

# EDUCATION

## First Quarter



## What's Needed: Opportunity, Excellence and Happiness

By Paul F. Rosenbaum

As any parent will tell you, there are an infinite number of things that children want. But few parents will dispute that what children actually need is to be loved and to learn.

When Jane Goodall, the renowned primatologist, came to speak at Viewpoint School last year, she noted that primate babies have an incredibly long period of attachment to their mothers. Human babies, likewise, are defenseless and need a long period of care, nurturing, and instruction before they are able to make their way in the world. Dr. Goodall noted that, in a way, the school provides a universal function: providing knowledge for life.

Some students want to learn specific things to such a degree that they will excel, overcoming obstacles. Jimi Hendrix played the broom ferociously, we are told, until his musician father took the opportunity to put a ukulele into his little hands. Mozart sat at the feet of his sister during years of her piano lessons before the day on which he famously clambered up the stool to play fluidly himself for his father, the piano teacher. Those are instances, though, in which the opportunity clearly lay before the artist and the parent recognized it.

The path for most parents is not so clearly prompted. Currently, the New York Times Web site features a running debate between the proponents of "Chinese tiger-mother parenting" and those who feel themselves to have been "victims of the Asian Parenting Experience."

The extreme cultural stereotype, that of parents who fear that their children will not have succeeded in life if they haven't made it to Carnegie Hall in their early 20s, is probably a manifestation of America's fear of the rise of the Far East as an economic power. The tales of the "victims," though, tell of an extreme emphasis on achievement over personal happiness, over balance and acceptance. Something seems to be wrong.

In my 25 years at Viewpoint School, we have expanded the curriculum to reflect the passions and energy of our teachers and students. Our goal is to provide the maximum amount of opportunity for every child, and to accept the choices that students make in their varying paths to excellence. We provide coursework that ranges from two choices of foreign languages in the Primary School to mathematics instruction in the Upper School, which extends past the Advanced Placement Calculus BC course for two more years of study. We have an award-winning fine and performing arts program in which every Primary Schooler appears on stage, and a number of our Upper Schoolers each year win recognition at the state and national levels. More than 100 interscholastic athletic teams are available for our Fifth through Twelfth Graders. In recent years, so many of our athletes have proven successful that in 2006 Viewpoint's boys program was awarded the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Southern Section's Commissioners Cup for the best record in CIF playoffs. Whether a student chooses to excel in academics, ath-

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## EDUCATION

# Understanding How Adults Learn

By Marty Mannone

A variety of sources provides us with a body of fairly reliable knowledge about adult learning. This knowledge might be divided into three basic divisions: things we know about adult learners and their motivation, things we know about designing curriculum for adults, and things we know about working with adults in the classroom.

## Motivation to Learn

1. Adults seek out learning experiences in order to cope with specific life-changing events--e.g., marriage, divorce, a new job, a promotion, being fired, retiring, losing a loved one, moving to a new city.

2. The more life change events an adult encounters, the more likely he or she is to seek out learning opportunities. Just as stress increases as life-change events accumulate, the motivation to cope with change through engagement in a learning experience increases.

3. The learning experiences adults seek out on their own are directly related - at least in their perception - to the life-change events that triggered the seeking.

4. Adults are generally willing to engage in learning experiences before, after, or even during the actual life change event. Once convinced that the change is a certainty, adults will engage in any learning that promises to help them cope with the transition.

5. Adults who are motivated to seek out a learning experience do so primarily because they have a use for the knowledge

or skill being sought. Learning is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

6. Increasing or maintaining one's sense of self-esteem and pleasure are strong secondary motivators for engaging in learning experiences.

## Curriculum Design

1. Adult learners tend to be less interested in, and enthralled by, survey courses. They tend to prefer single concept, single-theory courses that focus heavily on the application of the concept to relevant problems. This tendency increases with age.

2. Adults need to be able to integrate new ideas with what they already know if they are going to keep - and use - the new information.

3. Information that conflicts sharply with what is already held to be true, and thus forces a re-evaluation of the old material, is integrated more slowly.

4. Information that has little "conceptual overlap" with what is already known is acquired slowly.

5. Fast-paced, complex or unusual learning tasks interfere with the learning of the concepts or data they are intended to teach or illustrate.

6. Adults tend to compensate for being slower in some psychomotor learning tasks by being more accurate and making fewer trial-and-error ventures.

7. Adults tend to take errors personally and are more likely to let them affect self-esteem. Therefore, they tend to apply tried-and-true solutions and take fewer risks.

8. The curriculum designer must know whether the concepts or ideas will be in

concert or in conflict with the learner. Some instruction must be designed to effect a change in belief and value systems.

9. Programs need to be designed to accept viewpoints from people in different life stages and with different value "sets."

10. A concept needs to be "anchored" or explained from more than one value set and appeal to more than one developmental life stage.

11. Adults prefer self-directed and self-designed learning projects over group-learning experiences led by a professional, they select more than one medium for learning, and they desire to control pace and start/stop time.

12. Nonhuman media such as books, programmed instruction and television have become popular with adults in recent years.

13. Regardless of media, straightforward how-to is the preferred content orientation. Adults cite a need for application and how-to information as the primary motivation for beginning a learning project.

14. Self-direction does not mean isolation. Studies of self-directed learning indicate that self-directed projects involve an average of 10 other people as resources, guides, encouragers and the like. But even for the self-professed, self-directed learner, lectures and short seminars get positive ratings, especially when these events give the learner face-to-face, one-to-one access to an expert.

## In the Classroom

1. The learning environment must be physically and psychologically comfort-

able; long lectures, periods of interminable sitting and the absence of practice opportunities rate high on the irritation scale.

2. Adults have something real to lose in a classroom situation. Self-esteem and ego are on the line when they are asked to risk trying a new behavior in front of peers and cohorts. Bad experiences in traditional education, feelings about authority and the preoccupation with events outside the classroom affect in-class experience.

3. Adults have expectations, and it is critical to take time early on to clarify and articulate all expectations before getting into content. The instructor can assume responsibility only for his or her own expectations, not for those of students.

4. Adults bring a great deal of life experience into the classroom, an invaluable asset to be acknowledged, tapped and used. Adults can learn well -and much - from dialogue with respected peers.

5. Instructors who have a tendency to hold forth rather than facilitate can hold that tendency in check--or compensate for it--by concentrating on the use of open-ended questions to draw out relevant student knowledge and experience.

6. New knowledge has to be integrated with previous knowledge; students must actively participate in the learning experience. The learner is dependent on the instructor for confirming feedback on skill practice; the instructor is dependent on the learner for feedback about curriculum and in-class performance.

7. The key to the instructor role is control. The instructor must balance the pres-

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EDUCATION

# What Schools Cut During Tough Fiscal Times

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell last year released the results of a survey of educational agencies to find out how California state budget cuts to public education are affecting them.

"The survey results make clear that school administrators are making heartrending decisions to balance their dwindling budgets while trying valiantly to keep students' best interests in mind," said O'Connell. "Sixty-five percent of districts that responded to this survey made cuts to building and school grounds maintenance, 58 percent cut funding for instructional materials, and 58 percent reduced funding for district administration. Forty percent of respondents have reduced the number of teachers; reduced or eliminated summer school; increased class sizes; and cut art and music classes, closed libraries, eliminated school nurse positions, and canceled sports programs.

"Our public education system is in crisis. These cuts hurt students and hurt California's future economic viability. I call on the Governor and the Legislature to show the courage and leadership needed to find a budget solution that puts students first and protects our schools from further cuts."

The California Department of Education launched the survey to ask administrators in county offices of education, school districts, and charter schools how they have balanced their budgets in light of state budget cuts to public education. At the close of the survey last year, 387 educational agencies had responded. They represent 1.7 million students, or 26 percent of the statewide enrollment.

Administrators were asked questions on what type of educational organization they are; which programs were cut or eliminated in the last two school years, 2008-09 and 2009-10; enrollment data as of October 2009; and what other actions were taken in the last two school years such as staff reductions, school closures, or reduced school year as result of funding cuts. These are the results of K-12 budget cuts survey by category and the percentage of respondents that made cuts in those categories.

### Results of K-12 Budget Cuts Survey by Category Percentage of Respondents

Building, Grounds/Maintenance . . .	.65%
District Administration . . . . .	.58%
Instructional Materials . . . . .	.58%
Counselors, Nurses, Psychologists .	.48%
Art, Music, & Drama . . . . .	.48%
Classified Staff Compensation	
Reductions . . . . .	.47%
Certificated Staff Compensation	
Reductions . . . . .	.45%
K-3 Class Size Reduction . . . . .	.35%
Electives . . . . .	.34%
Library . . . . .	.34%
Facilities . . . . .	.33%
Teachers . . . . .	.32%
Professional Development	
Programs . . . . .	.30%
Paraeducators, Instructional	
Assistants . . . . .	.29%
Gifted and Talented Education . . .	.28%
Athletics . . . . .	.27%
Supplemental Instruction,	
Summer School . . . . .	.26%
Adult Education . . . . .	.20%

High School Class Size Reduction .	.18%
Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment . . . . .	.18%
Reduced School Year . . . . .	.16%
Food, Nutrition Services . . . . .	.14%
Technology Services . . . . .	.12%
Transportation . . . . .	.12%
Physical Education . . . . .	.12%
Career Technical Education . . . . .	.11%
School Closure . . . . .	.10%
Child Development,	
Early Childhood Programs . . . . .	.8%

Compensatory Education . . . . .	.5%
Special Education . . . . .	.5%
Advanced Placement, International	
Baccalaureate Programs . . . . .	.4%
Driver Education . . . . .	.4%
Safe Schools, Security,	
School Police . . . . .	.4%
Multilingual Services,	
Services for English Learners . . . .	.3%
Regional Occupational Centers	
and Programs . . . . .	.1%
Homeless Education . . . . .	.0%

## Adult Learning

Continued from page 24

entation of new material, debate and discussion, sharing of relevant student experiences, and the clock. Ironically, it seems that instructors are best able to establish control when they risk giving it up. When they shelve egos and stifle the tendency to be threatened by challenge to plans and methods, they gain the kind of facilitative control needed to effect adult learning.

8. The instructor has to protect minority opinion, keep disagreements civil and unheated, make connections between various opinions and ideas, and keep reminding the group of the variety of potential solutions to the problem. The instructor is less advocate than orchestrator.

9. Integration of new knowledge and

skill requires transition time and focused effort on application.

10. Learning and teaching theories function better as resources than as a Rosetta stone. A skill-training task can draw much from the behavioral approach, for example, while personal growth-centered subjects seem to draw gainfully from humanistic concepts. An eclectic, rather than a single theory-based approach to developing strategies and procedures, is recommended for matching instruction to learning tasks.

The next five years will eclipse the last fifty in terms of hard data production on adult learning. For the present, we must recognize that adults want their learning to be problem-oriented, personalized and accepting of their need for self-direction and personal responsibility.

Marty Mannone is a freelance writer.



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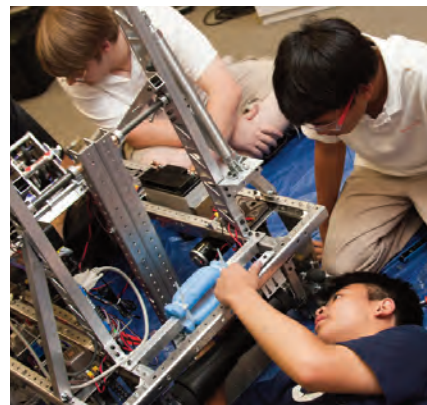
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## EDUCATION

# 2011 National Financial Capability Challenge

Earlier this month, high school-aged students across the country began taking a voluntary online exam as part of the 2011 National Financial Capability Challenge. The Challenge is designed to enhance the financial capability of high school-aged youth across the United States by strengthening their knowledge of the basics of saving, budgeting, and investing.

"All of us—parents, educators, policymakers and students—share the responsibility to ensure that young people in our country learn a set of practical skills that will help them navigate important personal financial decisions," said Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner. "This Challenge will help stu-

dents understand basic finance. It will help them understand what it means to save for retirement. And it will help them understand the risks and benefits associated with debt from things like car loans and credit cards. Empowering students with this knowledge is important for the long-term strength of our economy."

"Our goal is for every student in the nation to get a world class, well-rounded education," said Education Secretary Arne Duncan, "and that includes preparing them to make critical financial decisions. I hope the Challenge not only helps high school students get smart about money, but encourages more states and schools to make financial education a priority in class-

rooms as early as kindergarten."

The voluntary online exam will be available to students through April 8. Last month, the Department of the Treasury posted an Educator Toolkit on Challenge.Treas.gov to help teachers prepare students for the exam. From saving for college and retirement to managing expenses like cell phones, the exam tests a wide array of topics that together constitute a basic understanding of personal finance.

All high school teachers and other educators working with U.S. high-school aged students (ages 13-19) are encouraged to register for the Challenge, download the Educator Toolkit, prepare their students, and administer the online exam.

Later this spring, a group of the highest scoring students will be recognized through a national awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. The educators and students who place in the top 20 percent nationwide will receive official award certificates.

Some examples of the types of questions students will answer during the exam are as follows:

Carolina has \$5,000 saved from working at different jobs. She puts her money in a savings account that pays 4 percent per year in interest. How much money will be in her account at the end of the first year and at the end of the second year?

- A - End of first year: \$5,100; end of second year: \$5,400.
- B - End of first year: \$5,200; end of second year: \$5,400.
- C - End of first year: \$5,200; end of second year: \$5,408.
- D - I don't know.

(Answer: C)

Marco went to the grocery store to buy a box of cereal. The type of cereal he liked came in three different brands and three different size boxes. To select the brand and the box with the lowest unit cost, he should look at the:

- A - largest cereal box on the shelf.
- B - most popular brand of cereal.
- C - price per ounce of cereal in each box.
- D - I don't know.

(Answer: C)

More than 76,000 students and 2,500 educators from more than 1,500 schools in all 50 states participated in the 2010 Challenge. To learn more about the Challenge or to register for this year, educators should visit Challenge.Treas.gov.

## What's Needed

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letics, or the arts, the mission of Viewpoint School, and the obligation of any school, is to develop a love of learning that will last a lifetime.

The research of K. Anders Ericsson, Professor at Florida State University, is often cited when discussing mastery and superior performance in the arts, athletics, and other highly skilled pursuits. It indicates that 10,000 hours of deliberate practice are needed to become an expert practitioner at anything. It is true that one can force a child to practice for 10,000 hours. That is apparently, what "tiger mothers" do. But it seems more humane to provide the opportunities to a child, to provide a child with love and nurturing, and then watch to see if happiness for that child grows in the desire for excellence.

As individuals, it is easy to believe that we need to make our children stand out, like Hendrix or Mozart, among the more than six-and-one-half billion individuals on the planet. But when one thinks that all the mothers and fathers of all the six-and-one-half billion likely have the same desire, it seems to make a bit more sense to seek to have happy children. Love and learning are the best gifts we have to give them.

Paul F. Rosenbaum is Associate Headmaster at Viewpoint School.



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