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Celebration of Learning | 19 May 2016

Number 3 ■ **June 2016**



**INVESTIGATE
INNOVATE
INSPIRE**

Self-directed professional growth

offers educators a unique opportunity to enhance their individual professional competencies while simultaneously addressing learners' needs.

Since last autumn, when we began meeting with individuals and groups of teachers with an interest in proposing a formal CIM project for the 2016 – 2017 school year, we have been inspired by the concerns for students' growth and well-being that have been central to the ideas we have explored and discussed.

Over the course of the year, we have also had the privilege to work with Board members, school leaders, teachers, students and parents on a new shared ACS-wide school philosophy and a set of expected school-wide learning results. Although the results of this process will not be announced until August 2016, individuals, grade-level teams, divisions and entire campuses have already begun thinking about ways we can better support the development of the skills and dispositions we view as essential to both academic progress and success in life beyond school.

Our Doha campus, for example, has launched a Social and Emotional Development Task Force, building on its work with the Mission Skills Assessment and involving all its divisions. Our Cobham campus Lower School remains committed to its use of the Responsive Classroom, routines that offer a consistent and evidence-informed approach to providing a safe and supportive school environment where all learners are valued. And several of our new 2016 – 2017 CIM projects will focus on non-cognitive skills – confidence, enjoyment and interpersonal communication, among others.

We know from research that teacher effectiveness is the strongest factor when it comes to student learning and success. By giving our teachers the autonomy and support they need to identify and pursue personal learning needs that best serve our students, we will be living our vision, "through learning, inspire all to make a difference."

We thank you for your continued interest in and support of the Centre for Inspiring Minds and look forward to learning with you next year.



Ben and Latifa

Sharing learning journeys

was the theme of this year's Celebration of Learning – our annual event where action research project leaders from across the ACS International Schools campuses gather in the Cobham Interactive Learning Centre to present their research questions, data and innovations with members of the school community.

The event was opened by Board Chair, David Thomas, who recognized the extraordinary commitment of the project teams and leaders, who have exceeded the expectations we have for educators in their roles to drive collaboration and innovation. He recognized the importance of teachers as role models for intellectual curiosity and lifelong learning, reminding those present of last January's Education Summit headline – that ACS International Schools is “a community of learners and learning.”

Project leaders from ACS Cobham International School included: Chris Hupp, Denisse Lie-Nielsen and Dee Tree. These presenters addressed research questions that ranged from the ways learners benefit from teacher collaboration; to how student enjoyment influences learning; to assessing the practical differences our teaching makes to students' lives outside the classroom.

Presenters from ACS Doha International School included both project leaders and team members including: Georgette Small, David Kinsella, Trevor Furness and Oliver Chua. Doha staff members reflected on research questions ranging from: how individual identity shapes cultural interactions; to assessing the extent to which we are delivering the non-cognitive outcomes we promote in our philosophy; to practical ways teachers can enhance student motivation; to methods for improving student reflective writing and its role in deep learning.

ACS Egham International School project leader, Jane Fox, shared her investigation of assessing and cultivating language tutor competencies as a key driver of quality native language enrichment provision.

To learn more about the event, visit the CIM website, where you will find a copy of **Postcards from Practice – A travelogue** at <http://cim.acs-schools.com/index.php/cim-celebration-of-learning/>

ACS Doha International School Middle School teacher, David Kinsella, presents findings from Year II of the Mission Skills Assessment project.



Using an evidence-informed approach to continuous improvement

is at the heart of the self-directed professional growth that defines CIM projects. In the past, this has involved the use of Action Research methods to investigate research questions and develop and assess innovative interventions. As the Centre for Inspiring Minds continues to evolve in response to the needs and interests of the school's education professionals, future CIM projects may also use Lesson Study to address emerging teaching and learning challenges.

The CIM project proposals for the 2016 – 2017 school year, submitted by project leaders in April, were reviewed and discussed by the Heads of School, using a published rubric. The Centre for Inspiring Minds is pleased to announce that it will be working with seven cross-campus project teams, led by individuals from ACS Cobham and ACS Doha.

The 2016 – 2017 CIM projects are as follows:

- ❖ Somayyeh Doha, from ACS Cobham will lead the project team's investigation of the **Integrated Math** question, *"How does integrated mathematics contribute to grade 9 and 10 students' ability and skills in problem solving and promoting mathematical mindset?"*
- ❖ Karen Aham, from ACS Doha will lead the project team's investigation of the **First Language Use** question, *"How can the use of first language (L1) strategies with high school students change teachers' beliefs and support non-native English speaking students?"*
- ❖ Vanessa Tarrant, from ACS Cobham will lead the project team's investigation of the **Language Learning** question, *"How can the development and use of formative student data dashboards by language teachers inform teaching strategies and enhance student engagement, enjoyment and language learning?"*
- ❖ David Kinsella, from ACS Doha will lead the project team's investigation of the **Mission Skills Assessment** question, *"How can a whole school focus on six key learner dispositions - teamwork, creativity, ethics, resilience, curiosity and time management – and the use of the Mission Skills Assessment, provide evidence of the development of these skills and their contribution to student learning outcomes?"*
- ❖ Adrian Price, from ACS Doha will lead the project team's investigation of the **Soft Skills** question, *"How can the use of models and academically backed tools/techniques improve social-emotional development in grade 10 students?"*
- ❖ Dee Tree, from ACS Cobham will lead the project team's investigation of the **SRE Outcomes** question, *"How does the Cobham middle school Sex and Relationships Education program inform and influence student attitudes and behaviour as they progress through high school?"*
- ❖ Ryan Hinchley, from ACS Cobham will lead the project team's investigation of the **Perceptions of Course Selection** question, *"How do high school students make sense of their experience selecting courses that may influence their university placement and how can knowing this information improve the effectiveness of the high school college counseling?"*

If you would like to learn more about these projects or to join one of the project teams, please contact the project leader directly, or contact Latifa Hassanali. Read more about the projects at <http://cim.acs-schools.com/index.php/our-projects/>

Purposeful conversation

moves students from passive listeners to active learners. This simple, yet powerful teaching strategy is at the heart of “Talking in class” a CIM-supported project that ran from autumn 2012 through June 2015 – a project that continues to grow and engage an ever-increasing group of educators from around the world.

Initiated by project co-leaders Brianna Gray and Jake Rosch, Talking in class is based on the student dialogue research of Stanford University Senior Researcher, Jeff Zwiers. Zwiers is the author of several books on academic conversations and academic language including **Building Academic Language: Essential Practice for Content Classrooms** (2007), **Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk that Fosters Critical Thinking and Content Understanding** (2011) and **Building Academic Language: Meeting Common Core Standards Across Disciplines** (2014).

In a recent IB Community Blog (4 February 2016), Gray and Rosch shared some of the challenges that teachers they work with have shared with them. Chief among these is the careful balance that a skillful teacher needs to be able to achieve between allowing students to express their own ideas and providing enough structure to ensure that learning objectives are achieved. Central to this is the use of student dialogue routines. Routines addressing five key conversation skills are detailed in the publication, **Talking in Class – Conversation Skill Activities** (2015).

Learn more:

- ❖ In partnership with colleagues, Zwiers offers free on-line courses for facilitation constructive classroom conversations in primary and secondary classrooms. To find out about upcoming courses, visit <http://online.stanford.edu/instructors/jeff-zwiers>
- ❖ To learn more about Zwiers’ Academic Language and Literacy project, visit <http://www.jeffzwiers.org/>
- ❖ To learn more about the pre-conference ‘Talking in Class’ workshop to be offered at the January 2017 ELMLE Conference in Vienna, visit <http://www.elmle.org/vienna-2017>
- ❖ To learn more about the teaching and learning resources available from Talking in Class, visit <http://www.talkinginclass.com>



Talking in Class conversation skill routines in use in a Middle School Spanish class.

Empowering students

to direct their own learning lies at the heart of an inquiry-based curriculum. Education writers have identified a continuum of inquiry ranging from teacher-directed, to guided, to student-led. Authentic, student-led inquiry continues to challenge educators tasked with developing a standards-based curriculum. With ACS International School's recently developed shared definition of learning – the development of knowledge and understanding, skills and dispositions – we have reaffirmed our commitment to helping students approach learning with curiosity, enthusiasm and joy.

Over the past year, the grade three teachers at ACS Cobham have worked together to learn about, develop and deliver a social studies unit using an innovative teaching method called "Storyline."

Storyline originated in Scotland in 1965 as a response to government calls for child-centred approaches to teaching. The Jordanhill Staff Tutor Team took up this challenge and engaged classroom teachers, using methods that would later be recognized as action research, to develop and test new teaching strategies.

Over time, and with leadership from Jordanhill faculty Steve Bell and Sally Harkness, the method took shape and evolved. Through experimentation with the method in Scotland and in different parts of the world, what started as a call to action by the Scottish government was transformed into an international movement. There are now Storyline organisations in 10 countries, across Europe and in the United States.

At its heart, according to Storyline Scotland, the method "creates a partnership between the teacher and the learners in which the teacher designs the 'line' – the chapters of the story, and the learners create and develop the story. The line or plan aims at curricular content, while the story provides the context within which the pupils feel motivation through ownership.'

To learn more about how our teachers have used Storyline, visit the CIM website at <http://cim.acs-schools.com/index.php/collaboration-for-engagement-and-enjoyment/>

To learn more about Storyline read:

- ❖ Bell, Steve and Harkness, Sally (2006). **Storyline: Promoting Language Across the Curriculum**. UKLA Minibook.
- ❖ Creswell, Jeff (1997). **Creating World Constructing Meaning: The Scottish Storyline Method**. Heinemann.

Or visit Storyline on-line at www.storyline.com

June and July events

are being held across London and the South East this summer. We encourage you to consider these unique opportunities to learn more about British, European and International trends in teaching and learning.

Festival of Education

23-24 June 2016

8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Wellington College, Crowthorne RG45 7PU



The two-day Telegraph Festival of Education brings together the very best of Education's most forward thinking advocates, practitioners of change and policy makers. This two-day festival has become one of, if not the leading forum for thought leadership, CPD and debate in the Education sector. Among this year's more than 90 speakers and presenters is Professor Guy Claxton who spoke at BIG Think II. For registration information, visit the website at

<http://www.festivalofeducation.com/>

Research and Development Network Conference

28 June 2016

10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Institute of Education, London, WC1 0AL



This conference brings together teachers across education to share, evaluate and celebrate the activities of the Research and Development Network. There will be opportunities to take part in learning conversations led by schools and hear from key thinkers interested in advancing evidence use and knowledge exchange. The Centre for Inspiring Minds is a member of the Research and Development Network. ACS Staff members attending the event are eligible for the member rate. Please contact Latifa Hassanali if you are interested in attending.

CamStar Network Conference

1 July 2016

12 noon – 3:15 p.m.

Goffs School, Cheshunt EN7 5QW



Cambridge School Teachers and Research is a programme of University of Cambridge, Faculty of Education. Its annual conference brings together action research project teams from across the UK to share with and learn from one another. The Centre for Inspiring Minds will be a presenter at this year's conference. For more information, visit the website at <http://www.camstar.org.uk/>

Summer reading

If you would like to read about some of the inspiring work happening around the world, we recommend the following books for you summer reading list. Here are some books that have caught our attention this past year.

Brown, Chris (Editor) (2015). **Leading the Use of Research & Evidence in Schools**. Institute of Education, London.

Claxton, Guy and Lucas, Bill (2015). **Educating Ruby: What Our Children Really Need to Learn**. Crown House Publishing, London.

Duckworth, Angela (2016). **Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance**. Scribner.

Hayes Jacobs (Editor) (2014). **Mastering Global Literacy**. Solution Tree Press, Indiana.

Kaufman, Trent and Dolci Grimm, Emily (2013). **The Transparent Teacher: Taking Charge of Your Instruction with Peer-collected Classroom Data**. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Lewis, Catherine and Hurd, Jacqueline (2011). **Lesson Study: Step-by-Step**. Heinemann, New Hampshire.

Lucas, Bill, Claxton, Guy and Spencer, Ellen (2013). **Expansive Education**. Acer Press and Open University Press.



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