



## From the Executive Director

Colegio Nueva Granada in Bogotá, Colombia will be the host for this year's Annual Educators' Conference, taking place October 5-9, 2015. The organization on the part of the CNG Conference Planning Teams is impressive! I am most appreciative of the support provided by Eric Habegger and his staff on behalf of this year's Annual Conference. The program offers an impressive array of presenters and speakers who will explore methodologies and school experiences that have a lasting impact on students, and challenge us to take action!

Go to the Association page for a detailed description of the pre-conference and conference program, fees, and hotel information. You can also register online at [www.tri-association.org](http://www.tri-association.org).

The Pre-conference Program has several excellent options to support your work with Purposeful Use of Data, setting up instructional frameworks based on the Gradual Release of Responsibility, Curriculum Design based on 21st Century Fluencies, and Design Thinking. The featured consultants are leading experts in their field, and will deliver a valuable professional learning experience for your staff, so do take advantage of the opportunity! One of the presenters, Doug Fisher, is contributing two of his articles to this edition of the newsletter: "Getting to Quality: A Meeting of the Minds", and "Collaborative Conversations".

Wes Moore, the nationally acclaimed youth veteran and author will open the conference on Wednesday, with a motivational keynote; ***"The Transformational Power of Education"***, based on his compelling life story, depicted in the New York Times Bestseller: ***"The Other Wes Moore"***.

In his keynote: ***"Leading for Creativity"***, Doug Reeves, Ph.D., will make a strong case for action on what leaders must do, and what they must avoid in order to nurture creativity among teachers and students. The latest book by Dr. Reeves and co-author Brooks Reeves on this subject is *The Seven Virtues of Creativity*, to be published this year.

The culminating keynote, ***"Creativity: Measuring Our Impact"***, will give the audience the opportunity to interact with a panel of experts led by Dr. Doug Reeves, on this controversial topic.

## At a glance

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In the past two years the Tri-Association has co-sponsored several regional professional learning and staff development institutes based on requests from different regions. In order to expand on this formula, I will be sending you a proposal and application form to be filled out by schools that are interested in hosting one of these events.

In June forty-five participants in the Inclusive Education Program through the University of Kentucky will convene in Antigua, Guatemala for courses III & IV of this cohort. This program has been very successful and some of you have expressed an interest in a participating if a second cohort is offered. I will request funding from A/OS if enough schools show an interest in this. You can contact me if you would like to explore this possibility further so I have some idea of how many teachers this might draw. If a second cohort does not take place in our region, there is another option for interested schools. The University of Kentucky is very interested in working with our schools and in order to support these types of initiatives they have opened an office for International Partnerships led by Dr. Lee Ann Jung. I will send you a flyer with Lee Ann's contact information, the program description and costs involved.

The GIN movement continues to grow in our region through the support of schools willing to take on the responsibility of hosting a Global Issues Network Conference. The American School Foundation of Monterrey shares their experiences through the submission of two articles included in this edition. The transformational effect of GIN is clearly reflected in the words of Dr. Michael Adams, ASFM Superintendent, and Carlos Zambrano, GIN Student Leader! Congratulations to the ASFM GIN Team and to Linda and Ash Sills for the success of the Monterrey event!. GIN 2016 goes to Medellin, Colombia next year at The Columbus School!

I am pleased to highlight an outstanding accomplishment by Dennis Gallo, a Ninth Grade student at the American Nicaraguan School. A few months ago, Dennis decided to form a team to compete in NASA's International Space App Challenge. As the only H.S. student competing against university and graduate students, Dennis' team developed an app that supports the conservation of forests through a sophisticated tracking system, and was awarded 2nd place nationwide in this global app development competition. You can read the full account in the article included in this issue. Congratulations to Dennis and the ANS Community for this amazing recognition!

I am very pleased with the number of applications that came in from educators in the region interested in serving on the Staff Development Advisory Council. I will contact applicants this next month regarding the status of their application. The purpose of the SDAC is to help set the course for Association activities in the region, to serve as a spokesperson for Association initiatives, and to provide feedback on professional learning needs and interests in their respective region.

I encourage you to share an article about the important work taking place in your school! The deadlines for submission for next school year are found in the last page of this newsletter.

Thank you to the exhibitors, publishers and organizations that have supported the Tri-Association this year.

I appreciate the involvement on the part of your school and hope that this academic year ends on the most successful of notes for you and the members of your respective communities.

*Sincerely,*  
**Sonia Keller, Ed. D.**  
*Executive Director*

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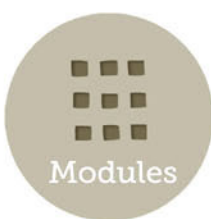




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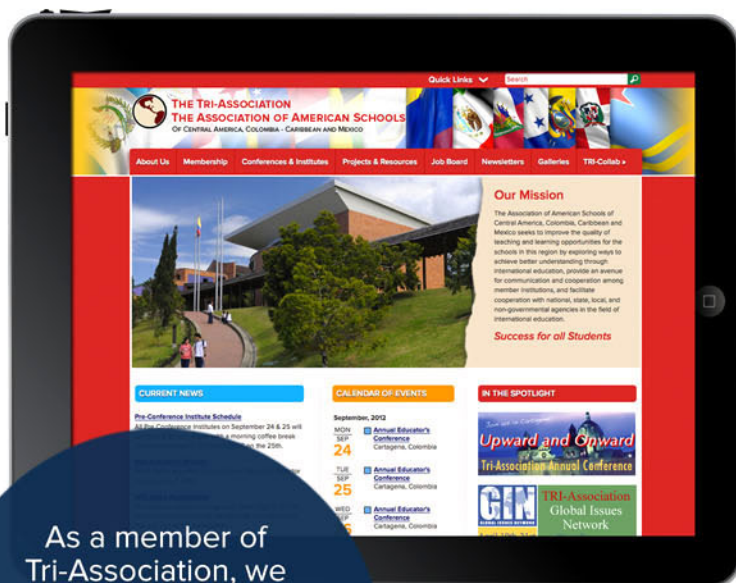
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# Featured Author: Douglas Fisher

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## Getting to Quality: A Meeting of the Minds

*High-quality instruction is reflected in a number of indicators, and learning to note those indicators will help you know when you're observing it.*

By Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher

**Nancy Frey** ([nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu)) is professor of teacher education at San Diego State University and a teacher leader at Health Sciences High and Middle College in San Diego, CA.

**Douglas Fisher** ([dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu)) is professor of teacher education at San Diego State University and a teacher leader at Health Sciences High and Middle College.

### Watch the Video!

You can practice identifying the components of high-quality instruction in this real lesson—exactly what you might see on a learning walk: [www.principals.org/pl0910frey](http://www.principals.org/pl0910frey).

**W**e've all been witness to conversations that are going nowhere. Both parties are trying to explain their positions, not to listen to each other. They are talking about two different things, and although we can see that they're not on the same page, they can't. Both leave feeling frustrated, defeated, and ill-disposed toward each other.

This is not just a phenomenon of family debates about politics and religion—it occurs in professional exchanges, especially between administrators and teachers. It's unlikely that the parties involved don't know their jobs. On the contrary, schools are filled with caring and committed educators. Yet sometimes those accomplished professionals have a hard time talking with one another, especially about high-quality instruction. A fundamental understanding has been overlooked: without a shared definition of high-quality instruction, teachers and administrators fail to truly communicate.

When educators share a vision of quality instruction, meaningful conversations about practice can occur. The indicators of high-quality classroom instruction can form the basis for walk-throughs, teacher observations, and evaluation procedures. Without a mutual understanding of what those indicators are, the teacher is immune to feedback from the administrator. Too often, well-meaning administrators talk about one thing while the teacher talks about another. In the end, there's little in the way of productive decisions, understanding, or progress.

Each month in this column, we'll explore an aspect of high-quality instruction in depth. But the first step is to identify the components of high-

quality instruction and its indicators and discuss ways to formulate them for your school.

### Seeing the Good

The components and indicators of high-quality instruction are based on data collected in thousands of classroom observations and represent current research on providing sound instruction through continuous improvement (Fisher & Frey, 2008).

**Establishing purpose.** This typically consists of the content purpose (what is being learned) and the language purpose (how it will be used). The emphasis is on the immediate lesson, and the lens is the student's. When a student can explain what he or she is learning and how he or she is applying it today, you know that the purpose has been firmly established.

### Thinking aloud and modeling.

Students deserve to see how an expert makes decisions about how concepts, ideas, and skills are applied. The think-aloud procedure shows learners disciplinary cognition at work. Modeling and demonstrating highlight the conditional knowledge of when, why, and how a concept is used.

**Complex tasks.** Group work is more than pushing desks together—it is the setting for fostering cognitive and metacognitive thinking in the company of peers. Tasks must have depth and complexity, or students will simply divide the work and assemble it later, so indicators of complexity must be defined and shared.

**High expectations.** The evidence on holding high expectations for students is strong, but the reality is that it is not evenly applied. A recent survey found that although 84% of teachers reported that they have the skills



to make it possible for all students to succeed, only 36% said that all of *their* students could succeed (MetLife, 2010). Some of the indicators of high expectations are that instruction meets grade-level standards, goal setting is evident, and students are expected to persevere.

**Guided instruction.** The strategic use of questions, prompts, and cues, as well as direct explanation and modeling when needed, form the nexus of the art and science of teaching. When guiding their students' learning, teachers check for understanding, scaffold instruction, and provide corrective feedback.

**Academic language.** Students must use the academic language of the discipline when speaking and in writing. Academic language is supported through the use of language frames, meaningful discussions, and opportunities to interact with one another and with the content.

**Background knowledge.** One of the strongest predictors of comprehension and academic achievement is the extent to which a learner possesses the requisite background knowledge. When students have gaps in background knowledge, it is necessary to build it. In other cases, the background knowledge may be there, but the learner is not skilled at applying it. Background knowledge should be assessed, built, and activated during lessons.

**Assessment that feeds back and feeds forward.** How do teachers give and receive feedback and how is feedback used to plan future instruction? In an era when formative assessment has become a common feature in many schools, how can this practice be leveraged to raise the quality of instruction?

## Getting to Quality Indicators

Understanding these indicators is a first step in having conversations about high-quality instruction. But the details of what constitutes good instruction must be determined and refined through internal discussions with and by practitioners and administrators in the contexts of their own schools. Schools are, in part, influenced by what is currently occurring in classrooms, so one way to begin to define high-quality instruction is to look for patterns as well as solitary examples during learning walks with groups of classroom teachers. Learning walks are short, arranged classroom visits, usually 15 to 20 minutes in length. Groups of 5 to 10 teachers visit the classrooms together in the company of a skilled facilitator, often an administrator or an instructional coach, to examine one specific aspect of classroom instruction (not every aspect) to formulate a definition of high-quality instruction.

For example, a series of learning walks that is focused on task complexity asks the participants to examine productive group work: Is the task at hand based on grade-level standards? Is it novel in its application of a set of concepts or skills, or is it a duplication of what the teacher has already done? Does the design of the task provide opportunities for students to interact with one another? After visiting classrooms, the group informally discusses what they have seen and begins to note indicators of the focus element.

The norms for learning walks should be established before entering any classroom. It is important to remember that the individual teacher is not being evaluated—nor is the principal, for that matter. The goal is to look for evidence that relates to school improvement efforts and their



*When students have gaps in background knowledge, it is necessary to build it. In other cases, the background knowledge may be there, but the learner is not skilled at applying it. Background knowledge should be assessed, built, and activated during lessons.*



Figure 1

### PLANNING A LEARNING WALK

#### Before the Learning Walk

- Identify the purpose of the learning walk and the quality indicator to be observed.
- Locate teachers who are willing to be observed during the learning walk.
- Share the purpose and the highlighted quality indicator with them and create a schedule.
- Identify the facilitator for the learning walk.
- Develop a team of 5 to 10 practitioners who will participate.
- Elicit potential quality indicator questions and compile them for the team.

#### The Day of the Learning Walk

- Meet with the team to review purposes and norms.
- Provide the team with three to five quality indicator questions for discussion.
- Lead the team through a series of classrooms, stopping after every third classroom to discuss observations.
- Note significant observations for later use by the team and others.

#### After the Learning Walk

- Synthesize the team's verbal observations and share them with the volunteer teachers.
- Coordinate a team of educators to refine the list of quality indicators that emerges over several learning walks.
- Meet with professional development committee to formulate next steps.

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impact on student learning. To keep the learning walks from shifting to evaluation, we encourage observers to make mental notes only because it can be intimidating for volunteer teachers to see observers furiously writing down notes.

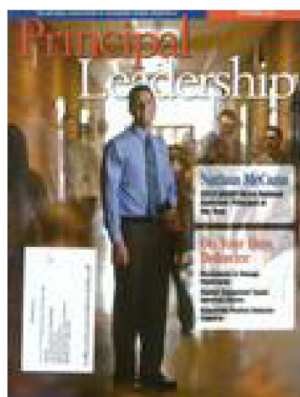
Learning walks are valuable to novice teachers and seasoned ones, so the composition of the group should be carefully considered. At times, we have found it useful to lead a group of teachers through classrooms in a different content area, such as leading a group of science educators through English classrooms, so that teachers shift their attention from content-specific issues to instruction. At other times, we've walked a building with new teachers and their support providers.

We've made a planning checklist of essential work to do before, during, and after the learning walk. (See figure 1.) You may also want to consider inviting administrators from other buildings to participate in learning walks. It can be insightful to hear what they are noticing as you develop quality indicators. Over time, you'll develop a valuable list that has been built through consensus. These quality indicators can shift the conversation so that there can truly be a meeting of the minds. **PL**

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## Collaborative Conversations

Speaking and listening standards ensure that students can communicate effectively and build on one another's ideas.

*Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey*

Increasing the amount of time that students spend using academic language has been a priority for decades. (See Fisher, Frey, & Rothenberg, 2008.) Simply said, students need practice with academic language if they are to become proficient in that language: they must learn to speak the language of science, history, mathematics, art, literature, and technical subjects if they are to become thinkers in those disciplines. From the time that there have been education standards, speaking and listening have been included. That is not new. What is new is the role that student-to-student interaction plays in the Common Core State Standards. Although a great deal of attention is paid to the reading and writing standards, we believe that instructional leaders should also attend to the increased demands of the speaking and listening domain, especially anchor standard one, which states that students should

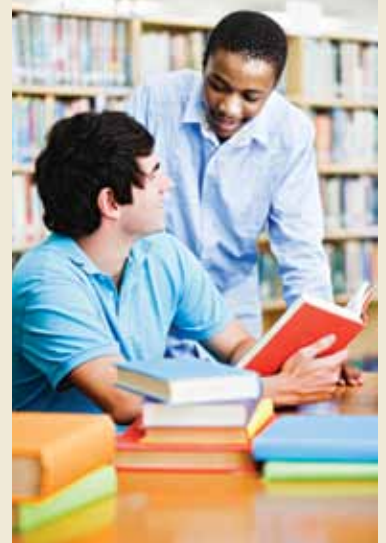
prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief

State School Officers, 2010, p. 22)

There is much to note in this standard, which applies to students across the grade levels. First, students are expected to come prepared to discuss, but instructional leaders who spend time in classrooms know that is rarely the case. More often, students are expected to work collaboratively with no preparation and no expectation that they are prepared for the interaction.

Second, students are expected to collaborate with diverse partners, which will require changes in instructional routines and procedures. In essence, the standard for speaking and listening sets the expectation that students should be able to engage effectively with a wide range of people, not just their friends and people they choose to interact with—which is, of course, the reality of most workplaces. Instructional leaders will need to be on the lookout for opportunities for students to interact with a wide range of their peers and provide teachers with assistance in forming groups and partnership activities.

Third, students are expected to maintain a conversation and continually build on others' ideas instead of simply sharing their own



From the time that there have been education standards, speaking and listening have been included. That is not new. What is new is the role that student-to-student interaction plays in the Common Core State Standards.

### Watch the Video

See examples of student conversations at [www.nassp.org/PL0413frey](http://www.nassp.org/PL0413frey).





ideas or understandings before the conversation moves to the next person. And finally, they need to be able to do so by expressing their ideas clearly and persuasively.

Anchor standard one in the speaking and listening domain of the Common Core represents increased expectations for students. The way this is operationalized in different grades is presented in figure 1, where we have bolded words and phrases that did not appear in the previous grade to highlight the instructional components of each grade. For example, students in ninth grade are expected to “summarize points of agreement and disagreement,” language that did not appear in the standards for eighth grade. This one change is significant as most students are already skilled at sum-

marizing points of agreement but are rarely asked to summarize the points of disagreement. Analyzing the differences by grade level, known as vertical alignment, is essential if teachers are going to develop teaching points that align with the standards.

### Instructional Implications

The most obvious instructional implication for meeting this standard relates to the use of time. Students need time every day in every class to practice their collaborative conversations. That’s not to say that teachers should simply turn over their classrooms for students to talk, but rather that there are expectations established for student-to-student interaction and that students will be held accountable for those interactions. An easy way to

do this is to use a conversation roundtable. Students can simply fold a piece of paper like the one in figure 2. As they read a selected piece of text, they take notes in the upper left quadrant. Then they take turns discussing the text and recording the content that their peers share in the other quadrants. At the end of the conversation, they can summarize their understanding of the text, identify the theme, or ask questions (depending on the task that was assigned by the teacher) in the area in the center.

It’s also important to provide students with instruction in how to engage in a collaborative conversation. They may need sentence starters at first to begin using argumentation in their discussions. For example, Karen Jessop gave her students the following frames when they wanted to offer a counter claim:

- I disagree with \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- The reason I believe \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.
- The facts that support my idea are \_\_\_\_\_.
- In my opinion, \_\_\_\_\_.
- One difference between my idea and yours is \_\_\_\_\_.

In addition, students need to be taught the rules of a conversation (Blyth, 2009), which include:

1. Avoid unnecessary details
2. Don’t ask another question before the first one has been answered
3. Do not interrupt another while he or she is speaking
4. Do not contradict, especially if it’s not important
5. Do not do all the talking
6. Don’t always be the hero of your story (but have a hero)
7. Choose a subject of mutual interest
8. Be a good listener

Figure 1 Speaking &amp; Listening Anchor Standard 1

<b>SL.CCR.1</b>	Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly <b>and persuasively.*</b>
<b>SL.11–12.1</b>	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
<b>Grade 11–12 Students:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.</li> <li>b. Work with peers <b>to promote civil, democratic</b> discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and <b>establish</b> individual roles as needed.</li> <li>c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that <b>probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue;</b> clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; <b>and promote divergent and creative perspectives.</b></li> <li>d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; <b>synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.</b></li> </ul>
<b>SL.9–10.1</b>	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
<b>Grade 9–10 Students:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Come to discussions prepared, having read <b>and</b> researched material under study: explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence <b>from texts and other research</b> on the topic or issue to <b>stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.</b></li> <li>b. <b>Work with peers to set rules</b> for collegial discussions and decision-making (<b>e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternative views</b>), <b>clear</b> goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.</li> <li>c. <b>Propel conversations</b> by posing <b>and responding</b> to questions that <b>relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.</b></li> <li>d. <b>Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement,</b> and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views <b>and understanding and make new connections</b> in light of the evidence <b>and reasoning</b> presented.</li> </ul>



Figure 1 CCR Speaking &amp; Listening Anchor Standard 1

<b>SL.8.1</b>	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 8 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
<b>Grade 8 Students:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.</li> <li>b. Follow rules for collegial discussions and <b>decision-making</b>, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.</li> <li>c. Pose questions that <b>connect the ideas of several speakers</b> and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant <b>evidence</b>, observations, and ideas.</li> <li>d. Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, <b>qualify or justify</b> their own views <b>in light of the evidence presented</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>SL.7.1</b>	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 7 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
<b>Grade 7 Students:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or <b>researched material under study</b>; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.</li> <li>b. Follow rules for collegial discussions, <b>track progress toward</b> specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.</li> <li>c. Pose <b>questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed</b>.</li> <li>d. <b>Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>SL.6.1</b>	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 6 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
<b>Grade 6 Students:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation <b>by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on</b> ideas under discussion.</li> <li>b. Follow rules for <b>collegial</b> discussions, <b>set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed</b>.</li> <li>c. Pose and respond to specific questions <b>with elaboration and detail</b> by making comments that contribute to the <b>topic, text, or issue under</b> discussion.</li> <li>d. Review the key ideas expressed and <b>demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing</b>.</li> </ul>

\* Words and phrases in bold are standards that do not appear in the previous grade.

**Source:** National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common core state standards for English language arts & literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects*. Retrieved from the Common Core State Standards Initiative website: [www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI\\_ELA%20Standards.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf)

9. The conversation should be in harmony with the surroundings
10. Do not exaggerate
11. Do not misquote
12. Cultivate tact.

These 12 aspects of conversation could become the focus of curricula across the content areas as schools prepare students to engage in the 21st century skill of communication. As we have noted, speaking and listening have been part of content standards for decades, but they have not received much instructional attention. Perhaps this time they will, especially if the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers or

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium develop assessments that gauge students' ability to interact with other human beings in the ways outlined in the standards. **PL**

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They are the authors, with Diane Lapp, of *Teaching Students to Read Like Detectives* (2012, Solution Tree).

Figure 2 **Conversation Roundtable**

Name: _____	Name: _____
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# Time to BeGIN embraces ASFM's new Vision of Open Minds, Caring Hearts and Global Leadership

By Michael W. Adams, Ed. D.  
ASFM Superintendent

*"We believe in open minds, caring hearts and global leadership as essentials to a healthy and successful life."*

This is our new vision at the American School Foundation of Monterrey and with this vision statement I recently opened the Global Issues Network conference in Monterrey and asked everyone present to close their eyes and imagine a world characterized by "open minds," then by "caring hearts" and finally by "global leadership." From that initial moment and throughout the three wonderful days of the conference, it was evident to me that the GIN conference and the Global Issues network as a whole are helping today's educators and students facilitate transformational social change that promises to improve the future for all of us.



As the Superintendent of ASFM I was fortunate to be able to clear my schedule for two full days, participate in 100% of the conference, and learn from 250+ students from 19 schools and 9 different countries. I was amazed by the incredible stories of the proactive, social initiatives taking place around our region that are giving our students multiple opportunities to grow and develop in the areas of environmental stewardship, global citizenship, student voice, and leadership.

The GIN conference serves as a wonderful platform for students to share with each other, learn from each other, challenge each other, question each other, and discuss ways in which they can work together to help battle critical problems facing the environment, our society, and millions of citizens from around the world.

By the end of the conference, I had millions of ideas and thoughts running through my mind, but the one overriding trend and message that kept coming forth centered around the importance of *patience*, *consistency*, and *persistency*. The projects and dreams that seemed to have the biggest impact on change and on society were not ones that happened over night. They were ones that took months, if not years, of persistency and drive. They were initiatives that were often started by one group and completed by another. They were dreams that often fell flat on their faces in their initial attempts, but later turned into successful and sustainable projects.

In the end, I walked away from the GIN conference as a better Superintendent, as a better educator, and as a better person. I am grateful to our ASFM GIN student leaders, to our ASFM GIN sponsors, Mr. Nathaniel Hayes and Mr. Patricio Saenz, to our visionary GIN leader, Mrs. Linda Sills, and to the leaders and dreamers from around the world who are helping make this world one that my children and their children will be able to enjoy and appreciate for many years to come.

Thank you GIN for giving us HOPE and DREAMS.

Now, I remind you all that it is **"Time to BeGIN!"**





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## Time to BeGIN: The Student Leader's Perspective

*By Carlos Zambrano*

It seems like this year's GIN Conference at ASFM was not just held at our school, but hosted by our community as a whole. With participation from local NGO's, law enforcement, teachers, administrators, keynotes and even parents; we tried to emphasize the local and sustainable aspects that represent GIN's genuine mission. Let's run through the highlights of the first GIN Conference ever to be held in Mexico.

Thursday was all about getting to know a little bit about each other, our projects, and what global issue each of us aimed to tackle. To do so, we took a little road trip! Right after our opening ceremony, we ventured into the Huasteca Canyon – an ecological reserve right next to our school known for its intricate rivers and colossal mountains. After situating ourselves on a ranch near the river, keynote Maggie Chumbley welcomed us by getting our minds ready for the experience that GIN is all about. We then split up into small groups – each with a local sustainability expert – where we gained superior insight on essential topics regarding the preservation of the important and sensitive region we had for a setting. Following our Huasteca visit, we got our first peek at the wonderful student led projects that were enacted by our participants during the first presentation session. To top it off, what better way to finish our first day than with a party hosted by our very own DJ Ruiz – who could cut tracks as fast as we could cut carbon emissions.

The focus of our second conference day was sustainability – how to make sure that the initiatives developed and global impact inspired would continue on beyond the conference? Thus, we started the day off by heading over to the elementary campus so we could expose our future leaders and even younger generations to world changing projects, encouraging them to take action as well. The day was capped off with excellent keynote presentations, panels, as well as other student project presentation blocks.





Given the rewarding networking experience we were all having, our third and final day came quickly. Nonetheless, it was a day full of new experiences and developed friendships. After listening to local speaker Horacio Marchand regarding the social business opportunities associated with student led GIN projects, it was time to start our carbon-offset initiative. With the help of Reforestación Extrema – a local NGO – we set off to plant 30 trees on the outskirts of our school. After a little manual labor for the good of our world it was time for the closing ceremony. I mentioned in my closing speech the following:

"To those who have had the benefit of living revelatory instances this weekend. I encourage you to persist and find creative alternatives to mend and even enhance your respective missions. I say so because, despite seeming counter-intuitive or even paradoxical in nature, it is often more important to know your greatest weaknesses, than your greatest attributes. To those who have succeeded in exposing your worthy missions to others, I say, keep pushing! Onward and upward! Use the momentum that your hard years of work have endowed you with and show the world that you are not simply a group of students, but an inexorable team of GINners that are fully capable of obtaining the change you seek – despite any adversities the world may throw back at you."

Despite our motto being "Time to BeGIN", we've realized that essentially all student groups' time clearly began a long time ago.



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## ANS Student's team places second in NASA sponsored app development competition

Team Scan Forest places second nationwide in the International Space App Challenge, a global app development competition sponsored by NASA. The team's UX Design & Thought Leader and ANS 9th Grade student Dennis Gallo, talks about the development of the application.

As a tool for helping to solve the problem of deforestation in Latin America, Team Scan Forest has developed an application of the same name in response to NASA's Forest Monitor Mapping Challenge. Scan Forest is an application which aims to assist in the conservation of forests globally through a system of user-generated geo-tagged alerts exchanged between users and state entities.

The team, composed of students from Nicaragua's UCA University and ANS' ninth grader, Dennis Gallo, drew inspiration from Google's Waze app, applying the idea behind this application to saving forests and fighting deforestation. "Deforestation is a major problem in Latin America, we have so many forests in Nicaragua, Bosawas for example, thus we have chosen this issue and created Scan Forest," explains Gallo.



Gallo, who was the only high school student competing in the challenge nationwide, collaborated with his teammates to code and develop Scan Forest. The application allows the user to create alerts, based on their location, to be placed in a map which local authorities would have access to. The notification would include information on the type of threat (fire, logging, etc) and the severity of the case. This would then share the data to local entities for further action. The app would also serve as a database for information on illegal logging and forest fires, "information which is limited in Nicaragua", Gallo added.

The creators of the app have followed an open source format as it "allows anyone to contribute to the project. Any one can use it as it has an MIT license" explained Gallo.

According to the challenge's website, The International Space Apps Challenge is an international mass collaboration focused on space exploration that takes place over 48-hours in cities around the world. The event embraces collaborative problem solving with a goal of producing relevant open-source solutions to address global needs applicable to both life on Earth and life in space. This year the competition is focusing in developing solutions in four areas: Earth, Outer Space, Humans and Robotics. The event is led by NASA who is also collaborating with a number of government entities and over 100 local organizing teams across the globe.

Scan Forest can be accessed via the following link: <http://scanforest.ga/>

Congratulations to Dennis Gallo and his team on this accomplishment.



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## HOW IS YOUR SCHOOL IMPLEMENTING A BLENDED LEARNING PROGRAM?

It has been interesting to talk with schools about the ways in which blended learning is being implemented. This month we are sharing the ways blended education is being implemented globally. This will give you an opportunity to reflect on your blended learning program. First, a quick definition: Blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns in part through online delivery of instruction and content, with some element of student control over time, place, path and place in a supervised brick-and-mortar location—a school.

The most common models are: Rotation, Flex, Self Blended and Enhanced Virtual.

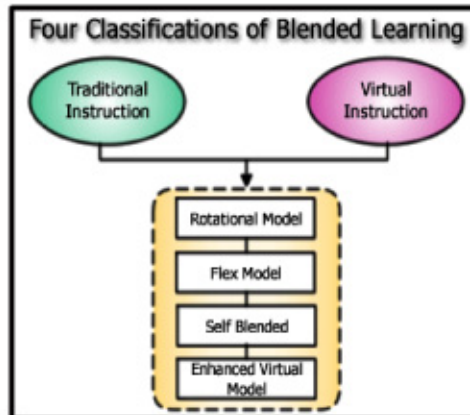
**In a Rotation model,** (the most common) students rotate on a fixed schedule, spending some time immersed in traditional face-to-face learning and some time learning online. This model includes four sub-models:

*The **Station Rotation** model involves students rotating in a contained classroom*

*The **Lab Rotation** model involves students learning in a classroom and going to a learning lab for online learning.*

*The **Flipped Classroom** model involves rotation between a school for face-to-face teacher-guided work, and the student's home or an off-site location for online learning.*

*The **Individual Rotation** model gives each student an individualized schedule.*



**The Flex model** utilizes online learning curriculum as the foundation of student learning. The expert content teacher is available online. Students do their school work on site, with a facilitator-learning coach, at the facility interacting with the student on an individual basis. This model is becoming very popular. Many 21<sup>st</sup> century minded entrepreneurial educators are starting up flex academies (or blended schools), but **more on this and the “how to” start your own flex academy in the July newsletter.** The San Francisco Flex Academy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lwsWLHd2UE>

**The Self Blended model** combines online learning and brick-and-mortar education. In this model, students take one or more courses online (off site) with an online teacher and also maintain brick-and-mortar education (on site.)

**The Enriched Virtual model** students divide their learning between brick-and-mortar and online methods. Within each course, students split their time between both learning methods.

### WHICH MODEL IS YOUR SCHOOL USING?

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### Questions & Comments

Donna J. Skinner, Ed.D.

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**How can K12 help you to unlock the potential of blended learning?**

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Global Issues Conference / GIN: American School Foundation of Monterrey	March 19-20, 2015	Monterrey, Mexico.
Inclusive Education Course III & IV	June 23- July 3, 2015	Antigua, Guatemala.
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# Information Page

► **The Association of American Schools of Central America, Colombian-Caribbean and Mexico**

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## ► From the Executive Director

Please send me articles featuring the important work and events taking place in your school!

## Submission Deadlines

- Fall Newsletter:  
September 1, 2015
- Winter Newsletter:  
November 1, 2015

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