

# balance

A large, stylized flame graphic composed of overlapping teardrop shapes in shades of orange, yellow, and red, set against a dark blue background with a pattern of small, lighter blue circles.

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## Balance

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*The whole purpose of  
education is to turn mirrors  
into windows.*  
*- Sydney J. Harris*

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# INTRODUCTION

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## **balance**, \ 'ba-lən(t)s\, *noun*

1. the state of having your weight spread equally so that you do not fall
2. the ability to move or to remain in a position without losing control or falling
3. a state in which different things occur in equal or proper amounts or have an equal or proper amount of importance the state of having shared interests or efforts (as in social or business matters)  
(Merriam-Webster)

While technological advances and global connectivity have ushered in a new era of knowledge, social problems and issues seem to compound daily. Global unrest, race relations, religious freedoms, gay marriage, gender identity, and income inequality have gained more and more attention.

Many are familiar with the term VUCA World. An acronym used to describe the Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity of the modern era, the term explores strategic leadership decisions at organizations including military, government, business, nonprofits, and schools, and accurately captures the complex environment of the Information Age. Author Bob Johansen, a Distinguished Fellow with the Institute for the Future, first wrote about VUCA in 2008. “Solvable problems will still abound, but senior leaders will deal mostly with dilemmas which have no solutions, yet leaders will have to make decisions and figure out how to win anyway,” he writes in his book *Leaders Make the Future*.

Changing demographics will continue to present new challenges to school leaders and communities. The makeup of our country is becoming more diverse than ever before, and new families bring new expectations and complexities. New technologies continue to impact how we teach, present-

ing great opportunities, but also inevitable challenges and a race to keep pace. And while STEM skills have dominated the conversation for a decade, greater weight is returning to the humanities and the arts. Non-cognitive skills continue to be explored, such as the five Cs – communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and cosmopolitanism, not to mention the need for cultural empathy and global competency.

The way children learn has not changed. Students thrive in safe environments, and through inquiry and trial and error – the John Dewey approach. A lifelong educator, Dewey advocated a progressive education that emphasizes the need to learn by doing, or learning through a hands-on approach.

Children benefit from well-rounded experiences that allow them to explore their talents while developing life skills like empathy, resilience, mindfulness, and courage. Schools are foremost in the business of developing people; however, like the rest of the world, educators are looking for the new normal. When extremes seem to abound, a sense of balance has never been more important.

As we step into the reality of 21st Century life, we are required to find a new normal, balancing opportunities and challenges. When there are few clear answers to the issues at hand, the best we can do is pursue balance, keeping an open mind to new information as we weather and hopefully leverage change.

In this booklet, we will look at three areas of life in independent schools: the changing landscapes of diversity, the impact of technology in curriculum, and how parents can balance their roles in their children’s lives. While we certainly cannot cover every aspect, we hope to offer examples and information that will help your school find balance in our VUCA world.

## Balancing Community

by: Sarah Stewart and Christina Mimms, SAIS

Published: October, 2015

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### Who We Are: Diversity and Inclusion

According to a *FastStats* by Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell, Head of School of **Currey Ingram Academy** in Brentwood, TN, in the 2014-15 school year, the average school in the NAIS network reported 29% student diversity, as compared with 20% in SAIS member schools.



NAIS schools employed an average of 23% people of color, while SAIS schools employed 15%. Dr. Mitchell's article considered a 10-year trend in diversity statistics for students, teachers, and administrators and noted that the diversity percentages are, overall, on the rise.

The SAIS Value Narrative Survey has been collecting data for the past three years. To date, more than 50,000 unique responses have been logged. The survey measures both school culture and school climate and merges the two together to indicate the level of congruency between expectations (school culture) and perceived realities (school climate). There is a high degree of congruency among all stakeholder groups relative to three categories of diversity: socio-economic, cultural, and religious.

Increasing diversity has been an explicit priority for independent schools for some time. The country's demographics have shifted and continue to shift toward a wider ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious mix. Independent schools face increased competition from public and charter schools requiring them to re-examine their communities in order to attract more families and maintain financial sustainability. Many independent schools also have embraced a public purpose to serve students from a wider socioeconomic background, and to create communities that more closely reflect the "real" world, so as to prepare their students to enter that world. The picture is not always so clear-cut, but numerous

schools are making significant strides under the umbrella of their diversity-related goals.

### Commitment through Leadership

At **The Lovett School** in Atlanta, Head of School Billy Peebles has set diversity as a strategic initiative. Peebles is in his 12th year at Lovett, and previously served as the head of Asheville School for 10 years, and Powhatan School for seven years. He sits on the Breakthrough Atlanta Board of Advisors, and is a member of the board of trustees for the Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education. He is also a former member of the board of trustees for the Breakthrough National Collaborative, among other organizations.

Located on the Chattahoochee River on the outskirts of the upscale Atlanta neighborhood Buckhead, Lovett could easily succumb to the "Buckhead Bubble." The school was founded in 1926, and today enrolls 1,665 students, Kindergarten through grade 12. The school's leadership has worked to counter that reality by developing a diverse student body and mix of faculty through partnerships with organizations like the Summerbridge Breakthrough Alumni Network (SBAN) and Breakthrough Atlanta.



SBAN is a community of graduates and former staff of Summerbridge Breakthrough "students teaching students" model programs. SBAN promotes the lifelong learning, leadership, and success of people of color through the exchange of knowledge, opportunities, and resources. Independent schools want and need a diverse





mix of students and faculty to offer the best learning environment for their families. However, many independent schools have a history of exclusion. Families of color may not feel they belong, and teachers of color may not consider independent schools as an option, or after being hired, struggle to fit in. These realities and perceptions challenge schools that want to sustain and

thrive. SBAN helps independent schools connect with prospective faculty, create inclusive communities, and retain their teachers of color through support and mentoring programs.

Breakthrough Atlanta is a six-year, academically intense, year-round program that provides educational enrichment opportunities to talented metro Atlanta public school middle school and high school students, while simultaneously offering a “hands-on” teacher internship experience to college and high school students who will be the teachers of tomorrow. Lovett has hosted Breakthrough Atlanta on its campus and at Atlanta Youth Academy in southeast Atlanta for almost 20 years. The work involves summer programs and year-round mentoring. Since its inaugural summer, the program has served more than 300 young teachers, and 700 students from metro Atlanta’s public schools. Of those students, 86% have gone on to college, and 75% were the first in their family to attend college.

“Breakthrough Atlanta is a life-changing program and through it we have been able to work with communities and build partnerships that would never have been possible. It’s a win for Lovett and it’s a win for the kids it serves,” Peebles said. Peebles sees his role as championing the importance of diversity and inclusion and providing the resources to support those programs. He believes the work has impacted the school’s enrollment. “We’ve doubled

our diversity in the last 10 years.”

Lovett’s connection to SBAN and Breakthrough Atlanta was fostered through the work of one of its previous teachers, Keno Sadler, who is the current executive director of SBAN. Sadler taught math at Lovett for seven years, and was also the executive director of Breakthrough Atlanta. Sadler is passionate about the importance of diversity and inclusion programs. “Fundamentally, as educators, we want to prepare students for their future,” Sadler said. “And while we don’t know what that future is going to look like exactly, we know that it’s going to be more diverse than it ever has been. We are doing a disservice to our students if we aren’t exposing our kids to a wide variety of people and to expose our kids to adults, and especially classroom teachers, where they can connect to that diversity.”

As Diversity Director, Ellice Hawkins has helped Peebles realize that mission. She previously served as the Student’s Activities Director for 10 years at Atlanta’s Morehouse College, an historically black college, and joined Lovett in 2005. Her work involves meeting with the school’s various divisions, being a resource for teachers and parents, and meeting regularly with Peebles about trends, programs, or issues. In terms of curriculum, the school offers programs for its youngest to oldest students around diversity, inclusion, and multiculturalism. Some examples of popular programs include “Lovett Life Lessons,” in which students in the 6th grade discuss the various “-isms,” and a workshop on privilege for 9th graders.

Another well-documented and useful tool used to promote inclusivity at Lovett is its wide variety of affinity groups. Lovett sponsors groups for students, teachers, and parents to support a number of religious, ethnic, racial, and gender groups. The school also has

**86%**

**of Breakthrough  
Atlanta students  
have gone on to  
college.**



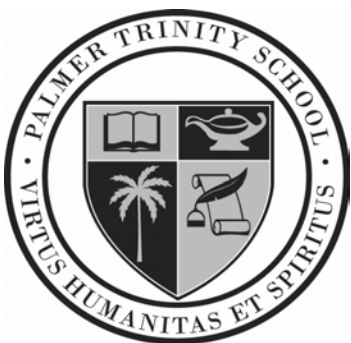
a vibrant parent-led club, the Lovett International Alliance, which Hawkins said has been instrumental in improving the cultural competencies of its students. The group organizes events and programs year-round representing a wide list of countries and areas including China, Cuba, France, the Caribbean, Ghana, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and the United Kingdom.

As for reaching balance in terms of diversity and inclusion in independent schools, Sadler said there is much work still to be done. “I don’t think we’ll ever reach a point where we should stop having conversations. It’s an ongoing thing to be sensitive to make sure we maintain the talent. Balance seems to be thought of as a place where we arrive and then we stop trying. Balance is effort. You have to focus and constantly adjust and monitor your growth. To maintain true balance, that’s one of the things we help our schools to do by including not just an understanding, but a concrete plan with measurable goals.”

*It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength. – Maya Angelou*

### Commitment through Curricula

Creating a school-wide curriculum around multiculturalism is another way that schools are creating more diverse and inclusive communities. Koree Hood is the Diversity Director at **Palmer**



**Trinity School** in Miami. He also was mentored by Sadler and is a graduate of SBAN’s leadership program. Hood has been instrumental in helping Palmer Trinity develop a new diversity and inclusion curriculum called Mosaic. Implemented in 2013, the curriculum is integrated through a series of age-appropriate workshops surrounding

learning characteristics, gender, culture, race, age, sexual identity, Episcopal identity, ethics, privilege, and socioeconomics.

Hood said the goal of Mosaic is to give students and faculty the tools to discuss sensitive topics and issues around identity. “Before Mosaic, if something like the Trayvon Martin incident or Ferguson happened, they didn’t know how or didn’t have the terminology to talk about it. Because of Mosaic, they are willing to come and ask and get help to resolve issues. If they are in the classroom and an anti-Semitic or homophobic opinion is expressed, and students were hurt because the teachers didn’t know how to intervene, now the teacher can ask us to have a conversation and follow up.”

Finding inspiration or interest in the topic is not difficult, Hood said. The news offers new examples every day. “We don’t have to say, a year from now the world will be talking about gender identity. We can say, turn on your TV and here’s an example and we can gain understanding.” Hood said that all students need to be able to talk sensitively about topics around identity. “The world is changing faster than ever because of technology. We are more global and our students have to be able to evolve. If they are only accustomed to students who look like them or believe what they do they are missing the global picture and they won’t be equipped to lead. They don’t have to agree, but they need to understand and affirm and hear from others who have a different perspective.”

A diverse school, Hood noted, is also more than having the right mix of students. It’s about creating a student-centered environment that honors, respects and welcomes people from different backgrounds. “Diversity is being invited to the party, but inclusion is being asked to dance. It’s very harmful to have diversity without inclusion. We have to be willing to evaluate students and understand and celebrate them.”

It is also critical that students see themselves reflected in the faculty and leadership around them. “If you have a student who’s a

minority, they need people they can go to. They need to imagine a world where they are in a position of authority and can create an impact. If there are no minority teachers who they can look up to, who look like them, they are less likely to internalize that possibility,” Hood said.

### Commitment through Planning

**The University School of Nashville (USN)** has been at the forefront of progressive education since its creation in 1915. The school, originally called the Peabody Demonstration School (PDS), was founded on the campus of the George Peabody College for Teachers so that future teachers could observe pedagogy and participate in training. The school wanted children to love learning and championed the relationship between the teacher and pupil. Its founder Thomas Alexander said, “Traditional education concerned itself too largely with mental training at the expense of body training, heart training, and hand training ... Our aim is to have our pupils grow power, power in every direction; power to think, to feel, to do, to be.”



After opening, the school’s reputation quickly spread, and families in Nashville and surrounding cities enrolled their children. The school drew from a rich pool of applicants from nearby neighborhoods, but also all over the world due to Vanderbilt University visiting faculty members. In 1964, PDS preceded the local public schools in desegregating and accepting its first African-American students and faculty. When the college voted to close the school in 1974 to cut costs, parents and community members pulled together to keep the school going under a new name and charter, The University School of Nashville.

During a school renewal process in 1997, USN added elements around diversity to its strategic plan, and committed to an ongoing

organizational assessment and development in the area of diversity management and multicultural education. The school polled faculty, students, parents, families, and board members about how “to promote and underscore a shared belief in common humanity, demonstrate respect for and appreciation of differences, and foster institutional access and responsiveness to demographic change.” They identified five key areas of school life that should reflect diversity: staff development, school climate, curriculum, communication, and planning. The document was formally added to the 2001 Strategic Plan, and also led to the addition of USN’s first diversity administrator.

USN celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2015. The school currently enrolls 1,050 students, Pre-K through 12th grade, with 30% people of color; in addition, 20% of the students have at least one parent who is not native to the U.S. and 26% of faculty are people of color.

Recently, the school has reviewed its strategic plan, including its plan for multicultural goals and diversity. Treda Collier, USN’s Director of Diversity and Community Life, has been leading the effort in the community and with the leadership team. Collier holds a Master’s of Divinity from Yale Divinity School and a Master’s of Liberal Studies from Wesleyan University (Wesleyan, CT) and prior to the position at USN, worked in admissions from 1989 to 2012, primarily in boarding schools. Collier said she draws her inspiration from a desire to help young people, as well as the example set by her father, who organized and operated leadership programs for young African-American men during the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s in Hartford, CT.

By 2014, USN polls of faculty and students about what progress could be made in its diversity and inclusion programs revealed that faculty wanted more curricula related to diversity, cultural competency, and inclusion. Students also wanted more service learning opportunities. With help from Collier and the Office of Diversity and Community Life intern, a group of students created

a unique learning opportunity. They identified three cities to visit and to study the diversity climate in schools: St. Louis, Memphis, and Atlanta. The students visited St. Louis last year, and will visit Memphis and Atlanta in the 2015-2016 school year. The experience will allow USN to gather best practices from other schools in key cities.

Students also wanted to add a required diversity course for every student, and all members thought there should be a greater focus on attracting diverse faculty members. To reach those goals USN hired Dr. Patricia Romney, an organizational and clinical psychologist and consultant who has worked with hundreds of schools and organizations on topics related to diversity, leadership development, and team building. Romney will be joined by Beverly Daniel Tatum, president of Spelman College in Atlanta, and author of the best-seller, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* Dr. Romney will work with all three divisions, the administrative team, the diversity club and the diversity discussion group at USN. One of the questions students are asking is, “How do we take what we’ve learned from the study and from researching other schools, and put that into practice?”

“Overall, we want to use the consultant to really look at how we are succeeding with diversity and inclusion efforts in these five areas (staff development, school climate, curriculum, communication and planning), to see what our overall goals should be and how we are doing with them,” Collier said. “Our schools are very traditional and we felt like it was time to rethink who we are teaching, and the times we are teaching in, and what our teachers need to know to be able to better prepare and reach all students.”

While Collier has an extensive background in girls’ education, her goal is to develop a better framework for what is best for boys today, and how schools need to change to better educate all boys. She is focusing more attention toward them with the hopes of adding a mentoring program at USN, where high school students could work alongside lower school students and help them accli-

mate. She attended the International Boys School Coalition 22nd Annual Conference in Cape Town, South Africa, in July 2015. The event brought together leaders from prestigious boys schools from all over the world, and was keynoted by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, a Nobel Peace Laureate, a major component in the country’s fight against apartheid, and a civil and social rights activist.

Collier acquired many insights about how boys differ in their development; how they come through challenges, and how schools can help them thrive. The conference also emphasized the importance of leadership opportunities for boys, both athletic and non-athletic, and for ways to help boys deal with the stress in their lives, such as parental divorce, the death of a loved one, or illness.

“My goal is to begin to address any ways that we suggest our boys of color are the issue, instead of looking at ourselves,” Collier said. “I want us to rid ourselves of that. We have cultural behavioral needs of all our different students: our Muslim students who observe Ramadan, or our Jewish students who observe Passover, etc. If we are not intentional in showing that the cultural experiences of students of the students in our communities matter, how will all know that they do?”

*Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies. – Desmond Tutu*

### **Commitment through Identity**

While many schools have discussed racial and cultural diversity for some time, the concept of diversity is expanding. With the Supreme Court’s ruling in June that awarded gays the right to marry, communities could see a growing number of nontraditional families with gay parents. Diversity directors will play a critical role in educating leaders, faculty, and students about how they can be inclusive of this population.



Rosetta Lee is an experienced educator, diversity consultant, and faculty member at **Seattle Girls School** in Seattle. She has worked with more than 50 schools and colleges designing and implementing diversity trainings. She has presented at the White Privilege Conference, has served multiple times at the NAIS Summer Diversity Institute, was Co-Chair of the 2006 NAIS People of Color Conference, was a director on the board of the Northwest Association for Biomedical Research, and a Think Tank member of the 2012 NAIS Annual Conference.



Lee's passion and expertise range from science and ethics for middle school students, gender equity in STEM educa-

tion, cross-cultural communication, gender bias, relational aggression, identity development, anti-bullying, brain and learning, and more. She hopes to empower youth to make a better future for themselves and their communities, while working with adults to build inclusive communities that honor all races, ethnic origins, genders, abilities, sexual orientations, and other identities.

Lee said that in the past, the topic of diversity and inclusion has been considered a "nice" or charitable cause at independent schools. However, this is quickly changing. Schools need diversity and inclusion in order to thrive academically and economically. "The economic reality is that independent schools need to recognize the demographics and composition of the public is shifting," she said. "There are more multiracial kids, more single-sex families, and more transgenders recognizing themselves younger and younger. Because we are tuition driven, if we aren't the kind of place these non-traditional families feel represented, there's no reason to trust our schools and spend their dollars and send their kids."

Many schools are grappling with how to be sensitive to issues of gender-related and LGBT identity, and building inclusive environ-

ments does not happen overnight. It starts with the school leadership committed to the mission, with a diversity director empowered to do their job, and ongoing education. Lee also emphasizes the importance of applying the growth mindset to how we teach children and how we learn about diversity. Many adults never learned to have honest conversations about identity and privilege, so students may not gain these skills at home.

As adults become more comfortable with difficult topics, they are better equipped to instruct children and young people, who need to know how to create dialog around different types of people, how to explore their own assumptions and biases, and reflect on how they shape individuals. Even if schools don't want to take a stand on LGBT issues, they still need to create a safe environment for all of their students, according to Lee. "You have no idea whether you have transgender, or gay or lesbian students. And since you don't know, you want to create an environment where they know they are valued. Even if those people don't come out, they should feel safe and know 'You exist and you matter,' as opposed to 'You exist and I disparage you.'"

Lee also adds that attracting a diverse faculty has to be intentional. If you go about recruiting the same way you always have, you will get the same results, she said. You have to think about recruitment from the first encounter to retention. She recommends schools try different channels for recruitment, such as investing in second-career teachers who want to transition into education. They should also make sure during the interview process that the candidate speaks to one or two people with similar backgrounds, so they will have a sense of belonging. She also encourages independent schools to consider teachers with public school experience, since they already have experience connecting with students from different backgrounds. Next, schools need to consider the support those new teachers will need if they are relocating, if they will need mentoring or help making social connections.

Lee also said it is important for schools to develop transparent

leadership development and advancement processes. Schools typically see higher turnover among minority teachers, but perhaps there was no opportunity for them to grow and advance. And schools need to regularly measure and assess their progress. Whether by creating and leveraging focus groups, surveying stakeholders, or bringing in an outside consultant, ongoing benchmarks and assessments inform future practices and can be valuable tools to convey successes. Many schools today promote cultural diversity as part of their value proposition, and having numbers behind those claims is important.

In terms of balance in seeking diversity and inclusion, Lee added that she hopes that schools avoid chasing the newest, brightest, shiny thing, and remember the importance of building community. “With the wave of technology, 1:1 laptops, social media, online education, maker spaces; you name it. Those are big shiny things that grab our attention and make our school more exciting or attractive. But we have to deal with the basics of serving individuals. We show up as individuals and if we aren’t building a true community then we can’t expect long-term, meaningful change or success.”

### Commitment through Design

**Trinity Episcopal School (TES)** in Charlotte, NC, is 100 percent committed to diversity efforts, even going back to the school’s founding 15 years ago in its urban location with a core value to reflect the diverse makeup of the city of Charlotte itself. The placement of the campus makes it accessible to all of Charlotte and enables the school to use nearby resources, according to Head of School Tom Franz. Students at every grade level, from Kindergarten through 8th grade, participate in service learning programs, many of which are walking distance from the campus, including



a neighborhood garden they manage and Urban Ministries, a center for the homeless.

“We want to help kids develop their cultural dexterity,” Franz said. “We open our kids’ eyes to people who are different and we want to figure out ways for kids to be comfortable with differences. We pay a lot of attention to the books and literature we select and the history we teach.”



Unlike many schools, TES does not employ a diversity director – intentionally so, Franz explained. “We all wear diversity hats in our school and we are all responsible for it. I’ve talked to diversity directors at other schools and they get frustrated because everyone expects them to do it all. We all need to own it.”

As an Episcopal school, TES upholds the tenets of the Episcopal Church – to be a diverse, inclusive community that is welcoming to all – with a tradition of reason, openness and acceptance. “That is what God calls us to do,” Franz said. With four chaplains on staff, the leadership in this particular area is sound.

As part of its newly released five-year strategic plan, TES included diversity as a strategic goal, with new efforts toward recruitment. The school is cultivating its relationships with other institutions, such as bilingual preschools and African-American alumni groups. The school dedicates approximately 20% of its annual operating budget toward financial aid; currently, about 26% of its students receive aid. “It’s an expensive commitment but my board and I

are committed to that,” Franz said. “It has been that way since our founding.”

Among its faculty, TES has formed both affinity groups and mosaic groups who meet regularly. Sometimes the discussion includes a Bible study or just a conversation. Last year, the school formed a parent committee on Embracing Diversity. They have received some training from school personnel such as chaplains and they are expanding their work this year.

In serving the greater Charlotte community, TES hosts an annual Freedom Fete, a celebration featuring a speaker on topics of diversity, racial inequality and social justice. In 2015, Stephanie Robinson served as the keynote and previously, Tim Wise spoke. As part of the event, Charlotte area teachers and middle school students are invited to participate in workshops.

“It’s really helpful for people to have their eyes opened but in a safe way,” Franz said. “Our society has given us lots to talk about and some are hard conversations to have.”

Schools face many challenges in finding the right balance in their diversity efforts. Societal changes have birthed conversations many school leaders likely never expected to have. The world that our students will inherit looks a lot different from the world even 10 years ago. Our schools must be leaders in the efforts to create the new leaders for a very different future.

*If we cannot now end our differences,  
at least we can help make the world  
safe for diversity. – John F. Kennedy*



The SAIS Legacy Club members are retired SAIS Heads of School. They are invited and called on from time to time to share their wealth of knowledge. In so doing, they pass the torch to the next generation.

## Balancing Technology

by: Sarah Stewart, SAIS

Published: October, 2015

*You can be traditional with the greatest technology or you can be innovative with nothing at all. – Ross Cooper*

The Internet of Things. The phrase has become a defining one for the Knowledge Era. We know this: in a matter of decades, the world has changed with greater interconnectivity, globalization, and opportunity. Mobile devices and digital technology have transformed the way we live, work, and communicate.

Many independent schools are now 1:1 with a device for every child. Technology integration specialists are helping teachers reimagine how they teach. Coding, robotics, computer science, and blended learning are becoming the norm in schools, with children as young as Kindergarten. Digital citizenship is on par with the ethics and character training that students receive. Meanwhile, greater breakthroughs in wearable technology, artificial intelligence, 'smart' environments, and data-driven intelligence promise even more change in the near future.

Information is as accessible as the air we breathe and learning to turn it off, unplug and focus is becoming an important skill for productivity and well-being. In the digital land of milk and honey, how do we guard against excess? Are we digitally enhanced or digitally distracted, or is the balance somewhere in between?

## Integrating Technology

Melissa Herring has worked in education for 13 years, and at **Second Baptist School (SBS)** since 2008. Located in Houston, SBS enrolls around 1,200 students, Pre-K through the 12th grade.



85% OF TEACHERS

say advances in technology are  
changing the way they teach

The school was founded as part of Second Baptist Church in 1946 and sits on a 56-acre campus. Herring took on the role of technology integration

specialist for the school in 2011 when it rolled out its 1:1 initiative. The school also doubled the size of its technology team from four to eight staff members in order to support the demand and ongoing development of its teachers.



The energy among the tech team is as dynamic as the advances it has introduced. Throughout the school, classes continue to be enhanced by technology and are increasingly cross-curricular. Students in Kindergarten are introduced to coding through which they can design a snowflake for characters from Disney's "Frozen." First graders design projects and games with the programming tool Scratch. Third graders begin working with 3D printers allowing them to hash out math formulas for dimensions in real-time projects. A classroom study on Roman history and architecture is followed by research on the Internet and ancient Google maps, and a project to design bridges that reflects that period uses the 3D printer. A new robotics club for lower, middle, and high school students works with WeDo and Mindstorm LEGO products, with plans to start entering competitions in 2015. Students build and configure Raspberry Pi computers for a weather project where they attach the computer to a balloon, launch it, and then measure height, altitude, temperature, and other data.

Math teachers use the app ExplainIt to record portions of their



class, such as an explanation of long division, which they post online. Students who need extra help or were absent can review the material and return without missing a beat. A government



SECOND  
BAPTIST  
SCHOOL  
ESTABLISHED 1946

teacher has his student research current events online, watching videos and reading articles for discussion the next day.

Coaches carry iPads and increasingly use apps like iVolleyball to track statistics on players, watch film on competitors, or record and share videos from their games – which also can be shared with recruiters. Key to all this growth is the ongoing professional development of teachers and their commitment to exploring different technologies to enhance their work.

“It’s been amazing to watch the teachers and departments grow and enhance their teaching,” Herring said. “Our team works side by side with teachers to find places to integrate technology. They don’t need it every second of every day, and there’s a place and time for it. Technology will not replace a good teacher, but it’s a powerful enhancement. It makes a great teacher even more effective.”

### A Paperless Course

Sarah Wike Loyola has been teaching middle, high school, and university courses in Spanish for nearly 15 years, and currently is the Spanish Team Leader and a technology mentor at **Providence Day School** (PDS) in Charlotte, NC. Loyola has written articles for the Huffington Post, Edudemic, and Edutopia. In 2014, she was an NAIS “Teacher of the Future” and won the North Carolina Technology in Education Outstanding Teacher Award. This past summer, Loyola received the International Society for Technology in Education’s “Outstanding Teacher Award,” a national honor given to one teacher for their extraordinary work in the field.

At PDS, Loyola is changing the pedagogy in her classroom. She teaches “Spanish Through Technology and Social Media,” a class she launched in 2013. The class is completely paperless, and students explore current events and Spanish culture and history while improving their communication and working with technology.

Loyola is a big fan of app smashing, which involves using multiple apps to create one finished project. In Spanish, students are given a topic, such as immigration, to research. They choose a Latin country, conduct research and interview someone from that country.

They use an app called a MindMap to brainstorm on their iPads. They record the interview with the iPad, and then use iMovie and other apps to create a short documentary.



Throughout the process Loyola is an active guide, not giving them the questions to ask, but helping them along the way.

“A big part of blended learning is moving away from having kids memorize facts or regurgitate information,” she said. “They have so much access through the Internet, and a big proponent for them is doing the work.”

Loyola awards the students a “B” if their project contains everything she asks, but for an “A,” students must go beyond. This



encourages her students to own the work and be creative. “Maybe they find another app to use that I didn’t suggest; or if their project is a movie, maybe they create a trailer for the movie. But it gets them out of ‘this is what my teacher told me to do, so this is all I do’ and pushes them further.” Loyola also encourages her students to share their work by posting it online on YouTube or Facebook. This also encourages engagement, as the students love to showcase what they created, she said.

The end result is a different type of classroom, a different type of teaching, and a different type of learning. The work is more hands on, open ended, and perhaps chaotic, but the rewards are real. She said, “A lot of people think that using technology means taking what they’ve always done and doing it online. It’s not just about using the tech, it’s taking kids somewhere they’ve never gone. It doesn’t mean you aren’t, or the teacher isn’t, necessary. You have to get used to your classroom being a little more chaotic. You have to step back and ask kids to use their internal motivation to get something done. Some kids will work on a project that night, some kids will procrastinate and not work until the end. But that’s how they will have to make a decision as an adult, so it’s teaching them to manage their time. Those are real life skills.”



Children with access to a “smart” mobile device rose

**50% to 75%  
since 2011**

use the new technology. She said when mentoring other teachers, she tells them the students will likely pick it up faster than you, but that’s okay. Moreover, the students are empowered when they are creating things for themselves, and become mas-

Loyola has also been surprised by the creativity of her students. She is enthused by how far they will push themselves, and how quickly they learn to

ters. “When they turn around and teach you something, they feel really amazing,” she said.

Loyola also said integrating technology with her work has made teaching more interesting. “I’m not just teaching grammar out of context or drilling facts. But every year is different now, and all the students take their work in their own direction. I feel like I have been enlivened as a teacher and I look forward to going to work more than ever. And my relationship with my students has improved. They don’t just see me as this boring robot standing in front of them. They go out and investigate and we have more time to get to know each other and talk about the issues.”

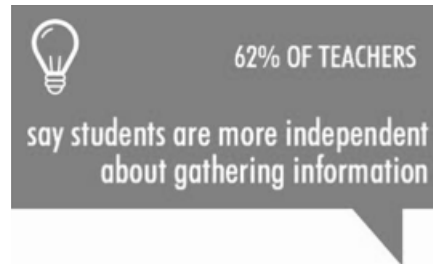
In “Breaking into the Heart of Character,” David Streight cited autonomy as one of the most critical components of student learning. He noted that students of teachers not willing to cede control lose initiative for schoolwork and learn less effectively. The more control the teachers exerts, the less the work “belongs” to students and they value it less.

## Generations and Screen Time

Jennifer Carey is the Director of Technology at **Ransom Everglades School** in Miami. She is a popular blogger, author, speaker, and chair-elect for the Independent School Education Network at the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Carey has helped Ransom Everglades make a number of changes since joining their staff. In 2014, the school transitioned to using Google Apps for Education for the majority of its needs, allowing the school to save money and take advantage of widely used – and largely free – cloud-based services for its students and teach-



ers. The school also recently joined the Global Online Academy, and will offer a growing number of online courses. Carey said the model is increasingly popular because it is cost effective and allows schools to expand their curriculum. Students interested in Japanese, Arabic, or other advanced courses can study those subjects online, with Ransom Everglades staff acting as guides.



Carey believes that many schools are still struggling to understand the benefits technology can bring to the classroom. "Schools are still trying to find an effective balance, and the predominant issue is that they don't understand that all screen time is not equal. So they view screen time as an inherently negative thing that we have to curb, when it's really more like reading."

She also thinks some of the pushback on technology is generational and will change in time. "A lot of us who are teaching now, these technologies, if we had them at all, didn't show up until we were in college. I think my freshman year of college is when we got rid of the card catalog. And now kids are walking around with small computers in their pockets, with web access and connectivity. As adults, the world is just a bit foreign because of the rate of change, and we are faced with a new reality, and it doesn't always work in the old world thinking of education, where [information] was controlled. I think it's going to take longer than we'd like it to find a new normal."

The best aspect of technology, according to Carey, is that it allows kids to apply the principles they are learning in the classroom. She attended ISTE's annual conference in July and there were numerous businesses marketing their new apps or software. She saw several companies with apps that would allow a teacher to read a Scantron form with their phone. "That's frightening," she said. "That's an example of technology completely

missing the concept of what it should be doing for learning." A particularly great example was a company called ArduSat, which sells kits that students can use to create experiments using real satellites and data. Students can create code for satellites to run their experiments. They showed examples of two students collecting data on cloud coverage and radiation in order to measure climate change. Another group of students gathered data to see if the Great Pacific Garbage Patch was growing or shifting.

"That was a really cool tool; this is how you teach science to kids," she said. "It's not just a formula, but they are building something testable, and they are running it through simulations, and then they have to figure out why it's working or why it's not working, and test their hypothesis. That's something you couldn't do when I was a kid."

Carey said the beauty in these technology-enhanced, project-based experiments is the application. "Technology is not replacing the foundation of education, it's expanding it," she said. "That kind of stuff is amazing, the collaborative making, which goes back to [experiential theories] that you learn by doing. Technology has gotten where it allows you to be more creative and effective in how you apply subjects. In physics, I just studied theory and did problems all day. But now middle school kids can make real-world projects, and apply it."



### Tech Overload?

Despite the many benefits of technology, drawbacks are inevitable. From "tech neck" to decreased social skills, users of technology have the potential for complete overload on devices. Looking at statistics the use of mobile and smart devices is becoming more widespread, especially with younger children.

Data from Common Sense Media noted:

- Children with access to a “smart” mobile device rose from 50% to 75% since 2011.
- In families with children age 8 and younger there has been an increase in ownership of tablet devices, from 11% in 2011 to 40% in 2013.
- More than 70% of children under the age of 8 have used a mobile device for a media activity such as playing games, watching videos, or using apps, up from 38% in 2011.
- 38% of children under age 2 have used a mobile device for media (compared with 10% two years ago).
- The percent of children who use mobile devices on a daily basis – at least once a day or more – has more than doubled, from 8% to 17%.
- The amount of time spent using these devices in a typical day has tripled.
- The average time for children under age 8 in front of a screen is two hours.

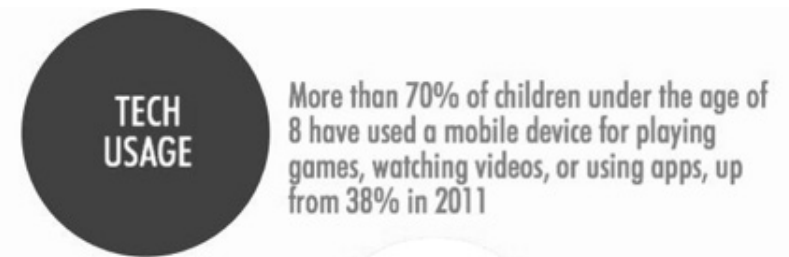
Some numbers from Pew Research Center on Teen Use:

- 24% of teens go online almost constantly.
- 92% go online daily.
- More than 75% of teens age 13 to 17 have smart phones.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than two hours of screen time a day for children ages 3 through 18, and zero time for younger children. According to the Fred Rogers Center, child development researchers and educators regularly point to the critical importance of the first years of life for children’s cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development ([www.sais.org/balance/rogers](http://www.sais.org/balance/rogers)).

Cognitively, children under age 2 are still learning to represent

their environment mentally. Until around 18-24 months of age, children represent information and experiences through physical action. Learning from media can be particularly difficult for infants and toddlers because the various platforms are more demanding than physical reality: media offer images and video



that play with time and space, placing greater strain on limited mental resources. Children may also find it more difficult to learn from TV’s representations of real-world objects, which offer a much richer perceptual experience. View a related article at [www.sais.org/balance/npr](http://www.sais.org/balance/npr).

Catherine Steiner-Adair, psychologist and author of *The Big Disconnect*, has studied how technology is impacting families. In her work with families and schools, she has encountered the negative fallout of 24/7 connectivity with children getting into trouble online, parents not being present at home, and families failing to disconnect from their devices in order to connect meaningfully with each other.

In a 2015 blog post, Steiner-Adair wrote:

*“Tech is a tool and kids will be kids, and there is a powerful new connection between the two that has exponentially expanded the playing fields on which kids are growing up. Kids can learn anything from tech, but tech won’t embody your values, or love your child, or be thoughtful about the pace at which your child explores the world. Which is why candid conversation — “unsettling” as it may be — between a parent and child, in families, schools and communities, is all the more essential in raising*



*kids today. Kids are growing up in what amounts to an amoral popular culture with unprecedented access to all kinds of adult content. That's not alarmist; it's just a fact. More than ever they need to be able to have honest, frank, unedited conversations with grownups who can help them dial in to their own moral compass."*

### A Waldorf Approach

While many schools fully embrace technology in their curriculum, other schools practice a more limited infusion of technology on their campuses. The Waldorf philosophy of education is a humanistic approach to pedagogy based on the work of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner. The philosophy emphasizes the role of the imagination in learning, and strives to integrate the intellectual, practical and artistic development of its students. Steiner rejected that teachers could learn how to teach from a book, and instead called them to focus on awakening the physical, behavioral, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of the child, fostering their creative and analytical thinking.

In early education, Waldorf schools focus on experiential activities and imaginative play, with the overall goal to "imbue the child with a sense that the world is good." The classroom is meant to resemble more of a home than a classroom, with simple and natural materials. Use of media for lower school students is discouraged, as it is understood to conflict with developmental needs, and may contain inappropriate content that can hamper the imagination. Elementary school students are introduced to more academic instruction through artistic works that include storytelling, visual arts, drama, music and crafts. The declared goal of elementary education is to "imbue children with a sense that the world is beautiful."

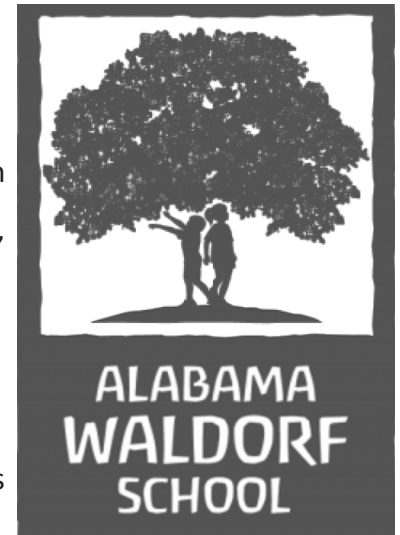
In secondary school, the education focuses more strongly on academics, with teacher specialists for each subject. The curriculum endeavors to foster students' intellectual understanding,

independent judgment, and ethical ideals on social responsibility, meeting the child's developing capacity for abstract thought and conceptual judgment. The intention of this stage is to "imbue the child with a sense that the world is true."

Technology is introduced to students in their teens, but its use is still limited. Students do not typically have free use of mobile devices at school, but can use computers for research, for computer science class or for robotics courses.

Some may find it surprising, but a number of successful technology executives and entrepreneurs have chosen Waldorf schools for their children due to their limits on technology. Alan Eagle, the chief technology officer of eBay, was quoted in a New York Times article ([www.sais.org/balance/nyt](http://www.sais.org/balance/nyt)) about the topic, saying, "The idea that an app on iPad can better teach my kids to read or do arithmetic, that's ridiculous." Another parent, and previous Microsoft and Intel employee Pierre Laurent added, "Engagement is about human contact, the contact with the teacher, the contact with their peers." Waldorf parents say technology skills are easy to pick up in the modern world, so what's the rush?

Dr. Lisa Grupe has been the head of the **Alabama Waldorf School** (AWS) in Birmingham since 2010. She holds a doctorate in development psychology and has been on staff at AWS since 2000. AWS enrolls about 130 children in Pre-K through 8th grade. Grupe said we are living in an age of anxiety and stress, and that the Waldorf philosophy helps children and teachers learn to combat those influences. Grupe described her approach in terms of the infinity symbol, and a person's "in breath" and "out breath." When we are in balance, we function along the



lines of a figure eight breathing in and breathing out.

With the pace of modern society, and the way we stay plugged in to technology, Grupe said many people walk around on a constant “in breath.” They are holding it in, trying to keep up. It’s not a healthy state, she said. If students are anxious or distracted, they can’t learn, and if teachers are distracted they can’t teach. If the administrators are out of balance, they can’t lead.

Waldorf schools offer education for the head, heart, and hands, with a deep connection to nature. So when a teacher brings a lesson, she brings it to the feeling life of the child, then the willing life, and then to the thinking life. This allows the lesson to have a natural pathway to the brain, Grupe said. Children create their own main lesson books (textbooks) as they are taught.

“I think technology is unworthy of the mind of a child,” Grupe said. “If you give an iPad at age 3, it’s got bright colors and sounds, and they won’t put it down for hours. But what have they not done? They haven’t been outside, played with their dog or cat, or they might not have eaten.” Technology is addictive and one-dimensional and the content can have no boundaries – this hinders students’ development. “But whether it’s an iPad or TV, we are trying to create balance in their lives. Even computers with filters can take them places where they shouldn’t be going. You put them in front of a TV, they will passively take that all in. And they can’t say ‘that program is too violent for me.’ It eclipses their own play and that is not good for children – it’s a tragedy.”



**Academe of the Oaks** is a Waldorf high school located in Decatur, GA. The school was founded in 2002 by Eva Handschin. Since opening in 2003 with 11 students, it has grown to 87 students and plans to expand its campus soon.

The school’s approach to technology is more relaxed than AWS since the students are older, but restrictions are still present. Teachers try not to put technology in between themselves and the students. The relationship between the teacher and student is critical, and the students are taught from primary sources and not textbooks. The school offers courses in computer science as well as robotics, and they use a computer for graphing. They also work with machines when building projects such as solar panels, a generator, windmills, or bridges.

The school recently decided to ban mobile phones at school. They had previously allowed students to use their phones at school, but tried a week without the devices as part of an experiment in 2014. Teachers and students noticed the difference. “You saw the students interacting. They weren’t constantly checking their devices, they were playing music during lunch, or talking, or playing games,” Handschin said. “Human interaction is so valuable, how we talk to each other. We wanted to encourage that and how we are as human beings that makes the difference. If we are just with the device by ourselves we isolate ourselves from others, and miss social interactions that are important.”

Plus, the students said, to their surprise, they didn’t miss the phones as much as they thought they would. “They said at times they wanted to show someone something but it could wait, and it wasn’t that important. And they talked to students who they hadn’t talked to before. They said the school was more calm, and they were doing things besides checking their emails like playing basketball or chess.”



The average time for children under age 8 in front of a screen is 2 hours.

## Future Focus

Despite the methods, pressure is on for all those in education to prepare students for an era that is in great flux. In their viral video, Shift Happens, about the digital 21st Century world, Karl Fisch and 2012 SAIS Annual Conference keynote speaker Scott McLeod note that “We are currently preparing students for jobs that don’t yet exist . . . using technologies that haven’t been invented . . . in order to solve problems we don’t even know are problems yet.”

The Economist recently completed a study, “Driving the Skills Agenda: Preparing Students for the Future,” which was commissioned by Google, to explore the opinions of students and teachers, as well as leaders in education, business, and governments around the world. The study, which included four global surveys of senior business executives in 19 sectors and 25 countries, found the top three skills businesses deemed most critical for the coming era were problem solving, teamwork, and communication. More than half expect creativity and digital literacy to grow in importance in the coming years.

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Meanwhile, almost 70% of businesses say they are unsatisfied with the level of attainment of skills such as digital literacy for students entering the workforce, and 52% say the skills gap is hampering their performance. 66% believe schools are not providing students with the skills they need.

The study also identified a number of trends around technology. It found that 85% of teachers say advances in technology are changing the way they teach. Also 77% of students said their country’s education system was ineffective at making full use

of the technologies available. Students are increasingly taking learning into their own hands, with 62% of teachers saying students have become more independent about gathering information. Digital literacy is now considered a basic skill for many employers. According to Sherry Tross, executive secretary of the Organization for the American States (OAS), “Digital literacy has become a fourth literacy added to reading, writing, and arithmetic. Like other forms of literacy, it helps in decoding information, solving problems, and discovering meaning in words or data.”

The role of teacher in helping students learn how to use information is critical. “Teachers have historically monopolized classrooms in terms of information,” said Dr. Yong Zhao, Director of Online Learning at the University of Oregon and 2013 SAIS Annual Conference keynote speaker ([www.sais.org/ac2013](http://www.sais.org/ac2013)). “But if we think the Internet means we don’t need teachers, we’re wrong. We need someone to take care of the human aspect of learning.”

The Economist’s survey found that businesses say they would like to see more partnerships with education. “CEOs argue that young people don’t seem to have the social graces and interpersonal skills such as respect, as well as the ability to work on their own without having someone looking over their shoulder all the time,” said Brian Schreuder, deputy director-general, Curriculum and Assessment Management, Western Cape Education Department, “Our current curriculum appears to be a bit reductionist. Instead of opening up to the skills of the future, we seem to be narrowing our focus to the maths and sciences,” he said. “Kids have an innate curiosity, and yet we kill that by the end of junior school with a focus on rote learning and regurgitation of facts.”

The report concluded that a habit of learning is the greatest skill that students can gain for the future. “Education must therefore concern itself more than ever with the development of skills to interrogate knowledge, to find it for oneself, and to respond to rapidly changing situations.”

## Balancing Parenting

Adapted from: “Friendship, Popularity and Social Cruelty”  
by Michael Thompson, Ph.D., a lecture given at Grosse Pointe  
Academy in Grosse Pointe Farms, MI, in 2003. October, 2015

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Parenting is a nonstop balancing act. In many households, both parents work full-time but also try to volunteer in their children’s schools or on their sports teams or in other activities. They also attempt to carve out time for themselves in a jam-packed week of meetings, traveling and children’s needs. Within the role of parenting, adults must balance the act of supporting their children without overstepping their bounds, but also recognize if and when they need to intervene.



Psychologist and author Michael Thompson, Ph.D., wrote about “Friendship, Popularity and Social Cruelty” in a lecture series for the Grosse Pointe Academy in Grosse Pointe Farms, MI, delivered in 2003. He mainly discusses children and their relationships at school but also talks about the role of parents in their children’s social lives. As Thompson says, “We see our kids make mistakes. We see them get hurt; we see them hit other kids or be overly aggressive.

What are we going to do? What is our role?”

Using examples from his school visits, Thompson offers advice to schools and to parents, who often are climbing uphill in dealing with their children, some of whom would prefer that their parents have no role in their social lives whatsoever.

What follows is a continuous excerpt from his lecture series that is relevant to the topic of parents balancing their role regarding their children’s relationships with others.

*SAIS is grateful to Dr. Thompson for granting permission to re-print this excerpt.*

If kids don’t want us to intervene in their social lives, what do we do when we see that they’re in pain? What do we do with their hurt? How do we manage that? I don’t think there is any area of our children’s lives that makes us feel as helpless. Why don’t kids want our help? Why do they always fight us off when we can see that things are tough? But, for whom are things tough? And what is too tough?

What kids want me to tell you – and I have heard this all over the United States – is that adults have no business in kids’ social lives. But is that true? We see our kids make mistakes. We see them get hurt, we see them hit other kids or be overly aggressive. What are we going to do? What is our role? We have a greater role when they’re smaller and we have less and less of a role as they get bigger – but we’re always on alert to intervene should the going get tough.

The fundamental thing I want for you is to have some idea of what is normal social pain and what is a high-risk situation where your child may be in tough shape, where he or she may need help and support and intervention.

All kids are going to experience pain in their social lives. Everybody has some scar tissue from something that happened to us from a group or a friend or a betrayal. So, were we traumatized by our social lives or did we just have normal social pain and learn from it?

School is almost intolerable without friends. Most kids think that’s the purpose of school. It’s not because of the great teaching or the fabulous curriculum or because of their parents’ college ambitions for them. It has nothing to do with that. They come to school to see their friends. That’s what they’re all about.



Let's go on to moral values. Isn't that the job of adults? Don't we take our children to church or temple? Don't we teach them right from wrong? Aren't we constantly reminding them of moral issues and an awareness of what's cruel, what's mean, what's not right? We do, but kids are each other's great moral teachers. Jean Piaget in 1936 wrote a book called *The Moral Judgment of the Child* in which he said if you observe children engaged in mixed stage free play, an extraordinary amount of time is spent in rule formation and rule debate.

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WE THINK OF OURSELVES AS OUR KIDS'  
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"That's not fair." Kids call each other on fairness issues all the time. If you stand and watch a game of four square on a playground, an enormous amount of the conversation is like a clinic for referees in training. It's all about rules and accountability, about questioning people's motivation and why they did that and fairness, fairness, fairness. We think of ourselves as our kids' moral teachers. But Piaget reminds us that kids are calling each other out on moral grounds, demanding moral accountability, all the time.

We often don't know where kids are in their thinking. Now, that doesn't mean we shouldn't talk about it. But kids have a bigger impact on each other than we do. So when a child says to another child, "That's not right, that's not fair," they snap to. Kids have a big impact on moral thinking. We shouldn't think we're the only game in town, because we're not.

Willard Hartup, who spent his entire career at the University of Minnesota as a psychologist looking at social lives of kids, said that kids do things for each other that adults don't do. They teach each other differently, or teach things that we don't teach.

What are those things? They teach effective communication. They teach each other to modulate aggression. They give each other sexual socialization. They teach other moral values, and have the ability to enhance each other's sense of self-worth.

As Hartup says, kids make each other feel good in a certain way that we cannot. I can say to my daughter Joanna, and I have for years, that she's a great kid, that she's beautiful, that she's talented and a wonderful athlete. She's glad to have her dad go on that way. But after awhile it's, "Turn it off, Dad." But if she walks into a room and her friend Miranda says, "Oh, Joanna, where did you get that jacket? That's so cool," her stock goes up. I can't do that for her no matter what I say to her.



When my son Will was 8 or 9, he played Pokemon incessantly and Gameboy games of all kinds. Sometimes a friend would call and ask him something like, "How do you get past the acid rain drops? Is the track an oval or is it a circle?" He would know the answer and he would give them advice about negotiating this game. When he hung up the phone he was Will Thompson, Gameboy Consultant to his Peers. The appreciation of his peers is something I can't ever make him feel, because I'm not his peer.

Kids have an impact on each other. Kids get confused and we get confused as their parents sometimes because we empathize with our children's desire to be more popular, especially during the popularity ward that rage from fourth grade through ninth grade. In those years, popularity and status ranking and rank

ordering and who's dominant are all powerful and it's incredibly painful. It's devastating if you don't have a friend.

I received an e-mail from a mom who said, "My fifth-grade daughter joined a swimming team three months ago. It's been three months and she only has one friend!" I wrote to the mom and asked, "When you were this age in school were you very social?" "Oh, yes," she replied. I said, "Well, you don't get to choose your child's social style. One friend may be a big deal for her. Support the hell out of that friendship."

If by the end of elementary school you have a friend, you've moved out of trouble. You're not at risk. And 85 percent of kids are probably okay. Will they feel pain? Yes. Will they bounce back? Yes. It's the bottom 15 percent, the controversial kids and rejected kids, for whom we may have to intervene.

In my experience, the parents who are most worried or excited about the school environment are not the parents of the kids at the bottom. It's the parents of the kids in the middle and the top who are socially sensitive themselves and alert to every little slight.

Here's how it might go: if you are a child who comes home one day and looks sad, your mother says, "Honey, how was school today?" You say, "Not so good." Your mom says, "What happened?" and you say, "Molly was mean to me." Your mother says, "Honey, that shouldn't have happened. I'm really sorry that happened."

Now you have told your mom and you feel better. You go off to play. Not your mother. She's in the kitchen thinking she never liked Molly and never thought her parent had good values. So the next day she asks you how school went, and you say, "Fine." But she probes. "Well, how are things with Molly?" You're confused. It's either gone and not on your mind or you have paid Molly back. You're not going to tell her that. Children never

say, "It's okay mom, I took care of Molly!" So you say something equivocal and get out of the conversation, but your mother thinks you had another bad day. She's keeping score.

The third day you come home and your mom says, "How are things with Molly?" By that time you know your mom needs some red meat. You say, "Nobody really thinks she's that nice, Mom."

What has happened? I call this interviewing for pain – and I see a lot of it among caring parents. Interviewing for pain gives the parent the feeling that she's doing a great job, that she's on top of things, that she's protecting her child. But she never asked you any questions about coping or adaptation. She didn't ask how other kids handle Molly, or whether you have some good days with Molly.

Because she never asks, she never hears about it. She gets a completely distorted view. One girl said to me, "My mother holds a grudge much longer than I do."

Don't do this. My best advice for parents: Don't interview for pain. Don't go back to middle school. Don't get involved. If your child has friends, support those friendships. There's nothing you can do about your child's popularity. It's already settled by the group. You can't work it up or down. But you can stay out of being part of the problem.

At a fancy private school in New York City a boy came up to me after my talk and said there are 100 kids in fifth grade at this school. He said last year there was a family who gave a party and they invited 75 kids. He said he wasn't invited.

That's a little hard to take. If someone is wealthy enough and nuts enough to give a party for 75 fifth graders, they can certainly give a party for 100 fifth graders. If you allow your child to give a party and chop off the bottom 25 percent, you've gone back



to middle school. Either the whole class, all of one gender in the class, or a minority, should be invited. Even if that's not the rule in school any more, it should be. If there are 11 girls in sixth grade and there's a birthday party where 10 girls were invited, the girl who is not included is devastated. As adults we should prevent that

from happening. What if your child says, "But I don't like her. I don't want her at my birthday party." Fair enough. In that case, you invite five kids, not 10. Ten is cruel. So support friendship and don't get involved in the popularity wars.

Kids at the bottom are often less good at picking up social cues than other children are. Our ability to read social cues is not evenly distributed. It's a bell-shaped curve. There is average, there's really gifted, and then there are the not so gifted, who are socially clueless and who need more coaching. Some kids are socially learning disabled. It's hard enough to have a learning disability that makes academics tough, but when you don't get what's happening socially, that's painful. These kids need our help. If you have a kid who's lonely, when the phone doesn't ring, when they're not getting birthday party invitations, something's up. That's when you need to talk to other parents and teachers at school.

Teachers, incidentally, know everything. I've worked with teachers; I admire them. I was a teacher before I became a psychologist. I think they do the Lord's work. But they do not volunteer social information unless you ask for it. It's incredibly painful to say to a parent, "Your child is at the bottom of the social ladder in my class." The teachers feel bad and guilty. But if you want to know where your child stands in the hierarchy and how she functions socially, the teacher knows.

What you have to do to make a school a community and make it a better culture and climate is to give kids the feeling that they have a common mission and a common enemy. To be sure, in school the common enemy is always ignorance and disorder and the common mission is learning. But there are other things that bring out the best in kids, things like community service, team play or theater. You should value those activities as much as you value your children's grades. An over-reliance on grades gives children the feeling that school is a dog eat-dog, ranked world, that it's all about getting in the best college, and who cares about the stupid kids. We adults are sometimes guilty of unwittingly creating a culture of hierarchy and the kids imitate us. We don't like the look of it, but there it is.

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Creating community means embracing a common mission. When you take kids out to do a project, to help the truly disadvantaged, the rules of cool drop away. The same thing can happen with outdoor experience, with experiential learning.

Many years ago, I was an instructor at Hurricane Island Outward Bound School in Maine. We had lots of different kids who came to Outward Bound. I was a student there the summer I graduated from high school and they made a group that was called a "watch." We had kids in the group who were privileged preppies like me. We had public school athletes, big athletes, whom I found as scary as hell. We had African-American kids sent by the courts, and we had spindly kids whose parents hoped Outward Bound would beef them up. It was not a natural group. There were huge differences of race and social and economic status, and of size and physical ability. How do you make such a collection act like a cohesive group?

On the first day of Outward Bound, they take 12 kids and they put them in a whaling dory and they tow them five miles out to sea and they hand them oars and say, “Row back by dinner.”

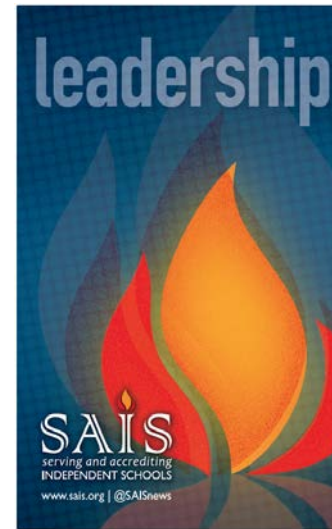
Then it doesn’t matter how cool you are at school. It doesn’t matter how big or small you are. You have to put an oar in and pull together with everybody else. You do that to get back to the island; you’re a group. You pull together metaphorically and actually.

We had a boy in our boat who had a late puberty. He was an eleventh grader, but he looked like a ninth grader from the head down. I now recognize that he was a rejected-submissive kid who was just trying to stay out of trouble.

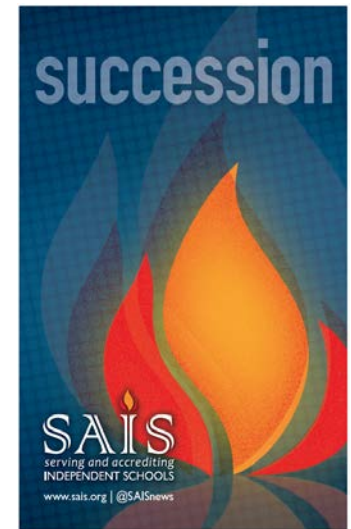
But guess what? He was the only boy in our boat who knew how to navigate. His parents had a place on the shore and he had sailed since he was a kid. The rest of us were terrified that we’d all row off into the fog and head for Europe and no one would ever find us. This kid could navigate. The last week of the month we were there we elected him our captain because we wanted the guy who knew how to do it in charge.

You should have seen him walk off Hurricane Island at the end of the session. We were dispersing to the four winds, but he walked off that island, head up, shoulders back. We had depended on him and we had trusted him. He had become friend eligible.

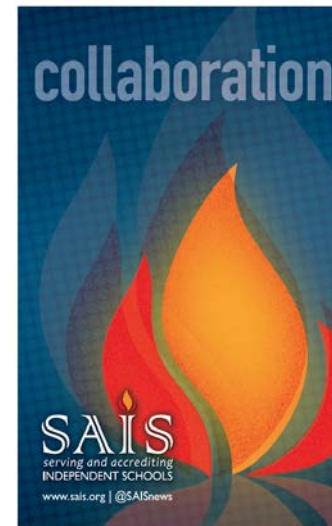
That’s what I want for kids. I want them to have a chance to showcase their talents in many different ways. I want them to have a friend. That’s what I look for in a school climate, because it is a friend who saves your life in school.



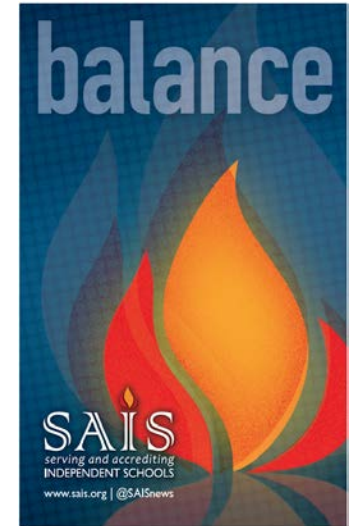
October, 2012



October, 2013



October, 2014



October, 2015

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