On Learning

Embracing a Growth Mindset
Successful Learning at School and at Home
On Learning

Dear Readers,

“Ancora Imparo.” – “I’m still learning.” (Michelangelo at age 87)

Learning is a lifelong process. It neither ends with the final examination at school nor with the final apprenticeship examination. It also doesn’t end after receiving a university degree or passing a higher professional examination. By staying curious and becoming a lifelong learner, learning becomes a gateway to personal growth in and outside the classroom. With the announcement of school closures in spring 2020, the essence of quality learning and teaching at SIS Swiss International School was put to the test involving the entire school community.

Classrooms, management meetings and morning circles had to move to the digital world. Learning was on(line) and classes were still in session – not just for our students. Whether you were challenged to learn how to tie your shoelaces with a learning video, to teach a virtual sports lesson from your living room or to help your child connect to a class video conference, learning continued for students and all those put in their shoes.

It is with great enthusiasm and passion that students and teachers accepted and mastered the challenge of distance learning. By means of a healthy mix of online and offline activities, the use of digital collaboration platforms and outstanding teamwork, teachers found new, creative ways to keep SIS’ promise of high quality teaching and learning across levels.

(Re)assessing learning processes and offering customised solutions for each level and student was not without difficulty and problems. Technological aspects and the distance between students and teachers caused some of the greatest challenges for schools. Students proved to be fast learners and also beyond the classroom, work processes changed profoundly almost overnight. Working from home and virtual meetings put digital learning on the agenda. Initial difficulties such as sending conference call invitations to uninvolved participants or forgetting to mute the microphone during meetings were not always resolved immediately but certainly made it possible to share some much needed laughter.

What have we learned from this extraordinary situation and what can we still learn from it?

We’ve been going through a learning process that illustrated the school community’s ability to rise to the challenge of distance learning. A range of methods in approaching and solving problems, appreciation, personal responsibility and commitment are tools and values that helped us learn more every day. These qualities are at the heart of our interactions with the students at SIS. We strive to embody the values we seek to impart to our students and aim to continue setting an example for lifelong learning also in the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire SIS community for the extraordinary commitment during these challenging times and wish you an interesting read. Remain curious and stay healthy.

Marcel Stähli
CEO SIS Swiss International School Switzerland
Spring 2020 | Switzerland

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“Crisis either causes regress or progress depending on the will of the people” (Abhijit Naskar). This article outlines the SIS collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating how the will of all parties saw us succeed in making a triumph of an unforeseen, unexpected and unpleasant turn of events.

Rumour spread in the early evening of 12 March 2020 that schools could be going into enforced closure “imminently”. SIS staff quietly arranged for students to be equipped with their most important materials to take home the following day; a move which proved wise when the news was confirmed by the federal government that indeed schools would be put into immediate closure. At 4 p.m. pick up, staff and parents met eyes, knowing that the challenge faced was huge and that shocked children required us to pull together for the common goal of slowing down the spread of COVID-19. The journey had many twists but has seen our SIS community reach new heights of collaboration and a new understanding of what it means to be partners in children’s education.

“I think I can speak for all the students when I say, SIS’s reaction to this global pandemic was very impressive. They were quick and organised as well as informative.”
Zirish, Grade 12, SIS Zürich

Fortuitously on 16 March 2020 all schools had a planned professional development day and whilst principals had to abandon previous plans for staff training, it was clear to all that a new focus was required. Each school worked with staff capabilities and students’ knowledge of online learning tools to create a plan for the implementation of an online learning program. The following day saw not only the roll out of this but also in-school emergency care solutions in all our SIS schools and for one of our schools, as dictated by the canton, ongoing face-to-face kindergarten provision.

The sharing of expertise across SIS schools was vital as together we considered the following dilemmas:

- structured timetable versus flexibility
- screen time versus non screen time
- core curriculum versus wider curriculum
- mailing work versus uploading work
- audio conferences versus video conferencing
- live lessons versus recorded lessons
- whole class versus small group versus individual meetings

It became clear that there was no “one plan fits all” solution. Older students already working effectively with Office 365 continued independently. Upper primary students became quickly accustomed to the new way of working, adapting flexibly to the new expectations of their teachers. The very youngest students needed the most support both emotionally and organisationally. A little sad and confused at the start, online meetings soon became a great joy to them.

Sharing across wider communities has also been paramount. Each of our schools has received regular updates from their cantons, which, although not always in concurrence, have both supported and guided our decision making. We too have shared freely, for example with Canton Schwyz using part of an SIS document as advice to public schools.

“I was grateful for the support of the teachers. They were always there online, helping as much as they could and giving clear instructions.”
Alva, Grade 5, SIS Männedorf-Zürich

Throughout these past weeks SIS staff have supported one another within and across schools. Our IT subject leader provided video tutorials for how to arrange and deliver online learning for all teachers. IT-Support staff within each school have resolved hundreds of IT issues. Parents have supported the progress through responding to surveys, requesting adaptations or simply sending messages of support. Our school principals have worked tirelessly to assimilate the local advice and parental feelings, management guidance and personnel resources to guide and direct their staff in a way they had never imagined.

As I write, 11 May 2020 and thus the reopening of the schools approaches. We take a deep breath and again create a new concept, this time for the “return to school”. It won’t be quite the same as before but we cannot wait to see those smiling faces, hear the joyful chatter and correct actual work again.
Mathematics introduces students to concepts, skills and thinking strategies that are essential in everyday life and support learning across the curriculum. It helps students make sense of the numbers, patterns and shapes they see in the world around them, offers ways of handling data in an increasingly digital world and makes a crucial contribution to their development as successful learners.

The SIS Mathematics Curriculum
The SIS Mathematics Curriculum has been developed to enhance the teaching of mathematics in our schools. It provides a balanced programme and helps students build a solid conceptual foundation in mathematics that will enable them to apply their knowledge.

Combining the most relevant and essential information from the British and Swiss curricula, the curriculum is divided into three strands:

- numbers and variables
- geometry: shapes and space
- measurement and statistics

Each strand provides progressions for the teaching and learning of mathematics from kindergarten to grade 6.

Implementing the Curriculum
Emphasis has been placed on the introduction of the new maths curriculum in all SIS schools this year so that it is implemented successfully. Through school workshops, SIS Maths Trainers Switzerland Andrea Oettinger and Miranda Dominguez Stead, with the assistance of Valérie Nordmann, are involved in its implementation.

As maths trainers we have placed great importance on the purposeful actions that teachers can take to support the engagement and learning of each student by positioning students as active learners and constructing their knowledge of mathematics through exploration, discussion and reflection. One such way that we are encouraging this is through maths discussions.

Maths Discussions
Maths discussions provide students opportunities for deeper understanding whereby students articulate and defend their ideas and analyse the reasoning of others. They allow for the exploration of ideas, strategies and procedures. Using discussions in the classroom to explain and justify, shapes the way students learn mathematics.

Simultaneously, teachers gain the ability to assess student knowledge through choosing open-ended tasks, which can be approached in many different ways, and by asking good questions. They align instruction to ensure students understand how to use maths skills through thinking, talking and exploring. These questions help students clarify and deepen their thinking and that of others, and to consider mathematical ideas more explicitly while making connections between different approaches. Furthermore, asking questions gives teachers information about students' thinking that can help determine the next course of action in lessons.

Shifting our Focus to Conceptual Maths
At SIS, we believe that conceptual understanding is essential for learning mathematics and the trainers are encouraging its execution within maths lessons. Conceptual understanding refers to an integrated and functional grasp of mathematical ideas. Students with conceptual understanding know more than isolated memorised facts and methods. They understand why a mathematical idea is important and the kinds of contexts in which it is useful. By contextualising topics with real life examples, students’ conceptual understanding is enhanced, they are encouraged to think fluidly and thus they can creatively solve unfamiliar problems.

SIS Mathematics Curriculum: Enhancing Conceptual Understanding
Miranda Dominguez Stead, SIS Maths Trainer Switzerland and Head of Kindergarten and Primary SIS Männedorf-Zürich
Guest Article

What Psychology Can Teach Us about Learning

Dr Alicia Chodkiewicz, Educational Psychologist

Childhood is an important time of learning and discovery. Psychology offers valuable insights into how students learn best and what we can do to inspire and support them to become lifelong learners. This article draws out some of the ways to help children and students embrace a growth mindset, learn from their experiences and set achievable goals for success.

Embrace a Growth Mindset

The way we see and interpret the world around us is shaped by our internal dialogue, otherwise known as self-talk. This internal chatter can be cheerful, making us see ourselves and those around us in a positive light. At other times it can be negative, undermining our confidence, acting as a roadblock to our success by telling us that we are not capable. While everyone will inevitably experience both positive and negative internal dialogue, studies show that individuals fall into set patterns of self-talk – either a fixed or growth mindset.

Individuals who have a fixed mindset believe intelligence is set, cannot be changed, and that ability and not effort leads to success. They focus on difficulties and barriers to learning, often on the things they cannot do (e.g. I can’t learn German because I’m not good at languages). In contrast, individuals who have a growth mindset believe that intelligence and abilities can always be improved. These individuals show an openness to learning and a willingness to try new things, even if it means they will make mistakes along the way (e.g. It’s never too late to learn a new language).

When it comes to learning in the classroom, there is extensive research showing that children who believe their brains can grow and get smarter do better at school. This is because students who have a growth mindset believe that effort is an important ingredient to success and see failure as a normal part of the learning process. These students will be more likely
to start a new challenge and stick with it. In comparison, students with a fixed mindset are often preoccupied with proving they are smart. As a result, they would rather avoid a challenge than try something new and fail. Research has shown that students with a growth mindset are not only found to be more persistent and resilient learners, they consistently perform better academically at school. So how can you help your children and students develop a growth mindset?

**Ask:** Encourage self-appraisal – ask your child or student how they feel things went, allow time for them to explain and talk it out, before jumping in to provide your own feedback.

**Model:** Model a growth mindset in front of your children and students, especially in challenging moments.

**Praise:** Give your children and students specific and sincere praise that focuses on the process and not the outcome – for example, instead of saying “You are very good at solving puzzles” you could say, “You are using a very good strategy to solve that puzzle”.

### Learn from Success and Failure

A key skill that defines successful learners is the ability to learn from their experiences. Too often students look for external explanations for their academic outcomes, blaming both success and failure on others, the task, or luck. By taking this approach, students feel a lack of control over their learning and will make little effort to change or improve.

In contrast, when students reflect on what happened and can identify specific actions that they took to cause an event, they will know what they can do better in the future to replicate their successes and avoid mistakes. Students who actively look to understand the role they play in academic outcomes are more likely to feel control over their learning and take the actions needed to improve. Research into student explanations have identified specific attributions that either help or hinder learning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Reason</th>
<th>Unhelpful Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I put in a lot of time and effort.</td>
<td>It was just easy. I got lucky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tried different strategies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Failure</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I left it to the last minute.</td>
<td>The teacher hates me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t invest enough time.</td>
<td>I was unlucky.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How can you help your children and students learn from their successes and mistakes?

**Talk:** Have conversations after moments of both success and failure – ask “Why do you think that happened?” If they respond with an unhelpful explanation, challenge them to identify something that they did to contribute to the outcome.

**Model:** Talk openly about why you believe you succeed or fail – practice using helpful explanations and avoid putting all the blame on others. Specifically, allow your children and students to see you learning from your mistakes, don’t be afraid to let them know that you are not perfect.

### Be specific:

When giving praise and feedback, include specific reasons why you believe the event occurred. For example: “That was a fantastic presentation, you were clearly well prepared”.

### Set Goals for Success

Most of the actions we take are motivated by our desire to reach a goal, be it big (i.e. I want to get into a top university) or small (i.e. I want to solve that problem). We are all striving to reach different goals and there is no single incentive that will motivate everyone. However, research has identified different types of goals that can either help or hinder a student’s learning. Goals can be broadly separated into two categories: approach goals and avoidance goals.

**Approach Goals**

- When you are working towards achieving a goal or getting something that you want.
- For example: I want to learn how to speak German.

**Avoidance Goals**

- When you are trying to avoid a bad outcome or negative consequence.
- For example: I don’t want to get a bad grade.

Among the most ineffective motivators are setting avoidance goals. It is tempting to think that telling someone to “work hard or you will fail” is an effective way to get them to study. However, this method is not supported by the research. Rather, students who are excessively focused on the goal of not failing often do the bare minimum needed to pass or can disengage entirely, leading to procrastination.

A more effective motivator is setting approach goals, where students are striving to achieve something. Ideally, students learn best when they are self-motivated and when they choose to learn or acquire a new skill. However, external rewards may be necessary when a student is not intrinsically motivated to learn something that is boring, challenging or unimportant to them. Students will learn best when they are supported to set achievable goals and identify strong incentives to keep them motivated. How can you help your children and students set goals for success?

**Ask:** Make time to ask your children and students about their goals – challenge their avoidance goals and help them find a positive goal they can work towards.

**Help:** To make a large goal feel more achievable – help them break their goals down into smaller more manageable steps.

**Reward:** Set a system of rewards – identify rewards that motivate your child or student to work toward that you can both agree on.

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Gastbeitrag

Cyber-Mobbing – den Kindern helfen, sich selbst zu helfen

Marco Eggerling, Security Advisor

Die heutige Jugend ist ständigigen digitalen und technologischen Reizen und Risiken ausgesetzt, deren Tragweite sie noch nicht korrekt einschätzen können. Eltern müssen zu guten und informierten Beratern werden, denn im Cyberspace gelten mitunter andere Gesetze als in der realen Welt.

Unsere Kinder nutzen digitale soziale Medien, Bewegen sich mühelos zwischen den gängigen Plattformen und viele haben bereits in sehr jungen Jahren uneingeschränkt Zugriff auf Technologien wie Smartphone, Tablet oder Laptop. Haben Sie sich schon einmal gefragt, was der Nachwuchs mit seinem Gerät so anstellt? Werden hier eventuell sogar Dinge gemacht, die geltende Gesetze verletzen?

Mit unseren Kindern wachsen technologische Autodidaktiken heran, was gut ist. Zugleich schreiten unsere Kinder jedoch schneller fort, als Eltern nachziehen können. Oft entsteht dabei das Risiko, nicht mehr nachvollziehen zu können, wie und mit wem die Kinder kommunizieren. Während es nicht unser Anliegen sein darf, unsere Kinder ihrer Privatsphäre zu berauben, müssen wir sie dennoch über die möglichen Risiken aufklären.

Das Austragen von Konflikten in der digitalen Welt hat ein Niveau erreicht, welches in der realen Welt nicht akzeptiert würde: Cyber-Mobbing. Alleine durch die Reichweite eines Tweets kann das Beschimpfen einer Person oder das unüberlegte Weitergeben eines Bildes eine Rechteverletzung (Recht am eigenen Bild, gilt für Kinder ab etwa 14) darstellen, die harte Konsequenzen zur Folge haben kann.

Dass Cyber-Mobbing nicht wieder gutzumachende Konsequenzen haben kann, zeigt der Fall „Sabrina“. Das Badener Tagesblatt, in Übereinstimmung mit der NZZ, berichteten am 30. September 2018 darüber, wie sich eine 13-jährige Schülerin aus Spreitenbach im August desselben Jahres das Leben genommen hatte, weil sie mutmasslich auf Social Media gemobbt worden war. Im Zusammenhang mit diesem Cyber-Mobbing Fall wurde gegen eine damals 17-Jährige Strafbefehl durch die zuständige Jugendanwaltschaft Limmattal/Albis erlassen.


Wichtigster Grundsatz: Reden statt verbieten. Ermüten Sie Ihr Kind sich bei Ihnen zu melden, wenn Dinge aus dem Ruder laufen, achten Sie auf Verhaltensveränderungen und sprechen Sie diese an.


SUMMARY

Today’s youth is constantly exposed to digital and technological incentives and risks. Ask your child about his/her behaviour in cyberspace and explain how misbehaviour can have dramatic consequences with the example of the widely publicised cyber-bullying case “Sabrina”. Help your children to help themselves by following the main principle of talking instead of forbidding. Encourage your child to turn to you when things go wrong and watch out for changes in behaviour and address them.
16 March 2020 was scheduled to be a day off for students and a day of professional development at school for teachers – with preschool and primary 1 teachers taking a literacy workshop and college teachers delving into topics of IT.

However, like something out of a science fiction novel, instead of the usual professional development protocol of gathering to learn and practice in dyads and groups – and then enjoying an Apéro together at day’s end – we found ourselves in the disorienting ambiance of digesting that any dreaded possible pandemic scenarios of the future had indeed arrived in the reality of today. In eerie silence, teachers shuffled outside to the sports field behind the school and spaced themselves the proper two meters apart. The principal’s message was clear: due to the threat of COVID-19 and as per the Swiss authorities, on-site school had been cancelled for an unknown duration, and effective immediately, our focus had to shift to organizing a distance learning program. Only through teamwork, community and a vast amount of effort would we be able to successfully push our curriculum forward for our nearly 600 students.

Not a minute was wasted. Adhering to new protocols, the school management drew up the framework of the new learning methodology while the teachers engaged in networking with their teams, upskilling in the ways of Office 365 and adjusting their plans to teach remotely.

Even though many obstacles had to be overcome, already the next day, teachers, students and their parents impressively managed to embark on what was to become the SIS schools worldwide trend for virtual distance learning in SIS Primary and Secondary sections. The transition meant dealing with issues such as: the availability of devices, including printers and scanners; issuance of passwords; safe and readily usable software; and, perhaps most crucially, producing a massive, school-wide tutorial on the idiosyncrasies of our new virtual platform. Trouble-shooting would be ongoing in the weeks ahead.

“The first time I watched one of my teachers meeting her 4- and 5-year-old students via a video conference their little faces lit up when they saw each other! An online teaching program cannot be successful if you don’t provide the social emotional interaction.”
Marie-Claude Gaëtan, Head of Preschool

I am extremely proud of the SIS Basel faculty, and I am grateful to the parents and children who joined forces with us and cooperated despite the stress. With me writing this article one week before we return to classroom learning, there will be much to process and evaluate, and though we do not yet know what’s still ahead in terms of COVID-19, at least we do know that we have the capacity to adapt, find creative, workable and even excellent solutions, making the best of a challenging experience under pressure.

In order to create a cohesive environment with only small deviations between classes, the SIS schools channeled the remote learning program largely through Office 365 Teams, with each class having its own profile and teachers following a centralized framework. Office 365 Teams features a wide array of options and provides an ideal platform for distance learning: teachers set up channels for each subject and transfer-files via OneDrive and OneNote; SharePoint allows for the sharing and distribution of important assignments; Sway, Forms and Class Notebook, are being employed liberally throughout the learning sequences. To the extent possible, teachers have endeavored to embrace a synchronous schedule based on the students’ familiar school day. As the program developed, more time was spent in live teaching encounters.

“Online school has proven to be a very positive contribution and has made students as well as teachers rise to the occasion to adapt creatively to the situation. Students are setting up websites and coding school-wide applications and it has widened the horizons of the teaching possibilities exponentially.”
Cedric, Grade 9
At SIS Männedorf-Zürich, all classes start each year with the same topic, “Learning to Learn”. Over two weeks, students learn about the class rules, expectations and routines of their classrooms and school. In addition, they spend time thinking about what it means to learn, how we learn, and how to be a successful learner and part of our school community.

For the younger students, this time might be their very first introduction to a school environment. As such, teachers use this time to settle the new learners into their new school career. Of course, they learn how to hold scissors, how to glue and how to pack away. At the same time, they learn where things are located – developing a sense of familiarity. Further, they learn who is who in their class, and get to know the adults around the school – developing a sense of belonging. More importantly, this learning to learn period is a good time to start developing important skills such as how to actively listen, how to be inclusive inside and outside of class, or how to stay safe in school.

In primary school, children are immediately introduced to online platforms. From the start, students learn how to log in to the computers, onto Office 365 and into the shared class workspaces. Additionally, older students become familiar with online learning platforms such as Mathletics, Reading Eggs, Lernlupe and Schabi. All students learn how to properly use, share and return the ICT materials.

Older children also helped in setting their own classroom expectations. Grade 3 this year focused on developing a shared understanding of what it means to be respectful towards ourselves, our classmates, our teachers and our school. They created a shared anchor chart of respectful actions and behaviors, on display in the class. Students set individual academic and social goals that they revisited at the end of the semester, and will again at the end of the year.

The oldest groups discuss deeper concepts about how we learn. Last year, grade 6 explored the idea of growth mindset – an educational theory about learning from Carol Dweck, a professor at Stanford University. They learned that no one is born smart. In fact, we all have the capacity to learn. Students learned about how the brain works: like a muscle that you can either use or lose, that gets stronger through practice. They explored how having a growth mindset helps us be successful learners – learning from our mistakes, understanding that learning is sometimes hard and takes time, and that we need to practice to improve.

This year, grades 5 and 6 discussed the concept of children’s rights. They began by looking at human rights, specifically at UNICEF’s “Convention on the Rights of the Child”. They used this to develop a shared understanding of children’s rights and responsibilities within the classroom. For instance, they have the right to be safe, but also, they have the responsibility to act safely around, and towards, others.

By using this settling in time in a deliberate manner, students have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them and how they can have a successful academic year.
Fächerübergreifender IT-Unterricht als Trumpf im Fernunterricht

Manuel Brunner, Lehrer Primarschule

In der Primarschule, wenn Kinder noch am Anfang ihrer Lernlaufbahn stehen, stellt sich stets folgende, zentrale Frage: Wie können wir als Lehrpersonen unsere Schülerinnen und Schüler zum Lernen motivieren?


Informatik-Schreiben

Informatik-Naturwissenschaften

Nachhaltiger IT-Unterricht

**Wertvorstellungen**


Unter dem Wert Herausforderung versteht sich, Fragen zu stellen, Sachverhalte kritisch zu hinterfragen, das Lernen stets neu zu reflektieren, Ausdauer auch in schwierigen Situationen zu zeigen und sich selbst herauszufordern, um das bestmögliche Resultat zu erzielen.


Der Wert Respekt hingegen setzt den Fokus auf ein gutes Zusammenleben in der Schulgemeinschaft. Die Kinder respektieren sich und ihre verschiedenen Ansichten. Sie lernen zu akzeptieren, dass Vielfalt und Unterschiede spannend und wertvoll sind.

**Schulversammlung und Preisverleihung**


Die SIS Rotkreuz-Zug erhofft sich so, die Tugenden der erwähnten drei Aspekte für die Schülerinnen und Schüler als nützliche Charaktereigenschaften auf deren Lebensweg mitzugeben.
SIS Schönenwerd

Sight Words: Comprehensive Reading Instruction

Tim Smith, Teacher Primary School

Sight words are the most commonly used words in the English language. Accordingly, a majority of the words that we read in a text are considered sight words. For example, “I”, “you”, and “the” account for ten percent of all words in printed English. As such, students learning to read greatly benefit by being able to instantly recognize and accurately read these words in order to build fluency and comprehension.

In general, teaching sight words is less focused on rules and letter sound knowledge. However, when sight words are coupled together with phonics instruction, we build strong, confident and fluent readers. Additionally, sight words are not a substitute for teaching phonics. Rather, sight word instruction helps students master reading words that frequently occur in a text, so they don’t have to stop and sound out every single letter or word.

There are many strategies and techniques to facilitate effective sight word learning. When I teach sight words I don’t have students sound them out or use their knowledge of letter sounds, as many of the sight words do not have a letter-sound correspondence. For example, sounding out the word “the” for a child, “t/h/e” does not work. Beginning and struggling readers may not understand how to pronounce the “th” letter sounds. Moreover, the first two counting numbers in English are not able to be sounded out, “one o/n/e” and “two t/w/o”! To help, I always use a non-verbal cue of circling the sight word or referencing it on our word wall. To clarify, we sound out other words, like CVC words, but not sight words. CVC words are words that begin with a consonant (C), have a single letter vowel sound (V), and end with a consonant (C).

To help reinforce sight word memorization, students need repetition and practice reading the words in context to help create mastery. For this reason, I use sight word fluency exercises, which allow the students to see the word, trace the individual letters on a pre-printed sheet, build the word by cutting out individual letters and assembling them in the correct order, and reading the word multiple times. Currently, I have found the most effective way to use the sight word fluency exercises is to show the word, say the word, trace the word, build the word, and read the word in context in a sentence. The sentence reading is then followed up with an opportunity to write it out on lined paper.

Struggling readers may have a difficult time moving from reading individual words to reading full sentences. Sometimes, children are overwhelmed when they see a sentence with 6+ words, but it’s critical for them to make this transition if they are going to be successful readers. If a child can read one word, then two, then three and so forth, they become more confident readers of full sentences. To aid in building this confidence I use sight word pyramid sentences. Sight word pyramid sentences increase the number of words a student reads and use both targeted sight words and words that can be sounded out. Students can simultaneously practice sight words and phonics. This is also a great way of providing repeated exposure to sight words. This helps the transition to reading words in context, which in turn helps build comprehension.

Language and literacy learning happen in a variety of ways as children are exposed to spoken and written language. Learning sight words is part of the SIS Reading Curriculum and is useful for early readers. Given the need to recognize high frequency and irregular words automatically, sight word instruction is one component of a comprehensive literacy program for early readers.
“The only way to have a friend is to be one.”
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

In order for learning to take place, it is crucial that children feel happy and safe at school. One way for this to happen is by developing a culture of community and friendship throughout the entire school, from the pre-kindergarten children, just starting out on their school careers, right through to the grade 6 students at the top of the school.

I believe this sense of community is a real strength of SIS Winterthur, and one of the strategies we use to help reinforce this is our buddy system. Every child is paired up with another child from a different age group. A great deal of thought goes into creating successful pairings, and the buddies change from time to time, once or twice throughout the year.

There are various opportunities during the school year for buddies to work together, for example during book week and on sports day, but the main chance for buddy interaction is on Thursday lunchtimes, when we have our weekly buddy lunch.

I joined them at a buddy lunch, to find out firstly, what they like about the buddy system, and secondly, what it has taught them.

Some of the younger students reported that they like how their older buddies help them and care for them. They also like to play outside and do fun things with them during playtimes. The older students enjoy the opportunity to have friends from classes other than their own, which they may not otherwise have. One buddy told me that she likes that her buddy always tries to cheer her up when she gets hurt.

A student in grade 3 mentioned that the buddy system has taught him about respect for other people. A fifth grader said that it has taught him about how to play with smaller people, and what sort of games and activities younger children enjoy, which are different from those of his same-age friends. A student in grade 4 has even learnt that her kindergarten buddy loses her teeth very fast! A child in kindergarten 2 told me that his buddy has taught him tips on how to run faster when playing catch, while another kindergartener is delighted that his older buddy has taught him some hard maths like $10 \times 10$ and $100 \times 100$! The overriding message that came through however, was that the buddy system has led to a greater understanding of different people, that they would not otherwise have experienced.

The buddy system at SIS Winterthur has certainly been a successful initiative, which has promoted learning, empathy and community spirit. It has taught us about friendship and respect for people outside our immediate classroom environment, which is a great life skill for our students to carry with them into the future.
Dean Bradley, Teacher Kindergarten

After much discussion and input from both teachers and children, we settled on the phrase “The Whole School Is Our Friend” for our annual project week theme last year. We decided that the best and most exciting way to develop this theme was through the creation of a whole school SIS song. With the support of our in-house musician and guitar club teacher, Mr. Tolman, as well as the music teacher, Ms. von Boyen, music ideas and basic compositions were prepared. The children were tasked with discussing and developing ideas for lyrics related to the theme. Every grade discussed what their shared school values were before collecting these ideas, and developing them into the song lyrics during their English and German writing lessons. Slowly, our school song was coming together.

The plan for the project week was focused on the school community writing, practising, singing and recording the new school song. During the week itself, every class had an amazing opportunity to visit a professional recording studio in Zürich and record the lyrics they had prepared in their lessons. Every grade had a verse to sing that they had helped write, and all children would help record the catchy chorus together. Although this would be a large focus of our weeks’ learning, to help integrate our school song into our entire weeks’ programme, the teachers had planned workshops to continue the excitement and enthusiasm for our song into daily routines.

Workshops, such as painting and drawing, focused on creating bright and colourful record covers for our song. Instrument making and percussion workshops were spaces for children to design, make and practise with instruments. Dance (and drama) classes had children learning and sharing dance moves, which resulted in groups presenting their own routines to one another. Workshops on song visualisation had the children thinking about and discussing how the song makes them feel and what it makes them think of, and singing workshops presented opportunities to practise the newly formed song. We also had the amazing experience of having a local beatboxer present an inspiring beatboxing workshop to the children during the week.

Best of all, our project week ended with our annual summer festival celebration, giving the children a perfect opportunity to perform our new SIS song to all of the parents and families. The week provided some wonderful and once-in-a-lifetime experiences for everyone, but the biggest thing that the staff and children felt as a result of the week was an atmosphere of community and support for one another that has remained prevalent since.

The children continue to sing the song to end assemblies and school performances, bringing big smiles to themselves and anyone who watches. Lastly, a big thank you has to be made to Mr. Tolman who helped developed the music, fit the children’s lyrics to the music, and organised the whole school trip to the recording studio. It was an amazing and very special week, that has clearly impacted the children’s attitude to school community and collaboration!
Yvonne van Luijt, Stufenleiterin Kindergarten und Primar

"Mathematik ist ein wesentlicher Bestandteil des alltäglichen Lebens. Indem Schüler und Schülerinnen Dinge logisch erkunden und Muster und Strukturen in Bezug auf Mengen, Raum, Zeit und Daten erforschen und untersuchen, gewinnen sie Freude an der Mathematik und verstehen deren Bedeutung." (SIS-Curriculum Mathematik)


Um allen Lehrpersonen der SIS Swiss International School hierfür eine zielorientierte Grundlage an die Hand zu geben, wurde zu Beginn des Schuljahres 2019/20 schweizweit ein einheitlicher Lehrplan im Fach Mathematik für die Klassenstufen Kindergarten bis 6. Klasse eingeführt.

Das SIS-Curriculum Mathematik


**Aufbau der Unterrichtsstunde**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aufgabe</th>
<th>5 Minuten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematische Diskussion</td>
<td>10 Minuten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anwendung</td>
<td>25 Minuten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexion</td>
<td>5 Minuten</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Nachdem das Problem auf unterschiedlichste Weise beleuchtet wurde, haben die Schülerinnen und Schüler Zeit, um verschiedene Ansätze auszuprobieren und den für sie einfachsten Weg zu verinnerlichen. Um den Lernerfolg aller sicherzustellen, wird am Ende der Stunde eine Reflexion, bezogen auf das Lernziel der Stunde, durchgeführt. Hier können die eigenen Lernerfolge bewertet und weitere Vorgehensweisen besprochen werden.

Das sagen Lehrpersonen sowie Schülerinnen und Schüler der SIS Zürich zum neuen Mathematik-Lernen:

- "Die grösste Veränderung liegt sicher in der Interaktion der Schülerinnen und Schüler." Lehrperson
- "Über Mathe zu diskutieren ist cool." Schüler
- "Mathe macht viel mehr Spass, wenn ich selbst auch mal Lehrerin spielen darf." Schülerin

Jede Neueinführung ist eine spannende Herausforderung und braucht etwas Zeit. Die Lehrpersonen der SIS Zürich haben grosse Freude am neuen Mathematikunterricht und werden diese sicherlich an die Kinder übertragen.
Die Siedler von Catan


Es ist ein Spiel für die ganze Familie für Kinder ab acht Jahren, das man einen ganzen Nachmittag lang spielen kann. Am meisten Spass macht mir, dass man überlegen muss, wie man mit wenigen Rohstoffen dennoch gewinnen kann.

Chess

In chess, there are no blinking screens to distract you, no cards to shuffle nor dice to throw. One only has the delicate shapes on a board filled with black and white squares. It’s that and one’s own cunning and wit to promote, outsmart, strategize and capture your opponents’ pieces.

The game of chess is a universal language, a culture in and of itself. One can indeed master the moves, but to master the game takes more than simple strategy. It’s a lifelong endeavor where the more you play, the better you get. It’s accessible to everyone, portable and easy to set up and best of all, it’s great for one’s concentration and focus.

For the last 1,500 years, chess has been the game of intellect and strategy enjoyed across all age groups and all nationalities. Whether you’re a beginner learning how the pieces move, or a more advanced player with a sophisticated array of openings and end games, chess will never fail to stimulate and activate its players. I highly recommend it to one and all.

Schiffe versenken


Dieses Spiel hat mir am besten gefallen, weil der Name so lustig ist. Ausserdem rate ich gerne und überlege, wo Kinder die Schiffe verstecken würden.
A Day with Alexander Hall, SIS Literacy Trainer Switzerland

Alexander Hall is the Literacy Trainer for SIS Switzerland and the grade 5/6 teacher at SIS Männedorf-Zürich. In the following article, he reports on his typical Monday, where he teaches in the morning and fulfils the role of SIS Literacy Trainer Switzerland in the afternoon.

5:30 a.m. I begin my day by catching the train from Waldshut, Germany, through Zürich and then on to Männedorf. This is my opportunity to catch up on emails or attempt to do my homework for my German course.

7:30 a.m. Once at school I prepare for my lessons: printing learning goals, collecting guided reading books and making sure the classroom is ready for the day.

8:20 a.m. The school day begins and my lovely grade 5 and 6 students arrive. We begin Monday mornings with a writing lesson. Every writing lesson begins with the children responding to their two stars and a wish. This is the perfect opportunity for children to go back and revise their work. With some next step marking, a student who was close to achieving the goal last week may be able to achieve it now within just a few short minutes.

10:00 a.m. A quick coffee break and chance to gossip and chat with my colleagues in the staff room. Then it’s time to prepare for the next lesson, maths.

10:20 a.m. The children return and we begin our maths lesson. We usually begin a double maths session with our Quick Maths activity before beginning our new topic. We then look at our new topic for the day and begin a maths discussion. This is really helping the children to develop their reasoning skills.

11:50 a.m. With my teaching commitments fulfilled for the day, I use my afternoon in the role of SIS Literacy Trainer Switzerland. In this time, I visit schools to run workshops, stay in Männedorf to plan future workshops, or I meet with principals and team leaders to discuss areas for possible development. I also frequently meet with Janet Meister (Chief Quality Officer SIS Group) and Paul Browne (SIS Literacy Trainer Germany) to ensure consistency across all SIS schools.

My favourite part of the job is having the opportunity to visit other schools and getting to work with different teams.

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17:30 p.m. Wherever I end up at the end of the day, I then make my way back home on the train. This is another opportunity to catch up on emails or squeeze in a little nap!
One question, two points of view

What Motivates You to Learn Something New?


Was mit Interesse beginnt, wandelt sich dann häufig in Begeisterung und genau das ist der Motor meiner Motivation. Natürlich wird Lernen nicht zu jedem Zeitpunkt von Euphorie begleitet, aber dieser Eifer hilft mir auch durch die schwierigen Lernzeiten hindurch.

Meine Motivation ist also stets durch Begeisterung geprägt, sei es durch einen akustischen Reiz oder persönliches Interesse ausgelöst. Am Schluss habe ich immer etwas Neues gelernt.

It turns out that I’m a learner at heart. My appetite to learn has spurred me on from a high school education to a BA, to graduate courses and onward, to no less than eleven separate certification trainings as a somatic mindfulness and trauma informed counselor – plus deep dives into other disciplines on the side, including meditation, self-inquiry, learning to play the harp, yoga, climbing, starting my own business, writing poetry, starting a women’s soccer team, living in four different countries, learning new languages, and more.

This enduring motivation to learn has been fueled by so many things: curiosity, necessity, the need to survive, the quest to belong, searching for answers to burning questions, improving professional skills, pursuing passionate interests; and through it all, a desire for self-actualization, progress and mastery. Everything I chose to pursue was relevant somehow to my life – and the desire to thrive.

Anyone’s growth impulse and innate curiosity can be sparked in some way – sometimes simply with the right question. This could be: What excites you? What expands your horizons? Where do you want to be five years from now? What is needed to get from here to there?

For further food for thought on motivation, I highly recommend a youtube video by Daniel Pink on RSA Animate, “The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us”.

Selina Lattner, Lehrerin Primarschule, SIS Winterthur

Annicka Henttonen, Administrative Assistant, SIS Basel
SIS Swiss International School is a group of private day schools offering bilingual education from kindergarten through to college. SIS is a company of the Kalaidos Swiss Education Group which belongs to the Klett Group Germany.