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It Takes a Village – Up Close and Personal with Young People

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It Takes a Village – Up Close and Personal with Young People

I do believe that the African saying of “It Takes a Village” to raise children is true, and this summer, I had the opportunity to live it. I had the profound pleasure of taking three nephews to Greece and Hong Kong with stopovers in Istanbul, Turkey. Two nephews, ages 11 and 12, had just completed primary school (grades 1-6) in Nassau, Bahamas and were about to enter high school (grades 7-12). The oldest nephew was 16 years of age and about to begin his final year of high school in the Bahamas. We were accompanied by two friends of mine.

Before the boys travelled to meet me in the US, they were required to learn about the countries that we would visit. They were also going to be interviewed by me. With the first interview, the boys failed miserably. I do not think they had taken the task seriously and were shocked when I said they had failed because they had not bothered to learn anything about the countries other than to report, “there were a lot of people and a lot of buildings there.”

When the boys arrived in the US, they were assigned one country each to become the “expert in” and they were given a worksheet that asked simple factual questions that they needed to research on the internet. Questions included, “What is the currency of Greece, Hong Kong, Turkey, and what is the value of one US/Bahamian dollar in each currency?” The boys needed to help develop the itinerary for each country by reporting on the important sites to visit and they needed to learn some greetings in the language of the country. By the time we were ready to depart for our ten days of travel, the boys knew a lot of information and were excited to put their knowledge to use.

In Greece, we went sightseeing in Athens on the Get-on, get off bus and spent time at the Acropolis. Then we toured three of the Greek islands (Hydra, Poros and Aegina). In Hong Kong,

where we spent most of our time, we visited the Peak, a local museum, and Ocean Park, and we shopped in Mei Foo, Mong Kok, and Tsim Sha Tsui, where the boys learned how to bargain. We travelled by Uber, on the Star Ferry, and by subway (MTR), cable car, taxi, mini bus, and double-decker bus, all by using our Octopus travel pass.

Our connecting point was always Istanbul because we flew on Turkish Airlines and had three layovers – the longest being nine hours. Because of the coup d'état in Istanbul, we also had to have a long layover in the Athens airport (12 hours). All layovers proved to be a great testing ground for the boys who had to write in their diaries, draw pictures about the places they had visited, and write thank you letters (when they were not on their ipads or laptops or sleeping). During the long plane rides, the boys watched movies and slept.

Returning to the US, the two younger boys remained with me for another 10 days while the older boy and the two friends returned to the Bahamas. During the daytime, the younger boys had to complete their thank you letters and drawings and most of all, spend a great deal of time completing a PowerPoint presentation on their summer travels. The boys did a great job inserting pictures and giving information on their trip. The presentations were later shared with family and friends in the Bahamas, during which the boys gave extensive and insightful oral reports about their experiences. During the evenings before bedtime, I read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

In reflecting on the events with the boys this summer, while I realized how essential it was for the boys to be able to talk in depth about the places they had visited and the experiences they had had, what I truly cherished most was the time spent reading to them. Firstly, the boys begged for the reading every evening; they wanted me to read more than two chapters at a time. If we were out the question always was, are you going to read to us tonight? Please read.

The picture I loved the most was of the two boys in bed, one on the upper bunk hanging over the top and the other on the bottom while I sat on a chair opposite them next to a small lamp to see the words. Never mind how tired I might have been, their insistence made me read in my best voice with enthusiasm and just inject the right amount of venom, ingenuousness, sass, curiosity, imperative, enigma, or huskiness in my voice according to the speaker. They never fell asleep; they wanted to see the illustrations. Their eyes were with me, their ears were listening to the tenor of my voice, and they were absolutely riveted by the text, so much so that one wanted me to purchase the original text because I told them I was disappointed with this “abbreviated, watered-down version as it was not rich like the original version I had read when I was their age. And...it was not a fat well- worn and weathered book!”

This feeling of the boys’ intense attention as I read a classic text has stayed with me. When it was time to read, if they were downstairs watching a movie or playing a game on their ipads or laptops, I had to call them only once to say it was bedtime and I was ready to read. They came racing up the stairs and in a matter of minutes, their teeth were brushed and they were in their beds waiting for me like little hungry pups to finish prayers and lead them to the main event, as they were transported to another space and time. I wonder, when the boys look back on this period of their lives, what will they remember most about the Summer of 2016? I know what I will cherish most!

For me, spending time with the boys helped me to recall my years as a secondary school teacher. I was a teacher of reading for most of the eight years at S. C. McPherson Junior High School, but I never read to my seventh grade students, who were about the same age as my younger nephews. Was all the skill and drill that I did to “elevate” my students’ reading the most appropriate way to push them to another level? In preparing our teachers to teach, what do we

espouse? In doing our research, are the aesthetics of the delivery of our content ever unmasked? That is, in our work as teacher/educator/professors, how close are we to the direct craft of teaching elementary and secondary students? Have we distanced ourselves from hands on activities with these age groups? Are we in schools and spaces where we engage directly with young people? My 16-year-old nephew used the term “fresh” very often to describe something that was “cool” and “current,” so I ask the question, “How fresh are we?”

Our contributors for this edition demonstrate their level of engagement with diverse learners in various ways: Panos and Damico take critical agency and environmental activism to upper elementary and middle grade learners. They describe the use of fiction and nonfiction texts to examine eco-activism and sacrifice zones to spur students to action as we face environmental deterioration. Hoffman takes a reflexive stance as she aligns the construction of a new mosque with the development of her own learning about adolescent immigrant students. Her example encourages all of us to be open to learning about our students and their communities. Marciano uses technology to recruit education students for a study abroad program while simultaneously reflecting on her own learning of new technologies as tools for communicating and engaging with university students.

Zackery works with her young elementary learners to discuss how she integrates the arts in her classroom and helps students to engage in critical and creative learning. She draws on her many years of teaching gifted learners to describe some of the ways she has been successful. Huang and Stanley work with helping young learners to read and write through the use of children’s picture books to promote language and literacy development. They describe strategies for use with second grade children. Last, but not least, Sassi and Lajimodiere show us how to work with seventh- and eighth-grade Native American students through the use of culturally

responsive and appropriate reading and writing pedagogies in a writers' workshop. They work collaboratively with many stakeholders to develop pedagogical practices that would benefit their learners.

Our Praxis papers are reflexive and practice-driven, but, above all, they show how educators remain “fresh” and alive in our craft of teaching. There is always more to learn and study as we teach and prepare the next generation to teach. We must remain “fresh” by being engaged with young people both inside and outside the classroom. It may mean travelling to new sites, as Figure 1 depicts below, or engaging in many new currencies as Figure 2 suggests. It just depends on how we look at “new sites” and “new currencies,” and our understandings of it takes a village to move our learners forward!

INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURES

11:26

STD	ETD	FLIGHT	DESTINATION	GATE	REMARK
11:15		UA 8702	TORONTO	209	LAST CALL
11:15	11:45	8Q 265	PARIS-CDG	310	GO TO GATE
11:15		8Q 371	AMSTERDAM	222	GATE CLOSED
11:30		8Q 643	VIENNA	309	GATE CLOSED
11:35		TK 1329	GENEVA	303	GATE CLOSED
11:35		8Q 415	DUSSELDORF	301	LAST CALL
11:40		8Q 561	FRANKFURT	302	LAST CALL
11:45		TK 1871	VENICE	206	LAST CALL
11:45		TK 1913	ZURICH	216	LAST CALL
11:50		B2 784	MINSK	300	LAST CALL
11:50		SQ 6259	LISBON	700	LAST CALL
11:50		TK 1895	MILAN	501	LAST CALL
11:55		SQ 6283	BUDAPEST	306	LAST CALL
11:55		UA 6900	FRANKFURT	218	BOARDING
12:00		TK 1633	MUNICH	305	BOARDING
12:00		TK 1725	BERLIN-TEGEL	307	BOARDING
12:00		TK 1771	PRAGUE	202	BOARDING
12:00		IR 2885	VIENNA	201	GO TO GATE
12:10		KC 870	ATYRAU	204	GO TO GATE
12:10		TK 1023	SARAJEVO	210	GO TO GATE
12:10		TK 1303	MALAGA	702	LAST CALL
12:10		8Q 475	BERLIN-TEGEL	309	GO TO GATE
12:20		TK 8438	BAKU	212	
12:20		TK 1051	VARNA	221	
12:20		TK 314	ARBIL	311	
12:25		TK 1345	EDINBURGH	304	
12:25		TK 824	BEIRUT	312	
12:35		IA 220	NAJAF	202	

INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURES

11:26

STD	ETD	FLIGHT	DESTINATION	GATE	REMARK
12:35		TK 1391	BORDEAUX	308	
12:35		LO 5134	WARSAW	225	
12:45		TK 1825	PARIS-CDG	223	
12:45		TK 1865	ROME-FCO	207	
12:45		TK 471	KHERSON	217	
12:45		TK 493	ORAN	215	
12:55		TK 1313	VALENCIA	703	
12:55		UA 6917	LONDON-LHR	227A	
13:05		TK 079	SAN FRANCISCO	503	GO TO GATE
13:05		TK 1977	DUBLIN	213	
13:10		A3 3153	ATHENS	205	
13:10		TK 382	TBILISI	203	
13:10		TK 651	ALGIERS	229A	
13:15		TK 1995	MANCHESTER	306	
13:20		QR 240	DOHA	216	
13:25		SQ 6305	LUXEMBOURG	224	
13:25		TK 786	TEL AVIV	211	
13:30		SQ 391	SINGAPORE		WAIT FOR GATE
13:30		TK 077	MIAMI		
13:35		TK 1445	BARI		WAIT FOR GATE
13:35		TK 1859	MADRID		WAIT FOR GATE
13:35		TK 591	NOUAKHOTT		WAIT FOR GATE
13:35		TK 988	ERCAN		WAIT FOR GATE
13:40		LX 1801	ZURICH		WAIT FOR GATE
13:40		SQ 6201	NEW YORK		WAIT FOR GATE
13:40		TK 1379	MUNSTER		WAIT FOR GATE
13:40		TK 589	KINSHASA		WAIT FOR GATE
13:50		AA 6355	LONDON-LHR		WAIT FOR GATE

INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURES

11:26

STD	ETD	FLIGHT	DESTINATION	GATE	REMARK
13:55		NH 5884	FRANKFURT		WAIT FOR GATE
13:55		SQ 6233	HOUSTON		
13:55		TK 1969	BIRMINGHAM		
13:55		TK 1897	LONDON-LGW		
14:00		SQ 6038	CAIRO		WAIT FOR GATE
14:00		8Q 441	MUNICH		WAIT FOR GATE
14:05		TK 031	ATLANTA		
14:05		TK 035	MONTREAL		
14:05		TK 1367	MARSEILLE		WAIT FOR GATE
14:05		SK 3412	OSLO		WAIT FOR GATE
14:10		KK 1016	ERCAN		WAIT FOR GATE
14:10		TK 625	LAGOS		WAIT FOR GATE
14:15		9W 6396	ABU DHABI		WAIT FOR GATE
14:15		PS 718	ODESSA		WAIT FOR GATE
14:20		SQ 6205	CHICAGO		WAIT FOR GATE
14:25		RJ 166	AMMAN		WAIT FOR GATE
14:25		NZ 4854	LOS ANGELES		
14:25		AV 6621	LONDON-LHR		
14:30		SK 3419	STOCKHOLM		WAIT FOR GATE
14:35		SQ 6301	BOSTON		
14:35		SQ 6243	COTONOU		WAIT FOR GATE
14:35		SQ 6229	ACCRA		WAIT FOR GATE
14:35		8U 971	MITIGA		WAIT FOR GATE
14:40		J9 483	KUWAIT		WAIT FOR GATE
14:40		TK 1799	GOETTERBURG		WAIT FOR GATE
14:40		TK 1855	BARCELONA		WAIT FOR GATE
14:45		SU 2137	MOSCOW		WAIT FOR GATE
14:45		SQ 6207	WASHINGTON		WAIT FOR GATE

Figure 1. New Sites.



Figure 2. New Currencies.

As always many thanks to our reviewers whose excellence in giving feedback takes our accepted papers to a higher level. Do enjoy this edition! Stay fresh as you journey with our learners of all ages.

Gertrude Tinker Sachs

Editor

Ubiquity Praxis

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Twain, M. (2014). *The adventures of Tom Sawyer*. (Abr. Ed., W. T. Robinson, Ed.). *Junior classics for young readers*. Ashland, OH: Bendon. (Original work published 1876)

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