

2007-2008 PYP Exhibition at WA: much more than the staging.

(By Ms. Watson and Ms. Smith)

6th Grade has completed the 4th PYP Exhibition at Westlake Academy. They made it look easy. Their lessons were polished, precise, and conceptual. Their success is a tribute to all the PYP teachers they have had since 2nd grade. The students' experience of



going beyond events to find underlying meaning, connections, and understanding helped them as they built their unit to display their conception of how *International understanding is influenced by communication, leadership, and history.*

Although the finished product appeared to be effortless it was built on two months of intense work. 6th Graders are always anxious to begin the Exhibition process because of the exposure they received from previous exhibits. They all know they will be having fun. What they do not know is how hard it is to develop something to talk about. The development of a unit is multilayered and requires reflection and inspection.

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the first step of writing a Central Idea. We prepared thinking by requiring each student to bring a current event every Wednesday. This prompted thinking that went beyond their small world. We used the Organizing Theme of *Sharing the Planet*, which is an inquiry into rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resources with other people and with other living things; communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution.



Their expanded worldview enabled them to begin to form a statement that is universally true and open to inquiry. They began with a brainstorming session where they wrote their thoughts on the four categories under the organizing theme. Based what they wrote, each student wrote a statement to guide the inquiry. All statements were reviewed to check for duplications and depth of exploration it would allow. The list was narrowed

to ten statements that were examined and rewritten. Groups of four reviewed comments and reworked the central idea. An agreement was reached on the Central Idea: "International understanding is influenced by communication, leadership, and history."



As a whole 6th grade we began a discussion as to what we wanted to inquire into.

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CI.

We gathered again as a whole 6th grade and began to look at what they wrote. There was little enthusiasm for the endeavor. We turned the topic to personal interest. Every student listed one personal interest. Students wrote a line of inquiry based on their interest. We grouped them by peace and conflict resolution, sharing finite resources, communities, and equal opportunities. The interest was examined to find the concepts they covered. As a whole class these concepts were listed by category. Students then developed three lines of inquiry that would allow for them to explore their personal interest. Students chose a line of inquiry and divided them into groups. From these large groups students chose groups of three to four other interested individuals.

The next task was to decide how they would assess their understanding. Altering some vocabulary and making the stages in a linear arrangement simplified a planner. Everyone wrote the CI and transdisciplinary theme. We continued to work through the planner focusing on himself or herself as the learner. They determined how they would know what they know. After completing the planner they returned to it to think about their audience and how they could determine the audience's prior knowledge and then determine what the audience understands after the lesson.



Before researching, students wrote two questions that would guide them during their research sessions. Each student had individual questions and their group chose two. This helped them be more productive by defining and narrowing questions. Everyone frequently reviewed their unit planners to refresh their memory about the key concepts they chose to cover.

After all that work, the Exhibition is staged in one day only. All their hard work, knowledge and commitment is displayed through their presentations. That may be the only thing that several people may be able to see, yet the PYP Exhibition is much more than the result, the Exhibition is the process of becoming independent, self-motivated and committed learners.



Feedback from visitors and parents

It has been an honor to visit with you today. My only regret is that we couldn't see every presentation. Your presentations were articulate and well prepared and I found myself pleasantly surprised by knowledge I did not previously have. I am most impressed by the poise and confidence demonstrated by the presenters when gullied by my team. We are thirsty for knowledge about how you do an exhibition and you made us feel most welcome. I look forward to next year's exhibition with great enthusiasm.

Julia Brady
Imagine Schools

Wow! That was so amazing. I could tell you all worked so hard. I am so proud of Carsen! I also enjoyed learning all the presentations.

Shelly Cunningham
Parent



I really enjoyed today at the Academy. The presentations by the students were excellent!

Tom Brymer
CEO/Town Manager

We are so impressed with your knowledge and presentation skills. We enjoyed our visit tremendously and learned many new things. Congratulations on fabulous exhibitions!

Las Colinas Teachers

Jean, Terri and Clau,

Just wanted to let you know what nice things I heard about and experienced during today's exhibition. The parents that I spoke with were all very impressed as well as the staff members. I only got to see two and one half presentations but they were brilliant! The amount of information that the students had and were able to share was amazing! I was especially impressed with the fact that when questions were asked that hadn't been covered in the presentation, they could even answer those. I myself learned a lot today.

I also wanted to let you know how smoothly organized everything was and how easily the students moved between the different demonstrations! Everyone knew exactly when and where to be.

You guys and the students were amazing!

Darcy

Dear Clau

On a separate note, I just wanted to let you know that today was absolutely outstanding. I loved the way that it was split and catered to

the audience level. The children were so engaged and it was just powerful to watch their reactions to their presentations. They inquired into how they could take action into either helping out or using/supporting those sources of energy.
Bottom line: the children (and I) were empowered by the efforts of the presenters. It was powerful. Great stuff there today. You should be proud!

Emily



Dear Mrs. Claudia,

We as a parent of Rameen Sarwarzad appreciate the work that all of you put in with the children to make a great Exhibition. I came to watch Rameen's presentation and also the other group's presentations and I was very impressed with the hard work that they put into it and the G6 teachers and you as a PYP coordinator helped the students to achieve a great success.

Sincerely,
Akila and Mohammad Sarwarzad

Good morning Claudia,

I just wanted to say again what an amazing experience the Exhibition was! I'm so proud of each and every one of the sixth graders!! Their hard work and perseverance paid off big!! Thank you to the wonderful sixth grade teaching team ~ you all are the reason the children were such a success!!

Our family feels so blessed to be a part of the Westlake Academy experience! Yesterday was certainly a testament to our great fortune, from the fabulous Exhibition to the sweet music of kindergarten ~ our cup truly overflows!!



Sincerely,
Mimi and Todd Turbeville

2007-2008 PYP Exhibition Teachers' Log

4/7/08

Groups of four reviewed comments and reworked the central idea.

An agreement was reached. "International understanding is influenced by communication, leadership, and history." is their central idea.

In groups of 3-4 students wrote at least three lines of inquiry.

4/14/7/08

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4/8/08

As a whole 6th grade we began a discussion as to what we wanted to inquire into.

In groups of 3-4 students began to write lines of inquiry. Their CI is a big concept and they were struggling to narrow their focus. The lines of inquiry were often as broad as the CI.

We gathered again as a whole 6th grade and began to look at what they wrote. There was little enthusiasm for the endeavor. We turned the topic to personal interest. Every student listed one personal interest. Students were to develop a line of inquiry based on their interest and return the next day prepared to discuss their area.

4/9/08

Students brought their personal interest. We grouped them by peace and conflict resolution, sharing finite resources, communities, and equal opportunities. The interest was examined to find the concept they were covering. As a whole class these concepts

were listed in their category. We then developed three lines of inquiry that would allow for students to explore their personal interest. Students chose a line of inquiry and we divided them into groups. From these large groups students chose groups of three to four other interested individuals.

4/10/08

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4/11/08

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4/14

We continue to work through the planner. As the students fill out the form they are focusing on themselves as the learner. They are determining how they will know what they know. After they completed the planner they then returned to it to think about their audience and how they can determine prior the audience's prior knowledge and then determine what the audience understands after the lesson.

4/18/08

I have been noticing the difficulty students have had determining how to evaluate their understanding and design a learning experience. Next year we may give opportunities throughout the year for students to plan parts of their inquiry and assessment. We are at the research stage but students are having difficulty with the intellectual and physical freedom of their task. Some groups will remain in the classroom as they research until we are able to determine their ability to control their freedom. We now need to arrange for mentors, establish guidelines, and have groups make appointment times.

4/21/08

Before researching, students wrote two questions that would guide them during the session. Each student had individual questions. This did help them be more productive but we saw that their questions needed to be more defined and narrowed.

4/22/08

Each group wrote a summary based on the information they currently have. Using this summary they narrowed their focus into a manageable topic.

4/23/08

This week's current event related to their specific inquiry. Groups talked about their selections and filed them in their folder.

4/25/08

Everyone reviewed their unit planners and refreshed their memory about the key concepts they chose to cover. They checked to make sure that they did that. We are still working on scripts and filling in gaps with additional research. All building materials are to come in at the beginning of next week.

5/5/08

Most building material is already here and everyone is anxious to begin construction, painting, computer work, etc. However after reviewing what they have to share we are spending the day improving our knowledge and understanding and how we will share that.

5/7/08

One of twelve groups has an approved script. Many groups are finding it difficult to sculpt their information into a form that pertains to the CI and their LOI.

5/9/08

Half of the twelve groups have a workable script and we expect all but perhaps two to begin building their lesson today. We have twelve groups. We have encouraged groups to concentrate on their key concepts and simplify their information.