LEADING TECHNOLOGY FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION
This workshop is designed and led by two experienced independent school technology leaders who understand the balance technology professionals must maintain between providing access to valuable resources and protecting school constituents. Each aspect of the workshop will be taught with a specific lens on the independent school technology environment. Guest speakers from the cyber security industry will join for some sessions as well.

Attendees will depart the workshop prepared to lead an independent school through the security review process and undertake the steps necessary to ensure improved security for all areas (development, admissions, business, and academic functions) as well as the security of individual community constituents.

TOPICS INCLUDED:
- Exposure and Risk Tolerance Defined
- Best Practices and Reasonable Precautions
- Protected Data: Rules, Regulations and the Right Thing to do
- Comprehensive Security Policies
- Campus Strategies for Politics and Persuasion

FEATURING TWO INDUSTRY VETERANS:

JAMIE BRITTO
Chief Information Officer
Collegiate School, Richmond, Va

Jamie’s responsibilities include infrastructure, data systems, and cyber security. In June 2016, he was recognized by Infotech as a CEO Award winner for medium size organizations. At Collegiate, Jamie works with and learns from a variety of experts in the technology, legal, and insurance industries to understand the emerging field of cyber security and how it might apply to independent schools.

DENISE MUSSELWHITE
Director of Technology
Trinity Preparatory School, Winter Park, Fl

Denise is charged with planning, managing, and supporting the network infrastructure and Trinity Prep’s award winning BYOD. She is committed to meeting the needs of the community of users in the context of the school’s mission and financial sustainability. Prior to joining Trinity Prep, Denise served as the technology manager for an Orlando-based law firm.

The workshop will take place at Trinity Valley School in Forth Worth.

WHERE: Trinity Valley School, 7500 Dutch Branch Rd, Fort Worth, TX 76132
WHEN: July 19 (10:00 am to 5:00 pm) and July 20 (8:00 am to 3:00 pm)
PRICING: ATLIS Members: $550; Non-member Guests: $750

MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTER ONLINE: www.theatlis.org

WHAT’S INSIDE....

5 TECHNOLOGY AS CULTURAL CATALYST
Beth Holland

8 WAYS TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE INTERSECT
Howard M. Glasser and Marcus R. Ingram

12 TECH-QUITY: A CASE FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE TECH OFFICE
Stacie Muñoz

15 EUREKA: THE INCLUSION DASHBOARD
Kalyan Balaven

20 IDENTITY IN THE MAKING: INCLUSIVE K-12 MAKERSCAPES
Ashley Cross, Ph.D., and Rurik Nackerud

23 STUDENT CHOICE ELECTIVES AS PASSION PROJECTS
Renee Ramig, Ph.D.

25 #ISSUESINREALTIME: USING TECHNOLOGY TO FACILITATE GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS
Sean Terwilliger

IN EVERY ISSUE
Editor’s Note 4
Book Reviews 28
End Notes 30
The Association of Technology Leaders of Independent Schools (ATLIS) was founded in 2014. ATLIS has grown to over 170 member schools serving individuals throughout the United States. The editorial oversight of Access Points has now grown to two with the addition of Renee Ramig of Seven Hills School (CA). Now well into our fourth year, ATLIS continues to evolve, but always with an eye on our core mission—to support the work of independent school technology leaders.

Looking forward to our third edition, we invite volunteers from the ATLIS community to join an editorial board to guide future issues of the journal. If you are interested, please contact Susan Davis (sdavis@theatlis.org). We’ll be organizing soon.

This second issue of Access Points, focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion, includes articles on cultural competency in the tech office, inclusive makerspaces, student-choice electives, technology as a cultural catalyst, inclusion dashboards, and global conversations. By diversity, we mean diversity in all its forms—diversity as richness, as difference, and as divergence within and across a number of socio-cultural constructions.

As technology leaders in education, it is imperative that each and everyone of us embraces the differences each community member brings to our schools. The conversations contained within this issue are engaging and important. Given the increasing heterogeneity of today’s K-12 classrooms, it is critical for education technology leaders to consider these topics that directly affect the students and faculty members we serve. Embracing diversity, in all its forms, promotes critical thinking and empathy.

As you read through each article, we invite you to reflect on your own practices and to consider ways your department can ensure that all members of your school community feel valued and equally served. Please look for opportunities to share articles with your administration, teachers, and staff who make these topics relevant for your school. We hope you enjoy this issue of Access Points.

Best,
Renee Ramig, Ph.D., and Jeff Morrison, Ph.D. | Access Points Editors

Access Points is an open forum for exchanging information, envisioning the future of education, and debating best practices about how technology leaders can best serve independent schools and their students. Access Points is published yearly by the Association for Technology Leaders in Independent Schools © 2018 by ATLIS.

ATLIS Mission: ATLIS believes technology leaders make the best decisions when they are reflective, informed, and connected. ATLIS empowers its members to develop strategies, build relationships, and share best practices in technology and innovation for independent schools.

Submission of manuscripts: We welcome well-written articles on topics relevant to our readers. Manuscripts may be submitted digitally to sdavis@theatlis.org.

FROM THE EDITORS

TECHNOLOGY AS CULTURAL CATALYST

BETH HOLLAND | Doctoral Candidate, Entrepreneurial Leadership in Education
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

Technology has always instigated revolution—whether in the development of tools to progress from the stone age to an agricultural society, advancements in steam and electricity to propel the Industrial Revolution, or the introduction of computers and digital technologies to activate the Information Age. In 2016, at the World Economic Forum, scholars, entrepreneurs, and thought leaders announced the arrival of a new, Fourth Industrial Revolution—one marked not by a single technology but by the fusion of digital, physical, and biological systems that could fundamentally change the nature of what it means to be human (Schwab, 2016). Unlike the previous three revolutions, the Fourth impacts almost every industry, in every country, at an unprecedented speed (Schwab, 2016).

In response to this new era, scholars at the World Economic Forum have called for advances in the world’s education systems to prepare students not only with traditional literacies but also more advanced cognitive skills (World Economic Forum, 2015). In most countries, the existing education system emerged in response to the policies and politics of an earlier era (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2015). However, the Fourth Industrial Revolution requires individuals to exist within a complex, technological, and global society (World Economic Forum, 2015). In his book, Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching, Banks (2015) defines global identity as a sense of self-awareness within a global culture. He asserts that students need an opportunity to develop an understanding of self in addition to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to influence their technological, social, and personal worlds.

TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD: DIGITALLY DEVELOPING A DEEPER CONNECTION TO LEARNING

From chalk and slate to pen and paper to textbooks and chalkboards, technology has always been a component of education, but those tools reinforced existing norms (Collins & Halverson, 2016). Conversely, digital technology has fundamentally challenged the structures on which schools base their identities. With mobile devices and access to the Internet, students can now learn anything from anywhere, anywhere, and at any time (Collins & Halverson, 2010), undermining the interconnected components of the system of school: content, instruction, and assessment (Gay, 2002).

Traditionally, the teacher or school determines the available content, including the perspective that it symbolizes (Gay, 2002). For example, textbooks tend to represent the dominant cultural view. A typical U.S. history textbook describes the story of the American Revolution and not the Colonial Rebellion. Digital technology not only creates the potential to let students experience content from diverse perspectives, but also to learn from experts beyond the walls of the classroom. Just as learning is no longer confined to the resources in the building, it can also be situated within a broader community.

Since 1999, Professor Sugata Mitra has conducted a number of experiments around the world where he provides students with access to technology and then observes the ways in which they engage in social learning within a “minimally invasive” (Mitra, 2014, p. 551) environment—one in which the students direct the learning within their community. Across these studies, Mitra has found that students develop technology skills, achieve educational objectives, self-organize into learning communities, and comprehend content beyond teacher expectations (Mitra, 2014).

By allowing students to control their technological world to access content and instruction, digital technologies afford...
them with the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in ways that value their individual voices and allow them to join new learning collectives (Thomas & Brown, 2014). Historically, schools have prized linear, direct answers and thinking. However, various cultures use analogies, stories, and divergent forms of discourse to convey understanding (Gay, 2002). Technology creates new opportunities for students to develop and express both their learning and their identity instead of fighting to conform their thinking to a monocultural education system. It has opened up a new, participatory culture (Jenkins, Ito, & boyd, 2013).

**SOCIAL AND PERSONAL WORLDS: CONNECTING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM**

Digital technology connects students and their individual identities to a broader, global community (Banks, 2015). Through these tools, students have the opportunity to access and understand global themes as well as to engage in authentic problem solving within their local context. Given the abstract complexities associated with building a global identity, students need to engage in meaningful and challenging learning experiences; to participate in a curriculum that encourages the social construction of knowledge; and to cultivate their empathy and communication skills so that they can effectively collaborate across communities and cultures (Banks, Cookson, Gay, & Hawley, 2001). A networked environment and participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2015) presents new opportunities for developing students' global identities (Banks, 2015) and fostering inclusive school cultures (Nieto, 2008).

To prepare for Fourth Industrial Revolution, students need to possess not only traditional competencies and the capacity to leverage technology, but also the broader capability to engage in empathy, analysis, synthesis, leadership, and iteration (World Economic Forum, 2015). Banks (2015) asserts that every nation influences the members of its society through the institutions of school, the media, and technology. Therefore, an education system that does not help students to recognize the influence that they possess over their personal, social, and technological worlds prevents them from fully participating in a global and interconnected society. This argument then elevates conversations about teaching, learning, and student development to the next level.

**REFERENCES**


WAYS TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE INTERSECT

HOWARD M. GLASSER AND MARCUS R. INGRAM | George School, Newtown, Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

I

t is reasonable to equate a school’s curriculum with the academic content that is taught in formal classes like history, languages, and math; there are, however, additional “hidden curricula” that introduce students to institutional culture, educating them about social norms and expectations (Donovan, 2014; McLaren, 2016). While hidden curricula may enjoy a symbiotic relationship with the standard, academic curriculum in a school context, a high-quality co-existence is not guaranteed. In either instance, there are risks (and rewards) involved when decisions are made that impact curricula and learning experiences. As society becomes more technologically savvy and dependent, a school’s technology practices, resources, and systems heighten their ability to influence curricula. At our school, one recent technological shift has been the integration of a new learning management system (LMS). This LMS has impacted interactions among students and teachers in ways that can either reinforce or disrupt the culture and norms within classrooms. It has opened new opportunities for the sharing of ideas, including sending messages about how knowledge is generated and assessed and about students’ agency in affecting course happenings.

INTRODUCTION

When we meet someone for the first time, our impression relies heavily on second- and maybe even third-hand information (e.g., what the person says about her or himself, what others have said about the person). If a relationship ensues, one begins to see first-hand what the person does, and coupling this with verbal and other sources of data, one can come to understand more about who the person is. This learning process helps determine what sort of future one can come to understand more about who the person is. 

Let’s consider a school environment and the students who progress through it, learning academic content and skills through a formal curriculum. Aton these academic learnings, however, hidden curricula communicate ideas about social norms, expectations, and practices (Donovan, 2014; McLaren, 2016). These ideas can send messages about agency, including who decides what is studied (as well as when and how) and how performance or “intelligence” is assessed and valued. These outcomes can be supported or disrupted through technological tools and structures, such as the ways a learning management system (LMS) or other digital resources are used.

While many readers might already be familiar with learning management systems, we want to briefly introduce them as digital means of sharing, administering, and documenting courses. Some popular learning management systems include Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle, and Schoology. These systems can have a large impact on the teaching and learning that occurs through our institutions as a primary means through which students and teachers interact. George School, a grade 9-12, boarding/day school, recently shifted to a new learning management system, and we have become interested in understanding more about its impact on culture. While we focus primarily on ways an LMS can be a means to teach hidden curricula, we are not arguing that any LMS, in itself, must teach specific lessons. Instead, how people use an LMS can modify the curricular teachings and learnings that transpire. The examples we explore aim to highlight how people can engage with an LMS to teach different lessons. And while the primary focus of this article is on an LMS, the general ideas and arguments can be applied to any technological resource, system, or practice. We are choosing to use an LMS to focus the conversation but not to argue that an LMS holds any more or less special sway compared to other technologies.

A WORD ON CULTURE

When we use the phrase “culture,” we draw on Edgar Schein’s three layers of culture (1992). Schein’s original framework focused on organizational culture, which we believe can be applied to educational institutions, including cultures that form within individual classes. The three layers of culture Schein introduced are “artifacts,” “espoused values,” and “basic assumptions.” “Artifacts” are the outer aspects of culture that are most readily experienced with at least one of the five senses. “Espoused values” sit beneath the outer layer of culture and can include the goals, approaches, and philosophies within the culture. Finally, “basic assumptions” often exist at an unconscious level and represent the taken-for-granted, core essence of a culture; these underlying principles provide a key to understanding why things happen as they do within the culture.

To illustrate this framework, let’s consider a classroom environment as our context. In our discussions, a classroom contains all course-related spaces and includes both the in-person, brick-and-mortar space, as well as the online environment that develops and is supported through the course. If a syllabus (artifact) asserts that class conversation is student centered, or a given course (espoused value) that meets in a conference room with an oval table that seats ten (artifacts), it is reasonable that someone might assume there is a culture of discussion among members of the class and that students are essential knowledge generators in this space (basic assumption). In reality, though, there might not be much conversation within the class. Instead, in practice, the class might involve the teacher doing most of the talking using her or his knowledge to pour into students, which suggests a different set of values and basic assumptions from those expressed in the syllabus (artifact). This inconsistency displays how culture can be mistaken for what is casually observed in or promoted by a given context. In the end, it is the enacted basic underlying assumptions that are the essence of culture (i.e., how we do things around here).

Appropriately enough, this article presents the unit of interest and analysis as the classroom, which again encompasses the in-person space and the online environment for a course, including all the interactions that occur there. To narrow our focus, we intend to look at the relationship between the learning process, which involves teachers and students, and a learning management system. Our inquiry is partially sparked by the potential for a transformative relationship between student and teacher. More pointedly, the organizing topic for our exploration of technology meeting culture is the degree to which use of a learning management system reflects a teacher-centered approach.

SUPPORTING MORE TEACHER-CENTERED PRACTICES THROUGH AN LMS

Though it is not unique to George School, our educational process primarily depends on teachers to facilitate students’ learning experiences. This nod to academic and professional norms that guide who teaches is supports many traditional systems of education, which also rely on administrators for effective leadership. That said, a useful LMS should be able to reflect these organizational responsibilities.

To that end, people are assigned roles within a learning management system that grant them access to certain features. There are typically administrative roles at the account level that allow individuals to manage LMS settings for the entire institution. There can be course roles such as teacher, teacher’s assistant, student, observers, and many others.

At our school, we primarily use the teacher and student roles. People assigned the “teacher” role are the default facilitators of classes because they are the people assigned the “student” role; teachers have the ability to post assignments, share content through the course pages, view and record grades, and evaluate or provide feedback on submissions. As a result, people who are “teachers” in the LMS are the individuals who have a greater ability to affect what is studied when, how understanding will be evaluated, and the attribution of value to different contributions to the class. As a result, these features support a teacher-centered approach to learning, which is consistent with many educational contexts, especially at the secondary level.

Marcus Ingram, one of this article’s authors, teaches a “Wisdom Traditions of Asia” course to ten sixteen- to eighteen-year-olds. Reading, writing, and other assignments are created and posted by him through the LMS. Students are able to see and submit the assignments via their interface with this LMS. The pace of the course, grading, uploaded files, and evaluations are all managed by the teacher.
Students are essentially recipients of guidance and direction from the teacher, and the LMS enables this “exchange” to take place.

The practices he follows, in which he is the sole editor of what is posted to the class site through our learning management system, is not unique to him at our institution. Conversations and interactions with colleagues have led us to recognize that many educators, both at our school and elsewhere, use learning management systems similar to the ways described above. To varying degrees, teachers lead the course content and assessment, and students follow along and “learn” with support through the learning management system. This functional approach in using an LMS reinforces a teacher-centered learning culture.

**SUPPORTING LESS TEACHER-CENTERED PRACTICES THROUGH AN LMS**

To be sure, use of a learning management system in the aforementioned section does not mean that other practices supported by the learning management system are similarly teacher-centered. In fact, while a (default) structure within the learning management system itself does not determine a specific culture, the ways they are used can and will support different cultural norms and values within any given classroom.

Regardless of the degree to which an individual class is teacher-centered, we believe it is very possible, even likely, that in many schools the cultures that emerge in classes vary course to course or teacher to teacher. As a result, students might need to (un)consciously code-switch over time, whether it is within a single day or over multiple years. This code-switching might be more extreme for some students than others, thereby privileging a subset of students.

It can be valuable for schools to consider the different cultures that are created and sought within the institution. The differing culture(s) across individual courses might be consonant with or dissonant to a desired institutional culture. We feel it can be important for schools and educators to step back and explicitly identify and endorse practices that are most desired and valued within that community and seek ways their technological resources, practices, and systems can support those goals.

**REFERENCES**


I t’s safe to say that the demographics of the adults at our schools don’t match that of our students. The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) lists the percentage of students of color at all member schools as averaging 30%, with faculty of color at 18.6% and administrators of color at 19.6% (Data and analysis for school leadership: facts at a glance: 2017–18). Despite co-ed schools maintaining a fairly equal number of male and female students on campus, the number of female Heads of School at member schools has remained at around 30% since 2000. Do you know where your school falls? How about your tech team? In most cases, I would argue that most of our tech offices are overwhelmingly white and male.

So what do we do? When “diverse hiring” doesn’t get the job done, schools push hard for equity and inclusion work to offset these demographic differences, hoping to avoid conflict and ensure that all students feel a sense of belonging on campus, regardless of race, gender, religion, or socioeconomic background. For some schools, this means one or two “PD Days” a year with an outside speaker where faculty come to discuss implicit biases around race and gender. These biases are important to acknowledge because they affect our interactions with students who fall at a variety of points on that spectrum. Is your team equipped with the vocabulary to support every one of these students? Does your team have an understanding of the gender spectrum, as well as the differences between gender and sex identity? In order to avoid misgendering students, it is important that our team members have a solid understanding of the gender spectrum, as well as the differences between gender and sexuality. If you are in a policy-creating role, this is mandatory. For example, “tech person” has become a very gendered term. What do your own biases cause you to visualize when you think of a “tech person”? I am a woman of color AND a Director of Educational Technology, and my own biases may come with the unique lived experiences of your staff?

For, and thus the body. If you are just getting started in this work, here are three types of cultural competency training models I would suggest for your team, along with example scenarios and resources for each.

**IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING**
Biases. We all have them. It doesn’t have to be a bad word. A common misconception is that we should do everything in our power to get rid of them. This is incorrect. What we should be doing is teaching ourselves and others how to recognize them and adjust our negative reactionary behaviors accordingly.

Implicit bias training will encourage your team to reflect on any unconscious attitudes or stereotypes they may have regarding certain groups of people. These biases are important to acknowledge because they affect our interactions with students and teachers on a daily basis. Is your team equipped to handle conflict or misunderstandings that may arise from biases around race and gender?

**Resources to Explore:**
- Verma Myers at TEDxBeaconStreet, “How to Overcome Our Biases? Walk Boldly toward Them”
- Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”
- Harvard University: Project Implicit (Take a Test)
- UCSF Unconscious Bias Resources

**DISCUSSING SOCIOECONOMIC STRESS**
Computers are expensive. Repairing them isn’t much cheaper. Given the price tags of attending our institutions, our support staffs may assume that all of our students come from well-to-do families. In fact, an average of 22.5% of students in independent schools receive some form of financial aid (NAIS, “Myths about financial aid”). Further, there are many families who are able to pay the full cost of tuition, but are stretching their budgets to do so. Extra technological costs do not come easy for all families.

For students in financially stressful situations, trips to the tech office to report a misplaced laptop or crashed computer screen can be intense. Does your tech office staff know how to support these students? Does your school have a policy in place for when a student who received financial aid damages a device owned by the school? What happens if a student cannot make payment for a repair?
to why this work is so essential. Committing to this culture shift is professionally beneficial to your department, but is also what’s best for your students and school community as a whole. Taking one step at a time will help you get there together.

REFERENCES


EUREKA: THE INCLUSION DASHBOARD

KALYAN BALAVEN | The Athenian School, Danville, California

ne morning, while at the tub of toys in our living room, my son Matin challenged me to a “big race.” The challenge was to pick the toys we wanted and race each other with them.

I dug through the bucket to find some of the best Hot Wheels. My first pick was my favorite golden Chevy Impala with crimson, 49er-faithful pinstripes. His first pick was a mini airplane. My next pick was a fire truck, his an eraser. We continued like this — me picking cars, Matin picking an increasingly varied group of toys, from stuffed animals to a light saber.

We settled at the starting line, and I wound up my toy cars to race them down the hallway. Matin had different plans. He didn’t have a single race car, but he still won. He fought his way to the finish line with his lightsaber, celebrating with a dance with his stuffed animals, and all the while he had his eraser to erase any chance of my winning. He found a way to use all the toys, not just the race cars, and still win.

Matin had used his imagination to change the rules of the race, and in that moment, I could finally define what I was attempting to do in my work as the Dean of Equity and Inclusion at The Athenian School: trying to open up the world of toys — equity — people are given boxes of different toys, but only the tallest can see over the fence. In the second image — equality — the spectators are in the outfield and are trying to look over the fence to watch a baseball game. In the first image — equity, but they also need to prioritize increasing the array of ideas and experiences through their peers. Again, when this work was done well, it looked like robust recruitment for diversity, looking at a multiplicity of identities to create true global community. But if done poorly, it epitomized the worst critiques imaginable of tokenistic affirmative action policies.

The next stage of this work focused on diversity, as schools realized that it didn’t matter what schools did with curricula if they couldn’t simultaneously expose students to a diverse array of ideas and experiences through their peers. Again, when this work was done well, it looked like robust recruitment for diversity, looking at a multiplicity of identities to create true global community. But if done poorly, it epitomized the worst critiques imaginable of tokenistic affirmative action policies.

Then came the moment when schools realized it was not enough to focus on equality, but they also need to prioritize equity. I am reminded of the oft-referenced images of the difference between the two, in which three people stand to watch a baseball game. In the first image — equity — the spectators are in the outfield and are trying to look over the fence to watch the game. Everyone is given the same size box, but only the tallest can see over the fence. In the second image — equity — people are given boxes of different size, which allows all of them to see over the fence and watch the game. It wasn’t enough to create diverse spaces without creating the boxes for students to stand upon so they could...
see the game clearly. When done poorly, a focus on equality can still look like programs catering to special interests, which end up separating the students it seeks to support. Even when done well, through financial aid or affinity spaces, exclusion can happen as a result of equity. Hence the final focus, on inclusion.

Either way, both of these two features — diversity and equity — are pretty measurable. A school can aim for a more diverse population, and then we can look at our admissions data to see if we’re achieving it. We can aim for equity and examine our financial aid and other programs to see how much we are accomplishing for equity.

Inclusion, on the other hand, has become the holy grail of diversity work within the independent school world. Inclusion is where we as independent schools are most tested, and I think it’s the realm that keeps people like me in our roles. A large percentage of my work day orbits around the concept of inclusion and challenges that the need for this concept creates in an increasingly polarized society. A student approaches me about a moment of exclusion, and I am called into action. Which students approach me, for which reasons, vary. It may be a student from an underrepresented minority dealing with the whiteness of our school. It may even be a conservative, white, heterosexual male who feels silenced in a progressive school. These narratives all speak of the pain of exclusion, and my job is then to interpret them for my colleagues, parents, and our student body. I often feel like Percival holding onto the chalice with loose and gossamer fingers of subjectivity.

The taste of exclusion is bitter. I learned its acrimonious tang firsthand, having grown up as a dark-skinned child of parents with “funny accents” while enrolled in public schools. The distaste of exclusion lingers on your tongue like nervous saliva, from the times you were the last one left on the blacktop and everyone had already been picked for the game. Or saliva, from the times you were the last one left on the blacktop and everyone had already been picked for the game. The first Inclusion Dashboard Consortium retreat, held at The Athenian School in September of 2017.

MEASURING INCLUSION

All our schools already attempt to measure inclusion. But we don’t do it with a universal metric — we tend to be idiosyncratic and over-rely on narratives. We hear about the one moment of exclusion and jump to respond, and then we make sense of it. This approach is fine for those who are “down with the work” or “in the know,” but is much harder for the broader community and those outside of our schools to understand. This absence of a clear measurement of inclusion makes it that much harder to hold ourselves accountable for how inclusive we actually are.

So I set out to see how we could measure inclusion, the hard, but hopefully not impossible, task. Thankfully, I was able to look down the road to see how colleges and universities had measured inclusion and then showcased that information. Institutions like the University of California, Berkeley, and Cornell University had already been leading the way in measuring their inclusion, which made it so that an outsider like me could see where inclusion was happening at their schools.

Using these models, I worked alongside the Equity and Inclusion Think Tank, a strategic planning committee of deans, division heads, and board members, to define which questions we wanted to ask. And we came up with these three:

- What are the values of our school that we want to hold ourselves accountable for?
- What are the things we promise students of an Athenian education?
- What are all the things that our community would say were important in helping them to thrive here at our school?

It was then time to see how our community would answer these questions. We posed these questions in a series on in-depth interviews with constituents throughout our school, and we conducted multiple surveys with our entire community. We poured through the questions and answers with the E&I Think Tank — not because we thought we had our data yet, but because we were still working to create our measurable data points for inclusion. We ended up with a survey of over 50 questions, and then, over a series of edits, we painstakingly trimmed it down to 19 questions. This survey became our foundation to inform our first Inclusion Dashboard, our medium for displaying our successes and room for growth in inclusion.

Along the way, I sought support from Alison Park and Blink Consulting, and through her, was put in touch with other schools who were also on the precipice of trying to envision inclusion in this way. Our initial meeting, in which I found kindred spirits, thrust both Athenian and me in a position of leadership in this work within the broader independent school network. Our prototype dashboard at Athenian became a rallying point for a larger group of interested peers, communities, which grew up to 25 schools and programs from throughout the West Coast. We capitalized on that energy with a retreat in the fall of 2017, where I shared the first Athenian School Inclusion Dashboard, our earnest effort at measuring our school’s inclusion.

The first dashboard below is the proto-dashboard that was shared at the retreat and is the first of a longitudinal examination of how inclusion looks at Athenian. The second dashboard follows on page 18. The entire Inclusion Dashboard Consortium of schools, as we had come to be known, has now embarked on this journey to do the same. The idea is that we can share these dashboards amongst ourselves, in an effort to hold ourselves accountable, but also to find thought partners in the work around inclusion so we can share best practices and evolve our schools as places where inclusion is made manifest in a tangible sense.

THE TOY BOX

Which brings me back to the “big race” with my son Matin. He takes care of all his toys. He makes sure his characters are fed the appropriate amount of imaginary food, that his automobiles are gassed and ready to go, and that his light-saber has new batteries at all times. And when we raced, he instinctively sought to make sure all the toys were included.

Our big race took place the day after my first presentation of Athenian’s Inclusion Dashboard, and so my mind was still wrapped in the world of my work. I wondered how I might measure inclusion in Matin’s toybox — which felt absurd at first, but then incredibly relevant. Because our independent schools are not unlike toy boxes. They are a collection of diverse characters collected for a purpose, played with in a different way.

The toy box is full of characters, each playing an essential role in the function of the whole. Some are the most visible characters. Some are invisible. Some are not.”
manner that allows for that diversity to shine, and cared for so that all the players can thrive. There is no one left on the blacktop, and no one is made out to be an example; there is just the love of play, the result of inclusion realized to its fullest potential, inclusion so encompassing that it cannot be contained in a toy box.

RESOURCES
IDENTITY IN THE MAKING: INCLUSIVE K-12 MAKERSPACES

ASHLEY CROSS, Ph.D. | St. Stephen’s Episcopal Day School, Coconut Grove, Florida
RURIK NACKERUD | The Elizabeth Morrow School, Englewood, New Jersey

ABSTRACT

Making spaces can enable creativity and explorations along emerging fields in science, education, art, and engineering. The informal educational context may, when utilized wisely, enable greater equity for students’ explorations of their identity. By being cognizant about the potential for the student’s identity development in makerspaces, educators can harness the space for deeper learning interactions.

While the “democratizing effects” of makerspaces remain to be argued, this article seeks to address how identity may be a key component towards access and engagement with all makers at a school. Allowing student choice with selecting tools and designing the making process aligns both with equity work and makerspace best practices. By engaging with student, teacher, and community stories and interests, a makerspace may also include diverse identities and broaden identities of those engaged in the space.

Makerspaces in independent schools occupy a niche of innovation and hope for inclusive and experiential learning. The opportunity for play and identity formation (Vygotsky, 1978; Krueger, 2014) embodied by the independent school makerspace lures in educators, students, and families. Independent schools, encouraged by Papert (1993) and other constructionist thought leaders (Stager, 2014; Kurti & Flemming, 2014; Schrock, 2014), have begun to substantiate multi-disciplinary action. Developing a school makerspace may both include diverse identities and broaden identities of those engaged in the space.

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Yet there are inequalities inherent in the popular notion of a makerspace. While low-tech tools can be quite effective, 3D printers, robots, and computer-guided tools often represent the visual icons for a makerspace. The public thinks of woodworking, sophisticated electronics work, and programming as common activities of makerspace users. These visual cues and methods are supportive, typically, of masculine cultural identities and neglect the diverse community of an independent school. Creating a culture of acceptance is imperative to a successful makerspace; Kafai (2018) noted that some Scandinavian makerspaces host girls-only work days, for example.

Makerspace activities do not, at first glance, appear to relate to Language Arts curricula; nor do they have a place in kindergarten due to potentially dangerous materials and tools. Circuits and LED lights alone do not provoke a school to multi-disciplinary action. Developing a school makerspace driven by the popular vision harms both the diverse student body and the curricular opportunities. Instead, this article offers identity as the lens for viewing makerspace development.

Identity is at the heart of a community-minded independent school makerspace. Facilitators value creating things from diverse tools and methods -- including often hidden cultural tools and methods. Individuals facilitating the makerspace become masters at uncovering these hidden resources to access and facilitate some exciting possibilities. In a school there are often two uses for a makerspace: the curricularly identified and often prescribed projects, or personally pursued, experimental, and open-ended maker activities that stem from personal identity.

The curricular and cultural capital define the makerspace; the participants define tools and materials. This experience redefines who has access and increases community-wide engagement. As children and families find their identity within the space, they begin to “make” and become the makers of the space. Valuation of identity leads to projects, tools, and methods that participants feel much more strongly about. Both curricular identity and personal identity have their place, as illustrated by the following experiences:

Curricular Identity
• A class of kindergarten electrical engineers makes flashlights from coin-cell batteries and LED lights for a flashlight picnic.
• Sixth-graders build Grecian armor for their historical studies after viewing a museum’s 3D models through virtual reality goggles.
• Two high school students use a 3D printer to produce a laser diffraction grating for a physics demonstration.

Personal Identity
• A second-grade makerspace is revolutionized by a grandmother’s sharing of origami, which turns into a copper tape circuitry and paper-folding industry enjoyed by everyone in the school.

While making spaces are not prescriptive and can adapt to the school’s needs and vision, this article offers identity as the lens for viewing makerspace development.

An identity lens allows for the transformative child-centered education. As families and students invest their identities into the space, they feel ownership while engaging in design thinking and experimenting with STEM identities, as well as their own identities.

NAVIGATING THE TENSIONS

Constructionist theories of learning heavily influence the pedagogy of a makerspace, including the culture, roles, and identities explored. The classroom dynamic is transformed from a didactic to a student-centered approach, which provides unique challenges for the educator. While makerspaces have the potential to help students develop computational thinking skills and positive STEM identities, they can also lead to unique challenges. When students first encounter design thinking, they may be overwhelmed with the freedom and lack of prescriptive direction. Schools can support faculty utilizing the makerspace by sending faculty to conferences to discuss pressing issues with educators from around the country. Cross (2017) found that 40% of makerspace teachers have received no training on makerspaces. Additionally, workshops can provide hands-on training guided by the constructivist pedagogy that underpins the teaching approach in making. Time to share ideas and best practices with other educators can be extremely valuable.

ACTUALIZING THE EQUITABLE MAKERSPACE

Just as there are no one-size-fits-all prescriptive guidebooks to teaching, there is no comprehensive guide to makerspaces. The Innovator’s Mindset by George Couros and Invent to Learn by Sylvia Libow Martinez and Gary S. Stager are two examples of guides that offer insights and practices to support equitable makerspace environments.

Lenses-MAKERSPACE-Practice-identity2.png

CREATING A CULTURE OF ACCEPTANCE IS IMPERATIVE TO A SUCCESSFUL MAKERSPACE; KAFAI (2018) NOTED THAT SOME SCANDINAVIAN MAKERSPACES HOST GIRLS-ONLY WORK DAYS, FOR EXAMPLE.
great primers to apply to the shift in teaching approach. The individual structure is up to the educator following a design thinking model. The good news is that expensive 3D printers and laser cutters are not required to start a makerspace successfully— as low-tech tools can be effective when properly utilized.

Each school’s journey is unique, but can be extremely rewarding when executed well. Makers can assume the curriculum identity of mathematicians, scientists, and historians, while also tapping into cultural identity in the makerspace and beyond.

REFERENCES


This year, Seven Hills School brought back middle school electives after an almost ten-year hiatus. We started by getting student feedback on interests. As expected, with our 140 students, there were dozens of diverse activities the students wanted to do— sports, arts, cooking, music, drama, coding, photography, and more.

With only seven teachers available during elective periods, our options were limited as to the number of electives we could offer, as well as the topics. As one of the available teachers during all three elective times, I decided to test out an elective called “Passion Projects.” Students could literally work on anything they were passionate about.

Although many of our traditional classes offer project choices, a Passion Project class would give students complete agency in what they worked on, how long they wanted to work on it, and the process along the way. Diversity is at the heart of student agency— diverse students, diverse topics, diverse tech that the learners discover in diverse ways. Students would also not be required to have an “end product,” nor would they be graded. Often the emphasis in the traditional classroom, even with choice projects, was geared toward ensuring an end product was completed on time with all the required elements to get a good grade.

Students also had the opportunity to work in ways that fit their diverse learning styles. Some students worked alone the entire semester. Other students worked alone part of the time, pairing up during other times. Some were in groups, while others worked alone part of the time.

The main difficulty for students was time. Electives met only once a week for an hour. Students were asked to spend the last 5-10 minutes of class recording in their personal Google Doc, reflecting on what worked and what was challenging for them that week. They could record in whatever way worked best for them— keywords, paragraphs, bullet points, pictures, charts, etc.

I had about eighteen students in each class, for 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. (Next year, the schedule has been modified to allow for mixed-grade electives.) I requested a co-teacher, as many of the project choices required use of multiple locations throughout our campus.

This elective truly showcased the day-to-day integration of technology in all its diversity. Many of the projects were in subject areas neither I nor my co-teacher knew anything about— guitar, piano, C# coding, and sewing. Students were often with students teaching or sharing something to the others. Kinesthetic learners could move around and use their hands (and even their full bodies) for an entire hour. Aural learners could listen to and create music. Visual learners could watch and design videos.
There were challenges too. My request for students to record a personal or ongoing adventure to see what passions students will work on next. Able to relax and just focus on their passions. We have even found a place once a week where they had complete agency, de-stress.” The variety of projects was much broader than I ever thought it would be: developing websites, creating videos on how to braid hair, learning to use Scratch, designing characters (drawing and traits), acrylic painting, cooking, baking, creating activities for spirit days, writing songs, dancing, sewing, blogging about fashion, game design using C#, writing (short stories, poetry, and a play), and recording skateboarding videos (for a play), and recording skateboarding videos (for a multi-level game could not be completed during that time period. Time management will definitely be part of discussions during the second semester.

A third challenge was the ability of some students to stick to a task. Sixth-graders actually gave feedback that said teachers should check in with them more, as sometimes they completed before the next elective class.

A second challenge, which was anticipated, was lack of time. Although we had an hour, trying to cook for 20 people and ensure the kitchen was cleaned up never seemed to fit into an hour. We also had only 15 classes in total, and some of the students realized writing a full play or coding a multi-level game could not be completed during that time period. Time management will definitely be part of discussıons during the second semester.

What worked well? Students were able to work on things they really loved. One student wrote, “Electives are a great break from life.” Another student wrote, “It is my favorite part of the week. It gives me time to de-stress.” The variety complete agency in what they work on, how long they want to work on it, and the process along the way.

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Also, having a second teacher was critical. Students were often spread out across the campus — in the classroom, at the library, outside, in the kitchen, and on the athletic courts. Certain activities required more direct supervision (cooking and skateboarding), so on weeks those activities were happening, two teachers were definitely needed.

There were challenges too. My request for students to record their progress in a Google Doc (for the last 5-10 minutes of class) would often stop the flow of what they were working on. I modified this to allow students to do their recordings during the week following the class, as long as it was completed before the next elective class.

Overall, the Passion Projects elective was a successful endeavor for both the teachers and the students. Students found a place once a week where they had complete agency, not only on what they worked on, but how and with whom they worked. Students in this class indicated that they were able to relax and just focus on their passions. We have even more students signed up for it second semester. It will be an ongoing adventure to see what passions students will work on next.

I decided then that I wanted to use technology to open up communication between the students at my school and anyone else who wanted to join in. Working closely with a colleague from the Humanities Department, we designed what we would call #WebDay. Using nothing but social media, we would invite people to join us as we spent the entire class day in live conversation, using our new Aver video conferencing system to connect with remote schools. An open Zoom video conferencing link was shared, and Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn were flooded with invitations. Our premise was that we’d pick a general theme — in this first case, “Racism, Ethics, and Global Culture” — and then allow the conversation to move forward to where the students wanted it to go.

GOING LIVE
Right away we ran into our first non-technological issue. We planned this web event, in urgency and haste, for our second day of classes. It was important, we felt, to be on top of the divisiveness that erupted in Charlottesville and begin immediately with some form of curative process. The events in Charlottesville had left us with an awareness of the potential for an amazing teaching moment — one that we felt could not be overlooked. The longer we waited, the less urgent the conversation would be. We were sure that our students would be full of questions and seeking advice on how to handle their feelings, so we moved forward quickly with our plan.

Sadly, most other schools hadn’t started yet, and despite a lot of very positive reaction from the external invitees, very few people were actually ready to join us. At our school, teachers were concerned about curricula and what kind of impact a change such as joining #WebDay would have. We did meet, in this first attempt, the two educators from other schools who would become our staunchest partners in this project, participating in nearly every event we hosted and even hosting events of their own.

What we learned, though, was that our students exploded all over the chance to have frank discussions, even just among themselves. They were open, opinionated, and eager to talk. They recognized their differences and their family histories and were able to have great conversations among themselves in a way that might not have happened in a typical classroom.

It was a fantastic day, with topics being breached that as-tounded the adults in the room. If we had even thought about shying away from the “hard” topics before this, there was no way we could do that now. Our students proved themselves to be mentally agile, thoughtful, and empathetic. Students who came in with a “hard” opinion on the matter were able to be constructive listeners and speakers. Most were not just speaking rhetoric, but were generally informed persuasive without being overbearing.

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#ISSUESINREALTIME: USING TECHNOLOGY TO FACILITATE GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS

SEAN TERWILLIGER | Chatham Hall, Chatham, Virginia

n the morning of August 13th, 2017, I woke up knowing that something needed to change. I live and work in a small rural community about two hours from Charlottesville, Virginia, and the Unite the Right rally had just happened the day before. It was clear that there was a great divide in our country, and that we, as educators, were among the best suited to help close it.

It was a fantastic day, with topics being breached that astounded the adults in the room. If we had even thought about shying away from the “hard” topics before this, there was no way we could do that now. Our students proved themselves to be mentally agile, thoughtful, and empathetic. Students who came in with a “hard” opinion on the matter were able to be constructive listeners and speakers. Most were not just speaking rhetoric, but were generally informed persuasive without being overbearing.
Several of our students spoke of the importance of their heritage and the place of the Confederate flag and monuments, but came away understanding the opinion of those who opposed these views. This was not a conversation that was set to change minds, but one that aimed to stimulate thought, and in that we were successful.

On our first day we had over 70 students take part in discussions that were frank, sometimes sad, and often deep. My partner and I now felt we had the ground to push even further!

THE BIG PUSH
And push we did! Future sessions would cover climate change, #MeToo (and #TimesUp), gender roles and equity, school culture, co-ed vs. all-girls education (we’re a all-girls school), world religions, Gay-Straight Alliances at schools, politics, and most recently, the water crisis in Cape Town. We’ve changed the name from #WebDay to #IssuesInRealTime, and we invite everyone to #PullUpAChair and join us in conversation. We’re still hoping to get world partners as most participation comes from the USA. We’d also love other schools to take the lead on planning sessions based on their needs and issues. We realize that the issues we face might not be the most pressing for those from other cultures.

TECHNICAL ISSUES
Here are some technical issues to consider. Every school does not necessarily have the facility we do to host a single-class meeting with one room camera. Audio and video levels differ greatly, as does the technology used. As a case in point, one school involved students with their individual computers, creating nineteen little faces on our screen, with a lot of cross talk. Lesson learned: Start all new attendees in mute. The issue this causes is that many folks screen, with a lot of cross talk. Lesson learned: Start all new individual computers, creating nineteen little faces on our video levels differ greatly, as does the technology used. As we look towards the future of education in this connectable world, we owe ourselves and our students the chance to see beyond the bubbles of our own communities.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DEVASTATING EVENTS AT THE PARKLAND SCHOOL IN FLORIDA, THE HONOR COUNCIL AT OUR SCHOOL APPROACHED ME TO REQUEST THAT WE HOST A GLOBAL CONVERSATION USING THE #ISSUESINREALTIME FORMAT TO TRY AND MAKE SOME SENSE OF THE TRAGEDY. AS I SET THIS CONVERSATION INTO MOTION, I FELT HOPEFUL FOR A STRONG U.S. AND GLOBAL PRESENCE IN THE CONVERSATION. AND I FELT ENORMOUSLY GRATIFIED THAT STUDENTS HAVE RECOGNIZED THE #ISSUESINREALTIME PROGRAM AS A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING.

SCHOOL LEVEL
Membership in ATLIS is school-based; once a school belongs, any colleague at the school is eligible to take advantage of the ATLIS member benefits including:

- Product reviews that now include pricing transparency for members via our member-exclusive LearnPlatform Portal.
- Online community membership, including our private network in a research-backed platform to help our members better discover, procure, and evaluate technology.
- Data collection tools and dashboards for analyzing software utilization in member schools.
- Program discounts on our annual conference, professional development offerings, and our aspiring and early career technology director institute (ECATD).
- Access to ATLIS’s database of annual survey data from schools on trends in technology usage.
- Focused professional development opportunities.
- Access to our extensive document library sharing templates and example documents.
- Best practices white papers.
- Online professional development for the entire technology office and other senior administrators, including free webinars and newsletters.
- Job board posting privileges, with job postings visible to the public.

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ATLIS seeks to build relationships with corporate entities dedicated to supporting excellence in technology in independent schools. Corporate memberships include:

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- Discounts on annual conference exhibiting and registration.
- A ½-page ad in Access Points, our annual journal, discounts on additional advertising.
- Discounted promotional opportunities in other ATLIS digital and print publications.
- Job board posting privileges (job postings are visible to the public).
- Opportunities to partner with members of a welcoming, forward-thinking community of technology leaders at independent schools to share expertise and experience on the critical technology issues of the day at ATLIS events or webinars (preference is given to corporate members over nonmembers when selecting presenters).
- Opportunity to publish guest posts on the ATLIS blog (preference is given to members over nonmembers when selecting posts).
- Access to aggregate survey data and results.
- Access to ATLIS newsletters focused on professional development resources, literature reviews, and networking.
- Access to best practice white papers and documentation on topics such as “Making Effective Technology Decisions” and “Best Practices in Managing Transitions in Technology Staff.”
- Advocacy to the greater independent school community, specifically school leadership, on the strategic importance of technology.
- Corporate membership in ATLIS is priced at $1,500.

LEARN MORE AND JOIN TODAY! WWW.THEATLIS.ORG
Educators who are not interested in finding out more about how “technology is changing our minds for the better” may be tempted to flip directly to the “Digital Schools” chapter of Smarter Than You Think. In this chapter comes a prescient observation made by Thompson in 2013: “young people live in a world where their daily activities are channelled by digital tools...few [of them] understand” (p. 195). Change “young people” to “most people” and you have a more accurate description of the Facebook/Amazon/Google world many of us inhabit.

In his look at education, Thompson goes on to discuss the fact that students who learn just a bit of programming, preferably through collaborative projects, are vastly better equipped to deal with complex problem-solving in the real world. For example, elementary children programming in Logo can derive foundational concepts of calculus, due to the iterative process of deducing that very small alterations can produce wildly different results. Adults’ failures to grasp this concept has led to failures in business, governments, and families as small changes cause systems to “spiral out of control.”

However, the educator who skipped the rest of the book would miss out on Thompson’s readable, thought-provoking and conversation-worthy analysis of how our digital tools have pushed us to develop new modes of thinking. Thompson dives into the need for everyday technology users to develop sophisticated questioning techniques (e.g. search skills). These skills enable deeper thinking and force the thinker to iterate and refine his or her techniques to arrive at a meaningful result.

Another enjoyable section of the book discusses the power of public thinking now that platforms have become democratized. Prior generations only faced a genuine audience period; in a digital, always-on society, thinkers (whether great thinkers or fan fiction authors) have a surfeit of public period. Unfortunately, technology often replaces the need for human empathy and automates processes in ways that negatively impact poor and working-class Americans. In her new book, Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor, SUNY Albany professor of political science Virginia Eubanks tracks the insidious ways that our most cutting-edge digital tools track, investigate, and punish the most economically vulnerable citizens. Automating Inequality is a timely and powerful portrait of how technology perpetuates inequality.

Eubanks writes that the United States manages its poor rather than eradicates poverty. Instead, we as a nation, have developed a “digital poorhouse” – a high tech containment of the poor that records their every action, association, and activity. This digital poorhouse is marketed to the public as a tool that increases efficiency while using tax dollars wisely. In fact, it uses complex algorithms to create prediction models, using information about children, parents, neighbors, and even neighborhoods to predict when a child should be removed and given to foster care or to determine whether a family qualifies for food stamps. It’s all automated. Automating Inequality outlines how decisions about human welfare are made by algorithms, neglecting the ensuing missteps lies somewhere between exaggerating and impossible. To illuminate this problem, Eubanks explores three very different and widely diverging approaches to managing, manipulating, and controlling the poor in Indiana, the homeless in Los Angeles, and the child welfare system in Pittsburgh.

Eubanks’ sobering analysis of digital poorhouses reminds us that oppression is inherently spatial. Throughout history governments have used mechanisms such as urban zoning and prisons to keep undesirable populations fixed in place; corporations have used office locations to distinguish permanent from contingent employees; houses of worship physically separate believers from infidels. This book serves as alarming evidence that Americans continue to treat poor people as second-class citizens by harnessing technology. Eubanks’ central premise is that the poor are largely portrayed either as criminals or as free-loaders and as such are deemed the main problem with American society. Because of this portrayal, Americans tolerate systems that dehumanize and surveil the poor to a degree that would not be tolerable if the systems were designed for middle and upper-class Americans.

As our schools move forward into digital spaces and as we develop curricula based on coding and computer science, technology educators must not lose sight of the effects technology, data analysis, databases, etc., have on human end users. Now more than ever a book like Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor should be required reading for all technology leaders in education, as this book illuminates the need for modeling the importance of empathy, culture, and gender diversity as essential ingredients of the coding lessons and the computer science courses we teach.
Last fall, I had the privilege of interviewing Andrew Speyer, Director of Information Technology Services at Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford, Connecticut, for this edition of Access Points. As a result, I gained a much deeper understanding of the influence our technology and data systems have on the way we recognize identity in our schools. The Choate leadership decided early on to address gender neutrality throughout its campus (with gender neutral bathrooms, gender neutral locker and training rooms). When his Head of School asked him to apply this change of philosophy to the school’s data systems, Speyer felt like he had been “handed a bomb.”

Aware of recommendations of the Connecticut Safe School Coalition and the 8 Schools Association, Speyer knew that those with the power to institute change like this had no idea how big such an initiative would turn out to be. More than two years later, Speyer expressed satisfaction with the gender-neutral process, they felt the need to define and redefine the scope of the project -- first for current students, then to grow into other policies for the school. After a report to the senior administration, it was decided that the school would suppress prefixes as much as possible. As Speyer and his colleagues stopped to reflect during this process, they felt the need to define and redefine the scope of the project -- first for current students, then to grow into other policies for the school. After a report to the senior administration, it was decided that the school would suppress prefixes as much as possible.

Next, he was tasked with rewriting the language and policies for the school handbook to reflect the school’s priorities. This raised issues of parental consent, as well as consideration of those instances when student and parent rights do not coincide. How often would students be allowed to change their preferred name, for instance? Prefixes or terms of address now had to be gender neutral – a particularly knotty problem for the Development Office. One possible solution? Eliminate the use of prefixes as much as possible.

As Speyer and his colleagues stopped to reflect during this process, they felt the need to define and redefine the scope of the project -- first for current students, then to grow into other policies for the school. After a report to the senior administration, it was decided that the school would suppress the gender field completely, unless it was absolutely needed. How often would students be allowed to change their preferred name, for instance? Prefixes or terms of address now had to be gender neutral – a particularly knotty problem for the Development Office. One possible solution? Eliminate the use of prefixes as much as possible.

Speyer explained to me how someone’s legal first name, for example, is a protected piece of data. As part of our self-identity, we might indicate a preferred first name, choose pronouns, and otherwise indicate how we might be referred to in both written and oral communications. Yet most systems -- SIS, LMS, development and advancement systems -- are still in process. In addition, Choate adopted a new field for pronouns (he/she/they in singular, plural, and possessive forms). Speyer decided to protect the gender field, making it hard coded and not removable. To protect everyone at the school, he set the default to U (unknown) for all.

The next step involved revisiting all the custom code that had been created for the school, for example, registrar functions for grade-level deans. The process was hard coded and not removable. To protect everyone at the school, he set the default to U (unknown) for all.

As Speyer and his colleagues stopped to reflect during this process, they felt the need to define and redefine the scope of the project -- first for current students, then to grow into other policies for the school. After a report to the senior administration, it was decided that the school would suppress the gender field completely, unless it was absolutely needed. In the midst of all this, there was surprising pushback from faculty -- the universal use of some gender pronouns ("they"), they felt, was simply ungrammatical.

In retrospect, Speyer notes that “There’s a tsunami, and it’s on its way.” Independent schools want to do the right thing, but they need to do the research, dedicate time to planning, think about implications, examine processes, and become more sensitive as well as more careful. He advises that addressing the identity checkbox issue requires at least a first year of research, a second year devoted to analysis of processes, and a third year to implement. As the world changes around us, Speyer says, “We are all faced with thinking outside the binary box.” The implications for gender are huge, and they are only the beginning -- as technology leaders rethink how we put the humans we work with into boxes that limit what they can do or curtail who they can become.
Making the Match

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