

Skylines

Skyview School, Inc.

From the Director... Scott McCreery

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I recently read an article from Edutopia, titled *Six Tips for Brain-Based Learning*, and it confirmed for me once again that the educational program at Skyview School has been at the forefront of education for the past sixteen years by incorporating research-based practices, serving children extraordinarily well. Over the last twenty years the field of neuroscience has grown significantly as new technology has been developed to study the brains of children. As this body of knowledge has expanded over the years, so has our understanding of how to



Natural sciences in 5-6

boost children's learning power. While the article states there are six important ways a school can boost student learning, I would like to highlight three of them and how they are seamlessly integrated within the educational life at Skyview School.

Create a Safe Environment—It should come as no surprise that *creating a safe climate* for children is

essential to learning. When children are feeling anxious or fearful, the part of the brain that processes emotions, the amygdala, begins to block information from traveling to the key learning centers of the brain. While educators are not able to address every stressor that a child experiences, there are several ways that a classroom environment can be created for more optimal learning opportunities. One strategy the article highlights is building the capacity for students to develop healthy emotional intelligences, or as we refer to them, the personal intelligences. While all of the multiple intelligences are addressed by Skyview School, we contend that the personal intelligences (intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences) are central to school life and success in the greater community. We believe that the healthy, constructive functioning and development of the intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences are foundational to successful learning and effective participation as a member of society. Thus, Skyview School places an emphasis on these two intelligences above and beyond the others.

Intrapersonal intelligence is our understanding of our self, discerning feelings and observing how they influence our behavior. It is our ability

to notice subtle distinctions in others, such as changes in their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions. Personal intelligences are a key human skill that is essential for developing and maintaining healthy relationships. It also turns out that students who are able to monitor their feelings and cooperatively interact with others tend to have longer attention spans, process information better, and have stronger memorization skills. In other words, it helps them learn better.

Children need opportunities to develop skills to handle anxiety and anger, to empathize, and to resolve conflict. Skyview has understood for many years that when students are in an emotionally safe environment they are more receptive to the academic challenges presented to them. The two are intricately linked. The goal of our personal intelligences curriculum, in broadest terms, is teaching self-discipline and self-regulation.

Encourage a Growth Mind-Set—Through numerous studies, neuroscientists and psychologists now understand a child's IQ is not fixed at birth. The brain, like our bodies, can build brainpower with exercise. However, many people, including children, still believe in the old way of thinking about the brain and that is how they define

themselves as learners. When teachers *encourage a growth mind-set* for their students, they are helping them understand that with challenging activities they can stretch their "thinking muscles." A growth mind-set can be learned and reinforced by messages that praise persistence and set high expectations.

Skyview believes that when students are actively engaged in their learning through a compelling, interactive, and dynamic curriculum, they develop and nurture a love of learning and intrinsic motivation. Through a combination of whole group instruction, center-based activities, thematic projects, small group collaborations, and individual work, students experience enthusiasm about and connections to their investigations and learn because they want to learn. Intrinsic motivation and self-direction are essential to fostering a lifetime love of learning and the ability to learn *how to learn* as opposed to simply learning *what to learn* in order to pass a test or satisfy a teacher or parent.

Developing and nurturing intrinsic motivation through an active approach to teaching and learning also means that students assume greater responsibility for their education and their lives. In this way, in addition to developing study habits that will serve them well for years to come, students are also developing important life

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From the Director continued...

skills as family and community members and as informed and active citizens.

The Skyview School's pedagogy, or the art, science, or practice of educators, is framed by thematic, project-based curricula. Compelling topics derived from content standards form the basis of the projects. Thematic projects feature linked investigations and intersecting content area and are created for real audiences. The multiple intelligences inform these projects, providing rich products in which content is expressed through a variety of intelligences. Thematic projects require students to construct deep understanding and skills, while simultaneously fulfilling academic standards and goals related to the personal intelligences. Teaching and learning are active and engaging in Skyview's classrooms. Effective instructional practices promote equity and high expectations: they make the content of products come alive, ensure that all students think and participate, and allow the teacher to know all students and their thinking well. Good practices foster character by inspiring each student to develop craftsmanship, perseverance, collaborative skills, and responsibility for learning. They promote critical thinking by asking that students make connections, perceive patterns and relationships, understand diverse perspectives, supply evidence for inferences and conclusions, and generalize to the big ideas of the discipline studies.

Emphasize Feedback— Educational researchers have long understood the value of *emphasizing feedback*

throughout the learning process to ensure students are staying on track with their learning. Excellent teachers use a range of formative (on-going) assessment strategies to check for understanding and address any misconceptions early on. Effective feedback means that students know more than whether their answers were right or wrong. When students understand where and how they got off track with their thinking they are able to make the necessary adjustments for successful completion of an assignment or project.

Skyview School uses a variety of formative assessment and feedback strategies to both support and stimulate the learning of all students. When multiple types of assessment and feedback are utilized to create a broad and comprehensive view of the students, the teachers are better able to address their particular learning needs. Formative feedback is used to ensure students are learning and teachers are effectively teaching to the students' developmental level. Students are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their own reflection and self-assessment.

Some of the ways in which feedback is used at Skyview includes peer revision groups; gallery walks; project work; cooperative games; authors' chair, small group discussions; questioning strategies; student presentations; and celebrations of learning. We believe it is not only important to provide timely feedback, but also provide students with metacognitive strategies so they are able to monitor their own work and recognize when they are on track.

Metacognition, or aware-

ness of the *process of learning*, is a critical ingredient to successful learning. When individuals are using metacognition they are *monitoring their progress* as they learn and *making changes* to their strategies if they perceive they are not working. Generally speaking, most students do not examine the quality of their work or stop to make revisions as they go along. Take reading for example. We have all experienced the phenomenon of reading a page in a book and then realize we have not comprehended anything we just read. A student who is not using metacognition would go on to the next page, thinking that merely reading the words on the page was enough. Students who are using metacognition would realize their flaw and re-read for understanding.

Skyview School was founded on the use of research-based standards of instruction, referred to as "best practices" in education. The expression "best practice" was originally borrowed from the professions of medicine, law, and architecture, where "good practice" or "best practice" were everyday phrases used to describe solid, reputable, state-of-the-art work in the field. When educators are using best practice standards, they are aware of the current research and consistently offer children the full benefit of the latest knowledge, technology, and procedures. Brain-based research and the possibilities it holds for children is not a new revelation for us, as we have been utilizing them many years and continue to draw upon them for inspiration and expert instruction.



Working together in 8th grade math.



Making cars in Primary.



2nd quarter Art Share! Such talented kids at Skyview!



Combining Antarctica studies and math, students experiment with water temperatures.
Dantes: "It's cold!"

Language Arts & Common Core Sonja Dougherty

Upon examining the newly adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for language arts, I am proud to state that Skyview's kindergarten curriculum not only meets the CCSS, but exceeds them. Coinciding with Skyview's curriculum, the four standards of the CCSS for language arts are reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. (Within these standards are more detailed strands.) Based upon the Building Blocks Program, our language arts activities are scaffolded sequentially and are literacy-rich. Children engage in a curriculum that interweaves the components of language: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. As we develop phonemic awareness, we read to—and with—the children and provide opportunities for independent reading. We write for—and with—the children and provide opportunities for the children to write by themselves. Our goal is to create a love for language arts while building a strong literacy foundation.

Answering the CCSS for “Foundational Skills” in reading, Skyview kindergartners are read aloud to every day, and beginning in third quarter, participate in guided reading groups. While reading, we “prompt, support, ask and answer questions about the text,” “retell familiar stories,” and “identify characters, settings, and major events,”—thus meeting the CCSS reading strands of “Key Ideas and Details,” “Craft

and Structure,” “Integration of Knowledge and Ideas,” and “Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity.”

Skyview kindergarten's writing program is based upon Lucy Calkins' *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum*. Our Writing Workshop focuses on the Personal Narrative genre in which the children write about and illustrate what they know and what is important to them. The idea, “What I Say, I Can Write,” is emphasized. This activity exemplifies the CCSS writing strand, “Text Types and Purposes,” in which students are to “use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts.”

The CCSS of speaking and listening is addressed in multiple ways within our curriculum. Two of the best examples are our “Morning Share” and “Author's Chair.” Each day begins with a student share in which the child speaks aloud about something that is important to him or her. The speaker is encouraged to include key details (who, what, when, where, why, and how) and the listeners are invited to relay back what they have heard while asking questions. When our kindergarten students have completed a language arts project, they are invited to sit in our “Author's Chair” and share their work with their peers. Classmates are encouraged to ask questions of the author about their

piece. Both of these activities clearly meet the CCSS listening and speaking strands of “Comprehension and Collaboration” and “Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas.”

Throughout the school year, Skyview kindergartners acquire the knowledge dictated by the CCSS for language arts. While only a portion of the strands are mentioned here, after studying them in their entirety, I am confident that each of them are integrated into Skyview's kindergarten curriculum. Honoring our commitments to a thematic, project-based curriculum, Best Practices, and the theory of Multiple Intelligences, information is not solely delivered by the teacher; the students are actively engaged in a rich variety of activities in which they are the creators of their own knowledge. While we utilize language skills to read, write, speak, and listen, we also explore, play, construct, illustrate, dance, move, sing, and dramatize. Knowledge becomes real as it is interwoven and internalized. Learning becomes challenging and fun. Our mission is to provide various avenues through which children of all learning styles can learn. Skyview's kindergarten curriculum for language arts not only meets the standards mandated by the state, it goes above and beyond.



Avery works on her language arts skills.

“Knowledge becomes real as it is interwoven and internalized.”



Grant focuses intently on writing his letters.

Mystery Science! Pam Robbins



It's a mystery! "Let's check out the clues!"



The chalk outline in the shape of a body lay surrounded by numerous artifacts of evidence within the perimeter of crime scene tape. "What happened? What's going on? Look at those footprints! What is that? Is that blood?"

This was what our middle school students walked into one Monday morning and our investigation into the interdisciplinary study of mystery was off to an exciting start. The students gathered around for instructions and were placed into forensic partnerships. They proceeded to work as trained scientists to solve a crime, step by step, making detailed drawings of the whole crime scene, their individual numbered areas, and then each piece of evidence within their area. They then recreated the entire scene onto a large crime-scene map, with detailed expertise. After they

studied the crime scene, they conducted lab tests on the evidence, analyzed the results, and solved the mystery!

The forensic science activities were conducted in 9 learning-stations, with key content areas emphasizing the difference between evidence and inference. The "detectives" made their inferences based on evidence at the end of each session, considering four suspects. Some of the crime-lab procedures included thread tests, powder tests (ph levels), DNA comparisons, chromatography, and fingerprinting. Along with exciting, fun and careful experimentation, the students used their logical mathematical intelligence, many making a real-life connection to forensic science.

During humanities we looked at how DNA is currently being used to over-

turn convictions of innocent people and as an element of mystery writing in short stories, novels, and screenplays. Many of the students were able to make a correlation between science and how detectives work to solve crimes, as well as authors taking the science of crime and creating art. They created partnership short stories and enjoyed watching an episode of *CSI Miami*, excellent tools for assessing and evaluating learning. The crime in the *CSI* episode involved environmental impact, straying from the series' usual story line. The students were able to apply their knowledge of current environmental issues, health, and their newly acquired skills in detective inferences based upon facts, to solve the mystery; some even before the *CSI* team!



Apple art study (and snack!)



Illustrator Lisa Neely demonstrates her technique to the 5/6.

Greetings from Art! Yvonne Holland

Greetings from the Art Department! Kindergarten students have been drawing from life this term. They began by studying, drawing and painting a pumpkin. We then had fun reading about and drawing apples, and eating the "models" afterwards!

Grades 1 & 2 drew and painted a bicycle as part of their studies in seeing how things work. Their images were quite sophisticated and truly showed keen observation by the children!

Grades 3 & 4 accompanied me to visit "P.K. Bootmaker", Paul Krause, in his downtown Prescott shop. We learned how a true craftsman creates a custom boot from start to finish. We then worked with leather tools, and are now painting a cowboy boot "canvas" with acrylics.

Local illustrator, Beth Neely, visited our 5/6 class this week and talked about her profession. Beth went over the steps that an illustrator must complete when

working with a publisher and then demonstrated several of her watercolor techniques. Students are currently working on their own illustrations.

Grades 7/8 created wonderful pieces for their celebration. They shaped beautiful pinch pot tea bowls with clay, using red iron and cobalt oxides in a traditional Japanese glaze style.

I hope that your winter break and holidays bring you joy.

The Choice is Theirs! Dena Ford

The buzz this quarter in our classroom is Daily Five. Daily Five is a curriculum tool designed to structure reading and writing programs in elementary classrooms. We use this each morning as children are busy completing meaningful literacy tasks through *Read to Self*, *Read to Someone*, *Listen to Reading*, *Word Work*, or *Work on Writing*. This structure was developed by two sisters who teach together in Seattle, Washington and was designed to help children develop the daily habits of reading, writing, and working independently that lead to a lifetime of literacy independence.

Our children are excited about Daily Five. They get to choose whether they will read by themselves, read to someone, work on their writing, listen to a story in the listening center, or do word work during our language block. It seems that, because the choice is theirs, they are more fully engaged and are taking ownership of their learning. This is astounding to observe at the first and second grade level! While I am working with a small reading group, children who are emergent

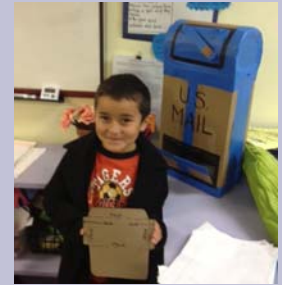
readers are choosing fluent readers to read with during *Read to Someone*. The fluent readers are then asking the emergent readers if they prefer “coaching” or “time” when they get stuck on a word. Children are eager to write at the *Work on Writing* center because they know they can choose one of many writing activities. These include free writing or writing a creative story, report, or letter to someone. The highlight of the day is when someone is ready to sit in the author’s chair and share their writing with the class. An example of something fun that happened recently occurred in one of the primary classrooms. A child came in with a homemade mailbox for his class so that they had a place to mail letters to each other during *Work on Writing*.

One component of Daily Five that we use during our language study time is Daily CAFÉ. CAFÉ is an acronym for our literacy goals: Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expand vocabulary. Children learn reading strategies within these categories that become tools for them to

utilize in becoming better readers and writers.

Through these strategies, children are learning how to pick “good fit books”. They are also reminded that there are three ways to read a book: read and talk about the pictures, read the words, and retell a previously read book. Our current reading goal is to “Expand Vocabulary” by “tuning in to interesting words.” Since introducing this strategy, children are continually jotting down interesting words on sticky notes that they read during Daily Five. I cannot read a book aloud without hands going up because children are “tuning in to interesting words.” These are very happy moments in the classroom!

When children are excited about what is happening in the classroom, learning takes place and it is absolutely contagious. By involving students so that they have choices in their learning, they bring more to the classroom every day. It’s been amazing to witness how each student has progressed in their reading proficiency and independence this quarter. Language arts are truly an inspiration at Skyview!



Dallin is ready to mail a letter!



Teacher: “Did you hear the word I read? I love that word! It sounds so interesting and feels delightful as I say it. Aren’t words wonderful? Tuning in to interesting words is a great strategy for expanding our vocabulary.”



Teacher: “We want to learn more and more words so we can read them and know what they mean as well as use them in our reading and speaking.”

3rd Quarter Happenings

January 16

MLK Day, No school.

January 17

Board Meeting

February 14

Board Meeting

February 20

President’s Day, No school

March 2

School Dance & Family Gathering

March 9-25

Spring Break!



Middle Childhood Development Kathryn Miedema



Building a mountain in 3/4.



Measuring the wind!

A child's development occurs in waves and happens in many ways: physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. There is great emphasis in education about early childhood development because growth is immense at these stages. However, in middle childhood another wave arises that is essential to child development.

At the third and fourth grade level, between ages seven and ten, a child goes through two major changes. The early-middle and late-middle childhood stages are a gradual process where a child goes from a largely egotistical to a more socially conscious being. Often, it is hard to understand what is going on because the changes that are occurring involve brain and neural growth which are not visible, nor do they happen overnight.

A major growth spurt occurs in the brain around 8 or 9 years old so that it is almost adult size. The part of the brain that is growing is in the frontal lobe, responsible for planning,

reasoning, social judgment, and ethical decision making. The development of the frontal lobe allows children to take on increasingly more complex tasks. The greatest accomplishment at this stage is independence. It is important to note that the frontal lobe continues to develop throughout childhood, adolescence and young adulthood and does not reach full maturation until an individual is approximately 25 years of age (Science News, 2004).

During this development, a student's stamina increases in order to complete multi-step assignments, a sense of community is developed through positive peer influences, and the ability to self-direct through reasoning and decision making improves. One of the greatest academic transitions at this age is reading to learn rather than learning to read. This skill then opens a world of knowledge that is self-sustaining.

In the Intermediate 3/4 level at Skyview School, students are guided to de-

velop these skills as the frontal lobe is growing. This first semester, while studying Prescott's Early History, students researched, summarized, and paraphrased information from expert folders and wrote expository and biographical essays. The students worked both independently and in crews to examine this information. In addition, the students performed the play *Glimpses of the Past: Prescott's Early History*.

In producing this play, forty-three students worked together to create a product. In smaller groups, students cooperated and took on the role of actors, musicians, and dancers. Through this play, the students' multiple intelligences ripened as they refined and expressed their learning through them. In a holistic approach to child development and education, we strive to guide the students physically, mentally, socially and emotionally as they pass through an important stage in human development.

Teamwork in 5/6 Lauren Cain

The second quarter always seems to fly by here at Skyview! We've had a very successful first semester of school, and the students have come a long way in their academics, inter- and intra-personal skills, and creativity. This class continually surprises me with the work that they create and

the way they treat each other. Our classroom is truly a safe space in which students can learn and express themselves fully! It's been wonderful to watch the students create that for themselves.

Great teamwork ensued this quarter as the 5/6th classroom created an amazing selection of booths

for our school's annual Fall Festival. The student's creativity was let loose as they came up with games, crafts, and creative booths for our school to enjoy.

This quarter also wrapped up our class's study of the Ancient People of the



Native American-style pots, hand-made by the 5-6.

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Teamwork Continued...

Southwest. The students all gave 10-15 minute long presentations on a culture of their choice, complete with visual spatial representations and re-creations of tools, pottery, and food. Creations included hand-woven yarn, dyed with blackberry juices, as well as full size arrow-heads and spears. The culminating piece of this study was a day trip to the Heard Museum in Phoenix. The museum has an amazing collection of Native American art and information. The students completely amazed the curator of the

museum with their thorough knowledge of the subject, and the docent said she had never been so impressed by any group of visiting students.

As we wrapped up the Native Peoples study, our class moved into mini studies on the major Central American cultures, including the Maya, Inca, and Aztecs. Education comes alive when you give students the opportunity to actively participate in their learning, and the students were intrigued with the concept of rubber trees, Aztec religion, and terrace farming. The kids virtually led the

study by asking questions, researching, and finding information of the subjects they were interested in.

We are wrapping up our quarter with a mini-study on the Spanish missions that existed in the Southwest in the 1500's, which shall lead us into our AZ history next quarter! Many thanks go out to all of the parents who have volunteered their time to drive for our fieldtrips these past two quarters; we wouldn't be able to have such a rich and diverse curriculum if it wasn't for you!



5/6 students create at the Heard Museum

A Child is Born...To Sing! Stephanie Griffin

There is an African proverb that says, "If you can walk, you can dance. If you can talk, you can sing." In this article, I aim to prove this proverb wrong.

Many musicologists, music educators, psychologists, and parents disagree with this belief. In fact, studies show that infants actually begin moving and responding physically to music and sounds *before* they can even crawl, let alone walk. And parents, I can bet that you don't need a study to prove that to you. Babies can bob their heads to music before they can form sounds.

When babies coo, they are trying to find their voices and imitate the sounds they hear around them.

A 1994 study entitled, "*An Analysis of the Characteristics of Infant-Child Singing Expressions*," by N.L. Reis, aimed to analyze the singing voices in infants ages 7 to

32 months. By examining the length, style, rhythm, frequency, pitch range, contour, and tonality of these very young children, the results are astounding. Spontaneous songs such as sleep-songs and game-songs, excerpts of standard songs, and occasional matched pitches were sung by seven-month-olds. By thirty months, 75% sang spontaneous songs, 83% sang standard songs with varying levels of success, and 17% sang whole songs accurately and unassisted.

To break this down – children begin to use their singing voices in complex ways before they can form complete sentences. And, as the following study shows, the more children are encouraged to sing, and the earlier they begin to sing, the more superior they can become with gross and fine motor activities, linguistic development, some aspects of body-sensory

coordination, and certain cognitive behaviors. (Lafuente, M. J., Grifol, R., Segerra, J., Soriano, J., Gorbá, M. A., & Montesinos, A. 1997).

At Skyview, we sing every day. For some of us, singing is more natural than speaking. Some students who struggle with literacy skills can sing rhythmically and in tune with ease. I encourage parents to add singing to the daily activities at home. My book recommendation is the classic, "Rise Up Singing," edited by Peter Blood and Annie Patterson. It contains lyrics of over 1,000 folk songs to sing alone, with a group, and with family. There is also a CD to accompany the book and guitar chords for every song. This would look lovely under the Christmas tree!

Happy singing!



Movement in the 3/4



Middle School's production of The Crane Wife