderful time watching as our students' dedicated hard work magically morphs into something very special indeed.

Echo Center Grad Student Interns



In January 2012, Sara Powers and Lauryn McGonagle, students from Smith College/ Clarke School for the Deaf on the East Coast, spent two weeks interning with Echo Center as part of their Graduate Teacher Education Program. These young women are completing their masters in deaf education. While at EHS, they shadowed Echo Center teachers, visited classroom and learned how a mainstream program works.

After observing in the classroom for two weeks, both Sara and Lauryn were impressed by the Echo Center program and the mainstreaming of our DHH students. They also participated in our after-school speech classes. "There's nothing like this on the East Coast," stated Sara. "Children with hearing challenges either go to a deaf school where they don't have the mainstreaming experience or a public school where their needs are not met as fully as they should be," added Lauryn. Both agree that what Echo Center offers is the best approach for children with hearing challenges.

Vicki Ishida, Head of Echo Center, arranged for the graduate students to further their education by visiting Oralingua School, House Research Institute and John Tracy Clinic. They also toured Advanced Bionics to further their knowledge of cochlear implant technology. "We have learned so much during our time here," Sara concluded. After graduation, Sara and Lauryn plan to be itinerant teachers, travelling from one public school to another to work with deaf and hard-of-hearing students on the East Coast.



EHS Alumni Named National Merit Scholar Finalists

In competition with 16,000 seniors across the United States, **Devin J. and Kyra L. (Class of 2006)** were named National Merit Scholar finalists for academic excellence. Both are currently seniors at Windward. Devin is off to Cornell in the fall, while Kyra will be attending Columbia University.

Be sure to check the summer issue of *Roots & Wings* for a complete listing of college matriculation for the EHS Class of 2006.



Photo: Devin Jameson and Kyra Lunenfeld

Echo Horizon School

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