

FIELDWORK

NOTES FROM EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING CLASSROOMS

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THE *DESIGN PRINCIPLES*: FROM VISION TO ACTION

BY STEVEN LEVY

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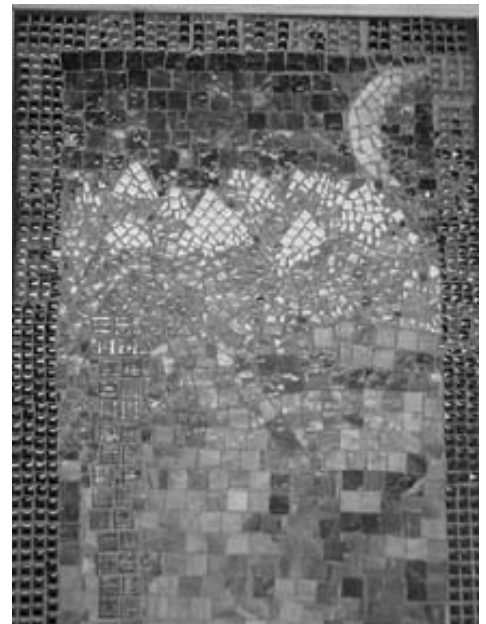
Having shared visions is so profoundly different from writing a vision statement that it's really night and day. It takes a long time, and it's a process that involves a lot of reflection and a great deal of listening and mutual understanding. . . . The problem is that it is usually [an event], not a process.

—Peter Senge

LIVING BY PRINCIPLES

A pastor once told me, "When I really want to learn something about a man's spiritual life, I look in his day-planner and his checkbook." Time and money is where the rubber of our principles meets the road of our lives, where we record the hard data that measures our values. Think of your planner and checkbook as tools for a personal 'implementation check.' How we allocate our time and spend our money reflects our principles and values. I am not sure my planner and checkbook show what I believe is most important in my life. The pages of my planner are mostly filled with meetings, notes and lists of stuff to do. My

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The artwork in this issue is the culmination of a service-oriented, art expedition in which seventh graders at Intermediate School 30 in Brooklyn, New York studied the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles and created mosaics to install in the front entrance of the school (see story on page 8). This mosaic, representing Solitude and Reflection, was designed and created by Kristin Scarpa, Caitlin Burke, and Katie Moran.

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From Vision to Action, continued from page 1

checkbook has records of bills paid and cash withdrawn from ATMs.

It is not that I do not have principles. It is just that I do not always consciously plan my life or spend my resources according to them. It is more like I recognize them when I bump into one, like seeing an old friend at Stop and Shop. I have never really named my guiding principles. There are virtues to which I aspire: courage, integrity, respect, etc. But at a certain point, 'a lot' becomes 'none,' and contradictory virtues often compete for my attention (humility and pride, action and reflection, productivity at work and loyalty at home). I need structures and habits that bring me back to my foundations, or else the currents of daily life will carry me from one item on the list to another.

FROM PERSONAL TO SCHOOL LIFE

Schools have the same challenge: to shape programs and allocate resources in accord with their fundamental values, and to remember the purpose of their endeavor amidst the many demands of daily school life. Expeditionary Learning schools have the advantage of a clear set of guiding principles. In the beginning were the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles. They are profound, but they do not give a lot of direction about what to do in school. The Expeditionary Learning

What does service and compassion look like in the classroom, in the halls, cafeteria, playground, or at home in the family?

Core Practices followed, creating a more specific guide for organizational structures and teaching practices. They are comprehensive, but they lack specifics about what to do in the classroom. Our national conference in March will focus on the actual instructional practices that teachers use to "deliver the goods." As our work gets more specific about pedagogy, more focused on the craft of teaching, it becomes all the more important to revisit our design principles. They remind us that literature circles, Socratic seminars, management techniques, etc. are not ends in themselves, but means to develop responsibility for learning, to inspire the having of wonderful ideas, to create communities of empathy and caring.

COMMUNICATING VALUES

The debate persists about whether or not we should teach values in our schools. I think both sides miss the point. We *do* teach values, *all* the time, whether we intend to or not. Every curriculum choice, every instructional practice, every assessment reveals what we consider important. We demonstrate what we value by what we pay attention to, what we ignore, what we celebrate, what we reflect on, and what we give time to. But just as in our personal lives, multiplied by a factor in the hundreds, there is a lot of stuff to do in schools. The "tyranny of the urgent" forever crouches at the door. Remembering our principles in the midst of constant activity and immediate demands is challenging. Arming them with the power to actually guide, or even change us, takes constant vigilance and reflection.

DRAWING IN FAMILIES

Schools need to communicate the meaning of the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles to parents as well as students. Creating sculptures, skits, songs, or photo essays of the design principles at parent meetings provides opportunities to reflect and communicate their meaning. Community explorations give teachers, students, and parents a chance to find examples of the principles in their neighborhood.

~ At ISAAC School in New London, Connecticut, parents went on a community exploration looking for examples of the design principles in downtown New London.

~ Annapolis Elementary School, in Annapolis, Maryland, assigned monthly homework to students and their families to help them explore the meaning of the principles.

tion. Even if there were evidence of the design principles in schedules and budgets, it remains a perilous journey from the beautiful glass frame on the wall to the messy floor of human behavior.

Here are a few examples of how some of our schools have protected the design principles from the daily pressures of school life, and used them to forge community identity and promote individual character.

VISIBILITY

Although not *sufficient*, it is *necessary* for the design principles to be visible. Many schools display posters in halls and classrooms. Bulletin boards, newsletters, stationery, and banners, all provide opportunities to make the design principles visible. Students at the Harbor School in Dorchester, Massachusetts painted a bright, colorful mural in the entrance hall that reflected all the design principles. A professional painter created paintings of each design principle to hang in the cafeteria of Oak Grove Elementary School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Making the design principles visible throughout the school delivers a message that they are valued by the community.

MAKING MEANING

The language of the design principles is not always child-friendly. Many schools have translated them into language that has meaning for students, local relevance to their community. At Buncombe Community School East in Swannanoa, North Carolina, teachers have designed schoolwide expeditions where students learned design principles through readings, video, and initiatives. Crews created bulletin boards representing each principle. Students at ISAAC School in New London, Connecticut produced a beautiful poster of the design principles, translated into their own words and illustrated with their own drawings. Harbor School students produced animated videos of each of the principles. Students at Arbor Vitae-Woodruff Middle School, in Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin, found the design principles in Calvin

and Hobbes, Peanuts, or Far Side cartoons. On page three of this issue, Deb Fordice writes about how her students, at Audubon School in Dubuque, Iowa, made sense of the principles through song lyrics.

EXAMPLES

We know the powerful effect of using models to help students understand what quality work looks like. In the same way, students need to see examples of the design principles in action. What exactly is the difference between a regular idea and a wonderful idea? What does it mean to take responsibility for learning? What does service and compassion look like in the classroom, in the halls, cafeteria, playground, or at home in the family? At Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning in Denver, Colorado, seniors write “action statements” for each of the design principles. They read them at an all-school assembly, communicating how to be a productive member of the RMSEL community. Students step forward if they agree to accept the challenge. They are given rope to make bracelets for each other, and wear them as reminders.

HEROES

The design principles gain power when the community recognizes members who em-

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DESIGN PRINCIPLES REVISITED

I found this simple translation of our design principles this fall in Jason Rosenbaum’s sixth-grade classroom at New Horizons Middle School in Brooklyn, New York. When asked who had done the translation, Mr. Rosenbaum said it had been there when he got to the school, and he thought it had been “handed down” from Expeditionary Learning. “You can see (the design principles) growing,” he says, “getting into the student’s vocabulary.” Later, Mary Lou Aranyos, New Horizons principal, said she and teachers from her school had picked it up from an Expeditionary Learning school they had visited several years before in Cincinnati, Ohio.

1. I am here to discover what I can do.
2. I have wonderful ideas.
3. I’m responsible for my learning and I help others learn.
4. I care for others. Others care for me.
5. Success is sweet, but mistakes are good food.
6. We work together as friends. I compete against myself.
7. Our differences make us stronger.
8. Nature is our teacher.
9. I need time to be with myself.
10. We do excellent things for others.

—Greg Farrell
President, Expeditionary Learning

DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN CONCERT

BY DEB FORDICE

Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.

– Victor Hugo (1802-1885)

I had the privilege to teach music at Audubon School, an Expeditionary Learning elementary school in Dubuque, Iowa. At times, however, I struggled with my role. How did I fit into the Expeditionary Learning picture? I realized that I needed to be an expert in the area of music for expeditions. Yet I had found it much easier in my work as a general education teacher to integrate Expeditionary Learning into my classroom. Then I discovered that because of the nature of *my* position, I had the opportunity to practice Expeditionary Learning by providing common experiences among every child in the school. I was lucky enough to have time once or twice each week with every single student in grades K-6, and I wanted to capitalize on that gift.

As I posted my Expeditionary Learning Design Principle posters on the wall of my music classroom at the beginning of that year, it dawned on me that the children might understand each design principle better by analyzing lyrics of songs. The children could teach their parents and community members about the design principles through their performance of the songs, especially if we had students introduce each song through original explanations of how the song related to the given design principle. We could even educate our audience on the use of rubrics, to guide the development of quality work, by displaying the concert rubric for me to refer to during the students' performances. (To view or download the rubric, go to

www.elob.org/news/index/html).

Finding good songs was the first step. The songs needed to have tunes appropriate for the young, developing voice, and lyrics that would help them make connections to the design principles. As I taught the songs, we discussed the meaning of each design principle. We dissected the lyrics using a shared text format (a description of this tool is available on-line at www.elob.org/news/index/html) and the children eagerly pointed out phrases that supported individual design principles.

While my classes rehearsed the songs, my colleague Jeanne Anderson and I began to develop a slide show. The photographs of students, contributed by teachers throughout the school, clearly illustrated each design principle. At the concert, some of the songs were sung by single grade levels, some by multiple grade levels, and some by the entire student body of 375 students. As students introduced each song with original speeches, another student held up a large poster of the design principle in question. Then we would start the song with its accompanying slide show.

There were many opportunities throughout the process of preparing for the concert to point out design principles in action to the students. For example, collaboration and competition clearly came through as students sang to be placed in voluntary small ensemble or solo spots in the concert. A trio of tough-exteriored, sixth-grade boys wanted to sing the first verse of "Lean On Me," a song whose lyrics illustrated service and compassion. It was touching to watch these rough-and-tumble boys stand side by side and so thoughtfully sing that first verse: "Sometimes in our lives we all have pain, we all have sorrow; but if we are wise we know that there's always to-

The song, *Do You Ever*, reflects the design principle Solitude and Reflection. Solitude and reflection means open up your mind and think for yourself. In the song it asks, "Do you ever take time to be free?" Let your children think their own creations.

— Fifth-grade student at Audubon School


tomorrow.” As they sang, one of the boys was perfectly in tune while the other two floundered, but they had definitely decided that the three of them wanted to do this together or not at all. I explained that one of them had sung all the pitches accurately, and in order to sing this verse as a trio the other two would have to match his every pitch. They put the “in-tune” boy in the middle, listened more intently this time, and sang the verse perfectly in tune as a group. They were so proud that we marched right into the principal’s office to surprise her with that first verse. Since the boys typically came to her office to discuss playground or classroom conflicts, she was especially moved to see and hear their angelic performance.

Another very special part of the process, and the most poignant moment in the concert, was a special surprise that every student in the school planned for one boy in kindergarten. This particular child was deaf. During music classes, he would imitate the other students as they bobbed their heads to the beat of the music. He would hug my guitar to feel the vibrations. When I put a CD on, he would come to the stereo speakers to feel the vibrations, and then feel the pencil sharpener, counter, and other nearby items to see if they, too, had that “fuzzy” feeling. He loved to play instruments, especially the drums.

As we approached the final week before the concert, his classmates began imitating the sign language provided by his hearing interpreter to the lyrics of the song “I’d Like to Roller Skate on the Moon,” for the having of wonderful ideas. The next day, I told one of the sixth-grade classes about this boy and how his classmates liked to do the sign language with him. The class got a wonderful idea to have the whole school learn the sign language and surprise him at the concert. During the final rehearsals, I offered each class the chance to join in the surprise and they were all so excited to be a part of it. Each class learned the sign language in one period.

The concert was packed with every seat full and rows three-deep of spectators standing along the gym walls. We had reserved front row

seats for the family of the boy who would soon be surprised. As a kindergarten student, he stood in the front row of the singers. We started silently, mouthing and signing the words. He noticed out of the corners of his eyes that there was a lot of movement around him. Then he came forward a few steps and turned around to see the whole school signing and singing the song! For a while he conducted the entire student body, and then he came over and hugged my guitar. Students and parents were brought to tears. It was one of those special moments as a teacher that I will never forget.

When given a chance, students will go places that teachers would never anticipate. My purposes for the design principle concert were to help the students make connections between their song lyrics and the meaning of the design principles, to introduce the design principles and rubric assessment to the parents, and to promote schoolwide unity. The added element of service initiated by the sixth-grade class helped bring the design principles to life in a far better way than I could have planned. As one sixth grader wrote in his post-concert reflection, “That schoolwide surprise was one of the best things that I have ever been involved in. Expeditionary Learning causes that to happen naturally.” 

Deb Fordice is a Midwest school designer with Expeditionary Learning. Before joining the staff, she taught for 18 years in either a general education classroom at the elementary level or in vocal music grades K-12.

He noticed out of the corners of his eyes that there was a lot of movement around him. Then he came forward a few steps and turned around to see the whole school signing and singing the song!

AUDUBON SCHOOL’S EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING DESIGN PRINCIPLES CONCERT PROGRAM (EXCERPTS)

Diversity and Inclusivity

—*The Hammer Song*

The Responsibility for Learning

—*One Tin Soldier*

Solitude and Reflection

—*Do You Ever?*

Service and Compassion

—*Lean on Me*

Intimacy and Caring

—*The More We Get Together*

The Having of Wonderful Ideas

—*I’d Like to Roller-Skate on the Moon*

The Natural World

—*The Happy Wanderer*

The Primacy of Self-Discovery

—*Child of the Universe*

A longer song list is available on-line at www.elob.org/news/index/html.

THE VALUABLE LESSONS OF FAILURE

BY CLAUDIA RAGAR

For several weeks, Lori Laliberte's third-fourth grade crew at Odyssey School in Denver had been diligently preparing for an overnight adventure trip in the Rocky Mountains.

With the guidance of Bill Lucas, Odyssey's former adventure coordinator, a crew of 22 students and seven adults would snowshoe two miles up a well-marked trail outside Vail, Colorado. Following a ridgeline, this gradually sloping trail takes you to Shrine Mountain Inn, a group of three huts located in the Tenth Mountain Division Trail system. These "huts" (aka comfortable cabins) are located on Vail Pass at 11,209 feet altitude. Nestled amongst the pines, the views are awe-inspiring.

The morning of February 25, 2002 arrived with some questionable weather conditions on the pass. Day one called for sunny skies, but a high of only 13 F with 10-15 mph winds. Day two sounded less promising, with a high of 22 F, cloudy skies and a 60 percent chance of snow. Winds on the ridge could reach 30 mph. We decided to proceed to the trailhead and reassess the conditions. If snow stranded the crew at the huts, the caretaker could easily retrieve everyone with his snowcat. The arctic wind posed a greater concern. Foremost in everyone's mind was the safety of the children.

The drive west was inspiring! A fresh snowfall had blanketed the mountains, creating a vivid contrast to the cloudless, brilliant, blue sky. From our warm busses, the blazing sun painted a deceivingly, inviting scene. We observed with some trepidation blowing snows high on the mountain ridges.

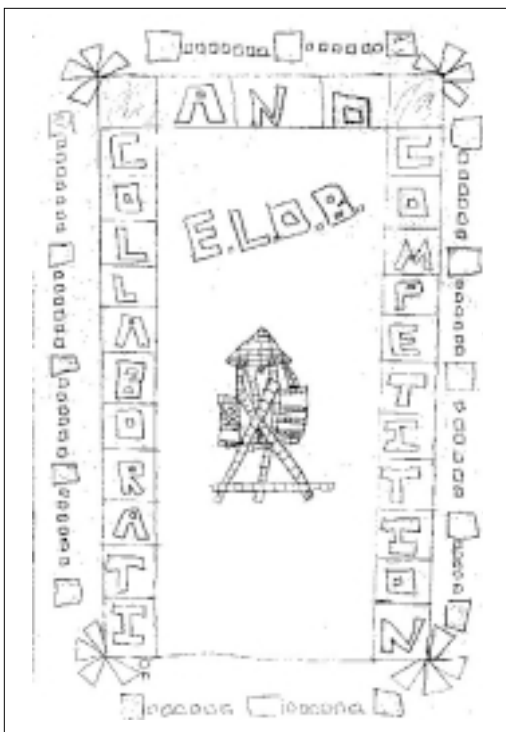
Arriving at the trailhead, we opted for lunch in the busses. While students donned their snowshoes, adults circled round to discuss the conditions. At base, the air was cold with minimal wind and the sun promised its relative warmth for the remainder of the day. The trail was snow-packed. The decision to go was made with plans to reassess the situation once we reached the inevitable ridge winds.

The crew fell naturally into three ability groups (the "hares", the "elephants" and the "turtles"). Adults stationed themselves evenly amongst the groups with walkie-talkies in hand. Singing, chattering, and laughter followed the crew up the slope.

The challenges of the day surfaced quickly. Cold wind snaked under hats and scarves. The exaggerated steps of snow-shoeing on an incline sapped energy. Even the "hares" stopped often to rest and drink water. Some of the "turtles" complained of cold feet and stopped often to rest—a huge concern to the adults.

Under favorable weather conditions, the spreading of the crew along a well-marked trail would have posed no problem. But to ask the "hares" to stop and wait meant standing in the unprotected cold and wind. The "turtles" were doing their best to keep trekking, but at a very slow pace. Upon sighting a hut on the

Samantha Feliciano, a seventh grader at I.S. 30 in Brooklyn, New York, sketched this design for her group's mosaic on the design principle Collaboration and Competition.



summit, the “hares” gave a cheer. They had reached the halfway point! It was 2:30 pm.

By now, the adults were well aware of the likely outcome of the trip. With students struggling far behind and complaining of the cold, how could we proceed? We briefly considered hiring the snowcat to transport the crew (\$250 each way). But what would that teach our children? After all, the Expeditionary Learning design principle, Service and Compassion, states: “We are crew, not passengers.” And what costly passengers at that!

When we decided to turn back, emotions ran high. From crushing disappointment to secret relief, a great sadness fell over the crew. We had failed to reach our goal. For some, disappointment revealed itself as anger that hastened them down the mountain like an avalanche. “Why couldn’t the others keep up? Because of them, we won’t reach the top.” Others broke into tears and sobbed uncontrollably.

When the first angry students reached the mountain base, Lori challenged them with a new role: to act as ambassadors of positive thinking by rallying the spirits of each crew member coming down the trail. “Talk about what the day has given us. Sunshine, challenge, breathtaking views, camaraderie and a “first draft” at making it to the top!”


One by one, as students and adults reached the base, the growing welcoming committee rallied their spirits with cheerful greetings and warm hugs. Tired and hungry, we packed up the gear and climbed onto the busses. It was 3:30 pm. We were too tired to stop for ice-skating (Plan B). Nobody complained.

In circle the next morning, the real lessons of our failure came to light as the crew, Bill and many of the adult chaperones reflected on our experience. What had we learned? What did we do well? What will we do differently next time? Did we make good decisions? Will there be a next time?

We learned that failure is a part of life. That if everything was easy to achieve, what would we strive for? That failure is disap-

pointing and sad. We learned that as a crew, we experience failure and success as a group.

Everyone did his or her best under the conditions we were faced with. Many students shared heart-warming stories of how they had supported and encouraged each other. The crew acknowledged the good planning and preparation that went into the trip. Everyone was dressed appropriately. We were glad we made the attempt.

The ultimate lesson, however, lay in the crew’s realization that they had experienced success. They pulled together as a crew and safely made it off the mountain. They showed compassion and support for one another in the face of failure. They learned the importance of respecting the natural world. 

Addendum: With the generosity of the Tenth Mountain Division Hut Association, Lori’s third and fourth graders did hike to the top of Vail Pass one glorious, spring day in June. It felt great!

Claudia Ragar is a founder, parent, and former board member of the Odyssey School in Denver, Colorado. Three of her four children attended Odyssey until their move to Grand Junction, Colorado this year.



Maher Mourad, Nathaniel Hernandez, and Brendan Rafferty, seventh graders at I.S. 30 in Brooklyn, New York, designed and created their mosaic based on the design principle Success and Failure.

ADVENTURE LINKED TO ACADEMICS

The adventure education program at Odyssey School in Denver, Colorado supports learning expeditions in a variety of ways throughout each school year. Every fall and spring, for example, crews take part in a camping trip from one to four nights, depending on the grade level. These trips involve a blend of adventure activities, expedition work, and crew building. For example:

~ The fifth and sixth grade classes, working on an immigration expedition, recently went to San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. The trip included adventure elements such as hiking, rock climbing, and camp craft, a community service project, and an in-depth investigation of the history of immigration in the region, and its resulting culture.

—Jen Dingman

Odyssey adventure coordinator

PIECING TOGETHER

THE *D*ESIGN *P*RINCIPLES:

EXPLORING THE *M*AKING OF *M*OSAICS

BY ANNE CAVALLARO

Housed in half of an apartment building on a residential street in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, Intermediate School 30's landscape is a unique model of an urban Expeditionary Learning school. We are small in numbers and in space—and while lack of space is an ever-present challenge—it also encourages a tight-knit community.

As I started my second year teaching art one day last September, I stood in our small lobby, cluttered with delivery boxes, tables, chairs, and chess sets and noticed that our school lacked the aesthetic of a traditional academic institution. I also observed a lack of visual information on the culture of our school at the school entrance. I wondered if there might be a way for our student's voices to be heard from the moment one stepped through our front doors. It seemed important not only for the needs of I.S. 30's visitors and guests, but for our students' need to express who we are as a

community in a real and permanent way. I found myself thinking about how the art room might offer a place for an expedition that allowed students to develop their artistic skills and also provide meaningful ser-

vice to the school community.

Upon meeting Class 703, 18 seventh graders, I realized it might be an opportunity to take advantage of the intimacy of a small group setting to explore this idea for an expedition combining service and art. I asked the students how they felt about the physical structure of their school. We discussed space and the different ways it can affect our moods. Many of them agreed that our school lobby needed a makeover. Using drawing as a powerful tool for observation, the students spent the next two weeks sketching the lobby from different perspectives. We returned to the classroom to discuss the ideas our observations had generated. Many ambitious (and expensive) ideas surfaced. Recognizing that redesigning the entire lobby would be too costly for our budget, the students suggested that the front entrance to the school needed a permanent and visible art piece that reflected the culture of the school. The Expeditionary Learning Design Principles seemed a perfect starting point as a theme. Most of us could recite all of the design principles, however we had questions about the degree to which they actually impacted our thinking in our daily lives. It seemed to all of us that exploring them further through a project like this would help us to better understand their place in our school's culture.

Having made the decision to create large-scale art works for the school lobby, I suggested to the students that we work in the medium of mosaic tiles. The pieces would be flat and

Kristen Scarpa and Katie Moran, seventh graders at I.S. 30 in Brooklyn, New York, depicted Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound in their mosaic.



could be hung on a wall, thereby saving space. In addition, I was curious about how the process of “fitting the pieces together” might become a physical metaphor for our eventual understanding of the design principles. We decided we would create 12 separate mosaics, representing each design principle, Expeditionary Learning, and our school. After much deliberation through measuring and mapping out the space, we decided that the mosaics would be approximately 22” by 36” each.

I divided the class into six groups. Each group picked a design principle out of a hat. Next, students sketched and brainstormed ideas for their designs. We took time to discuss and translate each design principle, and to decide how each might be best represented visually. Our first shipment of tiles arrived and the students began to work with the small, colorful tiles, when the groups confronted their first problem—how to get a square to form a curve. Designs with beautiful and intricate organic shapes no longer seemed functionally possible. It was a clear example of how the artistic process demands that the medium inform the design.

Once each group came up with a design, students coated pre-cut masonite boards with a glue and water mixture to prime the surface for the tiles. The designs were drawn in pencil and then marker to lay out where the tiles would be placed. Students worked within their small groups to designate jobs and discuss design problems. After the tiles were glued down and in place, the mosaics would be grouted. Students kept journals to reflect on their process, and as groups progressed and became more absorbed in nuances of their own designs, the class would form a circle to discuss how the design principles were guiding our collective project.

Throughout the mosaic-making process students encountered many successes and failures. One group discovered

when they grouted that they had placed their tiles too far apart and what had originally been a terrific design had gotten lost. It forced the group to come together to find a way to work with the problem and find another way to allow their design to emerge. The class felt empowered by taking responsibility for their own learning when navigating through tasks such as how to assign jobs within the group, how to resolve creative differences, as well as how to problem-solve while working with a new set of unusual materials.

Students also became experts in showing and critiquing each other’s work. Several times a week the students would give each other feedback. Often the class’ opinion on what did or did not work in a particular mosaic would differ from mine. Our differences often led to impassioned debates and pleas in favor of a certain aesthetic. The students in the class knew that their work would be a permanent installation in the school: their decisions would affect a larger and ever-growing audience, and that leant an air of gravity to them.

In addition to becoming expert craftsmen through their mosaic

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DESIGN PRINCIPLE RAP

Solitude and Reflection

There’s no exception

to be sitting down reading a book

or just to take a walk to look

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound

We be putting all these cracked tiles down

We are placing them without a frown

Kristen Scarpa and Caitlin Burke, seventh graders at I.S. 30 in Brooklyn, New York, wrote this design principle rap as part of their art expedition depicting the design principles in mosaic.

Seventh grader James Silva created this design principle rap as part of an expedition portraying the design principles in mosaic at I.S. 30 in Brooklyn, New York.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE RAP

The mosaics are our fate

Don’t hate

Appreciate

The Wonderful Ideas, it’s cool

Listen to me, don’t be a fool

The mosaics rule



Seventh grader Maher Mourad sketched this perspective of the front entrance of I.S. 30 in Brooklyn, New York. This initial exercise led Anne Cavallaro’s students to create 12 mosaics, 10 of which illustrated the design principles, to improve the entrance to the school.

Why Fly That Way— Linking Community and Academic Achievement

BY KATHY GREELEY

REVIEWED BY SCOTT HARTL

Community as described by this book is inseparable from intellectual work. It is a community commitment to quality and care.

When the early years of Expeditionary Learning we often looked to Kathy Greeley, author of *Why Fly That Way?* (Teachers College Press, 2001) for a high quality picture of what Expeditionary Learning might look like in the classroom. Greeley is an inspirational teacher. She is practical, reflective, passionate, and in it for the long haul. Greeley also holds exceptionally high standards for both herself and her students. Her book, *Why Fly That Way?* is also both inspirational and full of useful lessons for us as Expeditionary Learning educators.

Why Fly That Way? is the story of one year in Greeley's seventh-eighth grade classroom in a forward thinking urban middle school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The story of the year in classroom 311 unfolds like a good novel, as a group of guarded, challenging under-achievers struggle through learning a commitment to quality for both themselves and each other. The story is full of drama, tension, colorful characters, and moments of both pain and uplifting success. But this is no Hollywood tale. Greeley's writing rings with classroom reality— one step forward, two steps back. Rarely is the right next move unequivocally clear. It is Greeley's searching honesty, as well as her extraordinary talent that makes this story so full and useful for us.

The book's sub-title, *Linking Community and Academic Achievement*, frames Greeley's argument that each is a prerequisite of the other. She asserts that it is the character of the classroom community

that will, for many students, determine their willingness and ability to engage for the long haul, and to effectively pursue intellectual growth. The community that

Greeley and her students pursue over the course of the year is not of the simple "feel-good" variety. Community as described by this book is inseparable from intellectual work. It is a community commitment to quality and care.

The value of this book is Greeley's insightful description of what is required to attain this type of able community. Through *Why Fly That Way?* we see the details of planning engaging and rigorous projects. We see how to make historical content come alive with connections to the students' experience. We see how theatre can be used as a highly effective tool for learning. We see how a theme can be woven throughout a year to ignite deeper connections to material. We see a master teacher struggle with the details of how best to use the precious resource of instructional time to best serve competing needs. Through it all we see a teacher with an extraordinary commitment to her students and to the craft of teaching.

The country's current fervor over standards often fails to honor and support the work of defining and attaining high standards teacher by teacher, classroom by classroom. The story Kathy Greeley tells us is clear evidence that there is no other way. In the closing chapters of *Why Fly That Way?*, the sense of constructive community and bountiful achievement overflow from room 311. As a reader, I found myself cheering for it. You will too. ✂

Scott Hartl, former principal and founder of Harbor School in Dorchester, Massachusetts, currently consults with Expeditionary Learning. Hartl was the first school designer for Expeditionary Learning.

To view an excerpt of *Why Fly That Way*, check on-line at www.elob.org/news/index/html.

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body them and when students see examples of heroes from outside the school. Morning meeting, assemblies, faculty meetings, and other community gatherings offer opportunities to honor heroes of the natural world, empathy and caring, or success and failure. At Oak Grove, the principal uses a daily school television broadcast to honor students or teachers who have represented a design principle in action. If transgressions occur, students are asked to reflect on which design principles they violated.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS


Students can look for examples of design principle heroes and villains in the characters they encounter in literature, or in historical biographies. The design principles are posted on the wall at Hall's Crossroads Elementary School in Aberdeen, Maryland. Whenever students finish a book, they put the title up by the principle they think it represents. (A list of children's books is available on-line at www.elob.org/news/index/html.)

ASSESSMENT

We rarely get better at something without ongoing assessment. Schools need to provide opportunities for students to get feedback. Students need time to reflect on how they see themselves, how others see them, and how they want to be seen in relation to the design principles. Students at Glen Avenue Elementary School in Salisbury, Maryland, reflect on the design principles during lunch, and post examples of students who live them. Portfolios

and report cards might have a section related to the design principles. We show what we value by what we assess.

SUSTAINING MEANING

Even if we keep them alive, as principles “get old” we tend to take them for granted. They often move from minds and hearts to lips (as in “lip-service”). They lose their power to affect our behavior. They become like clouds that bring no rain. On the other hand, if we find a way to make them effective, they will build individual character and unite communities. Dependable structures are the night watchmen, guarding the treasures of school culture from the thieves of the moment. Ceremonies and rituals are the liturgy where we renew our vows and sustain our covenant. Symbols and artifacts are the icons that remind us why we gather together day after day. They all work together to communicate and sustain our commitment, helping the design principles to become a dynamic force, “raining” on the terrain of school life and nourishing all that grows there. 

Steven Levy is the Northeast school designer based in Lexington, Massachusetts.

RESOURCES

For readings on the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles, read *Reflections on Design Principles* by Emily Cousins (Kendall Hunt, 1998). For a list of other related readings and for a list of children's books illustrating the design principles, please refer to our website: www.elob.org/news/index/html.

USING THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES TO EXPLORE HISTORY AND CULTURE

The design principles might provide a generative lens for analyzing culture if teachers pose to their students a series of guiding questions to the design principles. For example:

The Primacy of Self-Discovery

- ~ *What were the passions of the people?*
- ~ *What obstacles did they overcome?*

The Responsibility for Learning

- ~ *What was the relationship of the individual to the society?*
- ~ *What opportunities did the members of the society have to direct their own lives?*

Success and Failure

- ~ *Where did they succeed as a culture?*
- ~ *Where did they fall?*
- ~ *Did they learn from their mistakes?*

Diversity and Inclusion

- ~ *What sub-groups were represented in the culture?*
- ~ *Who had power, who was left out?*

— *Steven Levy*

For a complete list of these guiding questions, refer to the newsletter on our website (www.elob.org/news/index/html).

FIELDWORK

NOTES FROM EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING CLASSROOMS

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making, students have also become more proficient in what it means to work within a team toward a common goal. They managed to do this while also finding ways in which to preserve their own creative spirit and emotional investment required for such a long-term endeavor.

The entire process has forever changed the shape of this class. Unlikely friendships have been formed; unknown talents discovered. As a result of our time spent reflecting on the design principles, in taking on the responsibility for making them come alive visually in a public way, they have become a regular part of my students' vernacular. The design principles acted as a lens through which we could frame any topic, and their universal accessibility as ideas allowed all students the opportunity to express their thoughts within the group.

This year when the mosaics are installed, my students will know that they have made history at their school by making the ideas that guide our

school's cultural vision come to life through their art. The students of Class 703 have ensured that the design principles will be a part of the daily life of I.S. 30 for years to come.



Anne Cavallaro teaches art at Intermediate School 30 /Mary White Ovington in Brooklyn, New York.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

We have revised slightly our statement of Expeditionary Learning's Design Principles to make it clearer and more useful. The new statement is enclosed. We will gradually replace the old statement with this one in future publications, and in reissues of existing materials.
