

From the Science Department

Dear Parents, Caregivers, Students, and Friends,

I placed my hand on the microscope's turn wheel, closed one eye and peered into a blurry light patch. Slowly I focused. Small floating debris danced across my monoscopic field of vision. Further turns revealed a transparent motile dancing zeppelin, a protozoan. As I searched this world of the very small my assignment was simple – draw what you see. This was not an interdisciplinary lesson.

I was not instructed on drawing techniques: shading, light, scale and other integral parts of the visual arts. My teacher did not address the art of drawing, instead inferring that we all had drawn at some point and that was good enough. The science was covered in more detail, the cilia, organelles and behavior of the organism. Was drawing the one-celled organisms really necessary? I believe yes, that the act of drawing the protozoa gave me a better understanding of this strange little life form.

When we bring two separate disciplines together for a specific purpose, we educators call it interdisciplinary (ID). ID is not the same as using two disciplines simultaneously, for doing so may not integrate them. The disciplines should have a purpose, a reason for coming together, when not using them would detract and diminish understanding. ID requires a commitment on the part of the teacher; planning takes more time; assessment is more complex, and student acceptance is not forthcoming. However, ID work frequently yields a deeper understanding, increased interest, and novel connections for both teacher and students.

BAA has a primary goal of bridging arts and academics in a meaningful way, not just for the student but also for the content of the class. I'm developing a lesson that combines biology and music. My purpose is to make the complex and often misunderstood concept of evolution accessible to all students. I have noticed that often students think of evolution as a driving force to make things better rather than different. By composing music to mimic hominid evolutionary change, I intend to show how changes to a piece don't necessarily improve it, they just make it different from the original composition. In addition, the students will be able to experiment with the idea of time. Often the immense scale of evolutionary time is boggling and can cause further misunderstandings. Using music (with its built-in measure and cadence) will help to clarify these issues.

Ultimately the intention of all ID units should be interdisciplinary understanding defined by Harvard University's Project Zero as: *the ability to integrate knowledge and modes of thinking from two or more disciplines to generate a new insight.*

During a recent visit to Ireland where some BAA students attended the Galway Science and Technology Festival, we noticed how important the integration of multiple disciplines is, especially to the biotechnology industry. We were given a tour of a facility where engineering and medicine are integrated to such an extent that one needs both disciplines to succeed in the field. We saw posters touting the "interdisciplinarity" of today's world.

One of our students mentioned how he has used music composition to truly understand a complex issue in humanities. Success! Visual and performing arts, science, economics, mathematics, music—all of these disparate disciplines inform and deepen each other when taught side by side.

Sincerely,



Javier Bastos
Science Faculty

“Interdisciplinary work frequently yields a deeper understanding, increased interest, and novel connections for both teacher and students.”



L to R: senior music student Herbert Maisonet, Co-Headmaster Linda Nathan, Minister for European Affairs Noel Treacy, senior music student Jonathan Howell, Boston Children's Museum's Virginia Zanger, science teacher Javier Bastos, and junior music student Kwaumane Brown.



BAA students with Abelardo Morell and photography instructor Guy Michel Telemaque at the Griffin Museum of Photography.

Abelardo Morell

For a second consecutive year, BAA photo students will collaborate with students from Winchester High School and the Griffin Art Museum in a series of lectures featuring fine art photographers.

Abelardo Morell is a Cuban-born photographer who now lives in Brookline and is a professor at the Massachusetts College of Art. His work has been collected by numerous museums including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Arts.

Humanities 2 Exhibition

Humanities 2 is focused on the study of American history and society. In this context, students study topics of immigration and migration in the early US history. Sophomores spent five weeks researching a topic and incorporated design principles into an oral presentation. These exhibitions were shared with

the wider school community in December. Topics included, "America: Land of Promise" (Scandinavian and German immigration), "Asian Invasion" (Indian and Russian immigration) and "Escape to Freedom" (African migration).



Theatre major Deysi Melgar, Co-Headmaster Linda Nathan, and Humanities teacher Abdi Ali were featured in The Boston Foundation's annual report, *Turning the Corner: Guided by Seasoned Leaders/Inspired by Emerging Leaders*. BAA was showcased in the education section of the Foundation's report as an example of a school which has gained both national and international recognition for its exemplary work.

A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL
FOR THE VISUAL AND
PERFORMING ARTS

Boston Arts Academy newsletter

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Carlomagno Pedro Martinez



Sculpture "Calavera con Mesa"

The works of Carlomagno Pedro Martinez will be on display at the Sandra and Philip Gordon Gallery until January 30, 2007. Gallery hours are Monday to Friday 8-4 pm.

The opening of this show coincided with a gallery opening in the Sandra and Philip Gordon Studio Gallery of student work from the Lilla Frederick Pilot Middle School in Dorchester. Students hosted their own opening with BAA staff and had the opportunity to attend a renowned professional artist's show as well.

Poderometro 2006/ Powermeter 2006

BAA Co-Headmasters Linda Nathan and Carmen Torres were honored as two of the 100 people who have most influenced the Latino community in the year 2006. The awards event was sponsored by *El Planeta*, New England's large-circulation, Spanish weekly newspaper.

Summer Institute: July 5-7, 2007

School teams are invited to join BAA staff to explore using the arts as a modality for school change. School teams will develop action plans to implement in their own schools or districts. Professional Development Points (PDPs) and college credit available **Early Registration (February 12 – April 30)**: \$725 per person; \$675 per person for groups of four or more before April 30. **For more information, please contact Corey Evans, 617-635-6470 x312, summerinstitute@bostonartsacademy.org**

Theatre Audition Workshops



Theatre student Kadahj Bennett works with 8th graders from the McKay School during a Theatre Workshop designed to prepare students for 2007-08 school year auditions, a major component of the BAA admissions process.

Important Dates*

Tuesday, January 2

Professional Day
NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS

Wednesday, January 3

BAA Faculty Retreat
NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS

Thursday, January 4

BAA Faculty Retreat
NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS

Friday, January 5

STUDENTS RETURN TO SCHOOL

Wednesday, January 10

School Visit Day
† Parent/Caregiver Council
Board Meeting 6-7:30 pm

Monday, January 15

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS

Thursday, January 18

Math Fair

Friday, January 19

SPECIAL SCHEDULE FOR ALL STUDENTS
SAT test for Juniors
Auditions, at BAA, 9 am - 5 pm

Saturday, January 20

Auditions, at BAA, 9 am - 5 pm

Tuesday, January 23

Humanities 3 Exhibition,
at Boston Architectural Center

Thursday, January 25

Inferno Exhibit
in Sandra and Philip Gordon
Studio Gallery, 4th Floor @ BAA

Saturday, January 27

SATs at various locations
Emerson High School
Theatre Festival 7:30 am-5:30 pm

Monday, January 29

Governing Council Meeting, 4 pm

Tuesday, January 30

Term 2 ends

Wednesday, January 31

Term 3 Begins

* Calendar events are subject to change.
Please call to confirm times and dates.

† Important parent/caregiver date!

Music, dance, poetry, visual art are at the core of our power to learn...

In a recent article in *Slate*, an online literary magazine published by the *Washington Post*, a number of renowned authors, columnists and educators were asked, "**If you had a million dollars to give, who would get it?**" Former Poet Laureate of the United States, **Robert Pinsky**, had a few things to say and much of it had to do with Boston Arts Academy! Some excerpts:

"So, my million dollars would go directly to some actual school or library.

An example: Boston Arts Academy, a Boston public high school—not a charter school, a straight-ahead public school—across the street from Fenway Park's outfield wall. The school uses art as a model and means for intellectual work. Studying an art—mastering a literal or figurative instrument—can help students focus their powers. Proficiency develops confidence in the ability to learn. The idea is not to train professional artists, but to use the worthy, engaging difficulties of art as a means toward accomplishment and concentration—in a word, learning...

BAA's atmosphere is extraordinary: People look one another in the eye; the social norm is casual good manners. The seedy, cheerful converted warehouse feels like a place where work gets done. Distinguished Boston musicians, dancers, writers volunteer time to the school—motivated partly by that atmosphere.

Along with its primary goal of education, BAA does a public service by respecting the arts as fundamental."

Mr. Pinsky is the recipient of Boston Arts Academy's 5th Annual Apollo Award to be presented May 21, 2007 at the Wimberly Theatre, Boston Center for the Arts. Please contact Rick Tagliaferri at 617-635-6543.



Robert Pinsky

To read the full article, please visit www.slate.com/id/2153314/

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