

Professional Development at TBS

February 12, 2010

Dear Families,

We bet you're wondering what really happens on those Professional Development days, when faculty are here without your children. Friday the 12th was a busy but inspiring day for us! After an opening all-faculty conversation about our Seed-to-Table program, led by Simon Hurd, we split into groups and rotated through three discussions. These conversations were each focused on a different component of Visible Thinking, which is one of the core ideas of Teaching for Understanding; you can read about it directly at <http://pzweb.harvard.edu/vt>. This concept is central to our vision of keeping learning alive, contemporary, evidence-based, and dynamic.

Expertly, and with great enthusiasm, Claire Patterson, Tanya Madrid-Campbell and Julianne Hughes shared their studies from Project Zero and how they are directly applying these tools and frameworks in their classrooms to make learning visible. Janet best described our feelings in her message after the day: "These ideas and teaching strategies are dear to my mind and heart, and the sophisticated work our teachers are doing with them shows the great strides TBS has taken in this important direction over the past few years." Hear, hear! Kudos, too, to Simon for sharing his commitment and vision for our Seed to Table program. It's clear from his and Maureen's description that this program has already taken root at TBS and will continue to grow.



Above: Presenter Tanya Madrid-Campbell listens to another program.

From Tanya Madrid-Campbell (teacher-presenter):

One of the reasons I became a teacher is the potential one has to constantly learn new things. Last Friday during our professional development day, I had the opportunity to share with my colleagues what I had learned about Thinking Routines from Project Zero. This experience brought to me a different kind of learning purpose I had not considered before: learning to teach teachers at many levels. My purpose for this presentation was not only about showing what I had learned, but also to provide teachers with tools that could be applied in their classrooms and that would enrich the teaching and learning in the classroom at any level. I surprised myself by learning that, by being clear about this new purpose, designing my workshop helped me know which avenues to take. I kept asking myself, "How can I make what I learned a resource for teachers at all levels?"

I was a presenter last Friday, but I was also a learner. I really appreciated the opportunity to share what I've learned through professional development, and now reflect on my own learning in that process. I know we have a great amount of talent in our faculty, and learning new things keeps our curiosity and motivation going.



Above: Claire Patterson talks to her colleagues about how she and Lyssa Ichikawa make learning visible in Blackberry Creek, and why it's crucial to learning (and teaching). You can see two short videos of Claire's presentation here:

<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/1783979/Claire%20on%20Visible%20Thinking.mov>

<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/1783979/VT%20in%20BBC%20Classroom.mov>

These raw videos take a while to download, but they're worth the wait! We hope to have them available more conveniently next week.

After our busy day, we left tired but further convinced that we are the community of learners that we work so hard to be, and that we truly embody our mission: to ignite curious minds, awaken generous hearts, and engage a changing world.

The TBS Educational Leadership Team
Zaq Roberts, Mitch Bostian and Andrea Gordon



Above: Benicia Hill and Sima Misra examine one of Julianne Hughes' vintage objects during her "Thinking with Objects" lesson. Says Julianne, "Art can still be an intimidating area to enter into; objects are possibly less charged. We looked at familiar objects using the 'Parts/Purposes/Complexities' model from Project Zero, trying to get beneath what we thought we already knew."



From Kate Klaire (teacher-participant):

Friday's workshops provided for me an opportunity to work in a deeper way with the principles of Project Zero, which I attended in 2008. I am fortunate to be returning to PZ this summer with several colleagues. I guess the presenters really made an impact; I have been referring to them often since last Friday, and have made one of the next big units of study in our class center around the thinking routine called Look-Think-Wonder. I picked this routine because I feel I understand it well, I've used it before, and it fits well with the specific content of the unit (the study of maps). If you want to know more, we will use documentation to help the kids understand their own thinking, and to demonstrate how it all comes together (another PZ principle discussed on Friday). Come by Sweet Briar and check it out soon.

I am an incredibly community-oriented person, but on Friday I was again reminded of my admiration and love for my peers and colleagues when we had a chance to work together as a whole staff. I am in awe of their dedication and talent, the quality of the presentations, the insight in the conversations, and the engagement in thinking together to better our practice!



Above: Nancy Lieblich and Noushin Moghaddam try to examine an object with fresh eyes during the "Thinking with Objects" lesson.

Left: Mike Raven examines "learning made visible" in Blackberry Creek.

All photos: TBS staff.