

In Shanghai, the Mini Wow the Many...

Festival of the Arts Mixes Cultures, Creative Media

By Amy Brummit

Shanghai Community International School's (SCIS) Pudong campus recently hosted a "Festival of the Arts by the Mini for the Many." The one-evening arts extravaganza highlighted the diversity of the school through visual arts, music, dance, and dramatic art.

Parents began the evening with a walking tour of student-created artwork, which included tribal masks, artistic photographs, and beautiful still art, all showcased for everyone

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A study in pink and lilac, students from Shanghai Community International School (SCIS), Pudong campus take the stage during the school's Festival of the Arts, which featured performers from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5 (photo: Steve Clark/Christi Chase).

For Effective Leadership, New Job Descriptions

By Bambi Betts

Just a few weeks ago at a high-profile international school, a group of middle school heads of grade and department leaders gathered for some professional development. They were asked one question: What decisions is your team empowered and required to make? The answers, or lack thereof, were telling: no one really knew. If you work in a school, you have been there.

An idea about learning bubbles up. It is on the agenda at meetings, at every level. Teachers discuss it; department and grade level leaders discuss it; principals discuss it; and everyone reads about it. Input pours in: opinions, reactions, embellishments. Our investigation confirms it is a valuable practice, adding value to learning.

And a year goes by... What happened to that good idea we invested so much time in?

Right into the "black hole," the resting place of dozens of valid and

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Successfully Teaching Boys: Findings from a New International Study

By Richard Hawley and Michael Reichert

This article was first published in ASCD Express 6 4 (<http://www.ascd.org/ascdexpress>).

In response to the mounting concern that boys are not thriving in many U.S. schools, it occurred to us that it might be possible to document the elements of successfully teaching boys in schools where the process was most clearly observable: in schools for boys.

We did not presume, nor do we now, that effectively teaching boys was possible only in boys' schools. Rather, we wanted to document common characteristics of effective practices and, if we found them, to consider their applicability to schools generally.

In partnership with The International Boys' Schools Coalition, we designed an international study called Teaching Boys: A Global Study of Effective Practices (2009) in which teachers and boys from 18 schools representing the United States, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa submitted narratives of specific lessons and practices that they deemed especially effective—in other words, that worked.

Faculty of 7th through 12th grade boys—middle school and high school—submitted narratives, as did a sampling of the boys in each school. From approximately 1,000 faculty narratives and 1,500 student narratives, we set out to identify common patterns in the effective practices reported.

We did not begin with any assumption of what such reports would reveal or, more critically, whether there would indeed be any common factors in what was reported. We did not want to hear only from or about proven faculty "stars"; we wanted to hear from whole school faculties—beginning, mid-career, and veteran teachers; men and women; teachers of all types in all disciplines; teachers who had taught in both single-sex and coed

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Emirati Students Find Learning Arabic "a Burden"

Restrictive Curriculum Makes Mother Tongue a Hard Sell

By Afshan Ahmed

This article was first printed in The National (UAE) on 28 December 2010.

Dubai, United Arab Emirates—Arab students find learning their mother tongue a burden, parents who feel the Arabic curriculum has led to a loss of interest in the language have said.

Private schools educating Arab students have to teach the language using books approved by the Ministry of Education.

Non-Arab students, who take Arabic as an additional language, can be taught through different programs after the approval of the education authority, so what and how they learn differs from Arab students.

"I feel like they do not love the language and a lot of effort goes into

teaching them Arabic at home," said Umm Shadha al Gergawi, an Emirati mother of two. "This is not the case with English or the additional languages they take. The [Arabic] curriculum is very restricted and it is difficult for them to comprehend the topics."

Students learning Arabic as a first language made good progress in developing their reading and listening skills in the lower grades but were lagging in writing and speaking, according to the 2010 annual report by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB).

Jameela al Muhairi, who heads the DSIB, said educators needed to make Arabic interesting through innovative teaching methods. "They have to be creative and learn from peers who teach other subjects,"

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Capstone Publishers Makes Largest Donation Yet, to Books for Africa

Publisher Donates 300,000 Books, a US\$5 Million Value

By Jennifer Glidden

Capstone, the leading publisher of children's books and digital products and services, is donating 300,000 overstock books to Books for Africa, the largest shipper of donated text and library books to the African continent. The donation is valued at more than US\$5 million.

The long voyage began in late November, when the donated books traveled from the publishers' warehouse in Mankato, Minnesota, to the Books for Africa warehouse in St. Paul, Minnesota. From there the books will be sorted and packaged for shipment to Africa.

"This incredibly generous donation from Capstone is one of the largest publisher donations received by Books For Africa we can remem-

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Up-and-coming authors do some peer review (photo: Margriet Ruurs).

By Margriet Ruurs

Following a recent author visit to the International School of Yangon (Myanmar), teacher Duffer Kinney gave me a pile of picturebooks and asked me to hand them out to chil-

dren as I toured the country. "I became spellbound by the folk tales of Burma," she explained.

A writing workshop led her to a publishing adventure, in which students' stories are turned into published picturebooks, to be distrib-

In Myanmar, Student-Author-Illustrators

uted throughout the country. As a school librarian, Duffer had told her students a Myanmar folk tale and asked them to retell the story. A tape recorder enabled her to duplicate their exact words. "We talked about the importance of collecting oral tales," she said.

Later, as a classroom teacher, she asked Burmese students to collect stories from friends and family. After a few times, they made a story map. Duffer found that this process turned her students into more fluent writers.

Students revised frequently, and dialogue lessons became more natural, because characters want to talk. Students then typed up their own edited story, and subsequently divided story boards into 12 pages: three for the beginning, six for the middle, and three for the ending.

They then circled each part of their story and drew sketches, using library books to look at styles and how illustrators include information.

During social studies, students thought about Myanmar's culture and how to include it in their books; they then illustrated their stories. A native teacher translated the English text into Burmese, while the school secretary typed it out in Burmese characters.

The Yinthway Foundation [a local NGO whose focus is early childhood development and education] asked Duffer if she was willing to share students' work. Yinthway chose five books the first year, and 13 the next, to be printed in Yangon.

Following publication the stories, written, edited, and illustrated by elementary students, were distributed

to children who very often had not owned a book before.

Handing out free books has touched many lives in Myanmar. And including oral storytelling helped students to become stronger writers.

Even though the Burmese government has recently declared that all schools must have libraries because of their importance, most do not hold any books.

Organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children, and Yinthway are hoping to change this. And what better way than to publish stories written and illustrated by children? ●

Your school can sponsor a print run of student-produced picture books in Myanmar! Visit <http://www.yinthway.org>.

Emirati Students Find Learning Arabic "a Burden"

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she said. However, those abilities declined in high school, where comprehension skills were limited to recollection of facts for most students, who also could not display creative and extended writing capabilities.

The report also noted that students' use of Standard Arabic required improvement and oral skills that had to be developed.

As a result, many Arab parents have resorted to sending their children for private instruction outside the school system. Basel Shaban said he had hired an Arabic tutor, who teaches his children at home. "When we moved to Dubai from America we thought there would be an environment where they could speak in Arabic," said Mr. Shaban, who is from Saudi Arabia. "The schools only fulfill certain criteria, so then we need to come in to drill the basics so that they can progress."

He said the school does not follow a differentiation approach, and students of various abilities were learning the same thing. "When they

joined my kids were learning the alphabet but after three years they come not having learnt much beyond that," he said. "When kids find themselves doing the same thing and learning the same concepts they shut down and lose interest."

Noura Rashid, the mother of a pupil at the Mirdiff Private School, agreed that the curriculum was not what it could be and expressed concern that it was not sufficiently age-specific.

"For other languages you have books on grammar, vocabulary, phonetics to develop speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills, but in Arabic the textbooks are not that diverse," she said. "It is also very hard to get such books on the market and I think the ministry must create more resources."

Parental disappointment with the ministry-approved language curriculum has led to a growing interest in courses offered at the Dar el ilm School of Languages because of the way Arabic is taught there, said Maha Jayyusi, the school's director of studies.

"We focus on communication and our method emphasises making learning easy, logical and fun," she said. "The script and language are taught through games and practical activities. In class every student has

to speak in Arabic." Most parents prefer the added support because schools are restricted to teaching to ministry requirements which may not necessarily develop the necessary language skills, Ms. Jayyusi said.

"The teachers are loading the children with information which they won't even use in their daily life, so they end up memorising it just to pass in an examination," she said.

The ministry is working to address the situation. Taaleem, a company that owns schools in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, has been conducting professional development for teachers and investing in resources to raise the profile of the language.

Dr. Samia al Farra, Taaleem's chief education officer, believes the onus of teaching one's mother tongue does not fall on the school alone. "The book is not the curriculum, it is just an instrument," she said. "The activities under the umbrella of the book is what constitutes the curriculum."

Dr. al Farra said parents need to be educated on their role in education. "When they bring home an Arabic newspaper or stories to read to their children, they are actually contributing to the whole picture of the curriculum," she said. ●

In Shanghai, the Mini Wow the Many

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to enjoy. After the art gallery walk, the audience was treated to a first-class performance by the entire SCIS lower school student body, with all students playing a vital role. Led by our dedicated production team, students prepared for months for the performance.

The production began with the harmonious Santa Lucia singers from Northern Europe gracing the audience with traditional songs. From there, the students took it away and performed three multicultural tales, each representing a different part of the world.

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten staged a traditional West African tale about Anansi, a popular figure in stories due to his cleverness. First and second graders performed "The Stonecutter," a Japanese folktale in which the lead character learns to be content with his life. Finally, our third, fourth, and fifth graders performed "The Cat and the Rat," a traditional tale from Jamaica.

The evening marked the accumulation of months of preparation and learning for SCIS students. While the performance was a huge success, the goal was much larger than one night of work: the production was about building an appreciation of what it means to come together as a community and work as a team; to experience something that everyone can take pride in.

Interweaving the multicultural theme only added to the experience for students, as our diverse population collectively took a story from paper and made it come alive on the stage.

The Multicultural Festival of the Arts further highlighted SCIS's commitment to educating the whole child, as an education in the arts supports not only children's intellectual development, but also their personal and social development.

Arts education strengthens problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and helps students develop self-confidence, self-discipline, and persistence. SCIS is rightly proud of this Festival, and will remain dedicated to providing a complete educational experience! ●

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The International Educator (TIE) is published by the Overseas Schools Assistance Corporation, a private, non-profit corporation chartered in Massachusetts, USA. Four issues are published each year, in October, December, February, and April, as well as a Jobs-Only supplement in June.

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