



An International Member Connection, August 2023



Fellow International Christian Educator,

I will never forget the first time I attended an international school graduation. Actually, it was what happened later that evening with the graduates that was the unforgettable part.

It was 1986; I had just committed to join the staff of Black Forest Academy and I was really excited about the future. There I was, a newly minted, state-certified, enthusiastic teacher, called and ready to serve the MKs and TCKs on my dorm floor and in my classroom. I should quickly add that I was also a mono-cultural newbie entering an international world that, as it turns out, involved so much more than I realized at the time.

Back in '86, the importance of a pre-field orientation for newly appointed expats was only in the idea stage. To their credit, my new school did their best to help me adjust by first providing a warm welcome, then a 3-week crash course in the German language, and finally some local culture and school tips. All good, but there were still several important things that were barely touched upon, and that brings me back to that first graduation evening.

After the grad ceremony, I was asked to tag along and help shuttle the new graduates to and from their after-grad party that went late into the evening. I use the term "party" loosely because what I witnessed that evening was nothing like my own suburban-American graduation that was filled with nothing but celebration. In contrast, I saw the newly graduated class sharing special reflections with their classmates, a lot of tears, hugs, and very meaningful and painful goodbyes the like of which I'd never seen before.

Looking back now, I know exactly what was happening that day and why the goodbyes and emotions were so strong, but at that moment I sure could have used some training in the complex world of Third Culture Kids (TCKs). Thankfully, I learned to ask a lot of questions, a practice that continued for years to follow.

You see, every new expat employee really needs a pre-job or pre-field orientation program to help explain the world they are entering. A good orientation should cover issues like a detailed TCK profile, culture basics, transition & adaptation, living in community, and of course, the local

particulars. Not only does a quality orientation program help a new hire start better, but it also lays a foundation that may help them ultimately stay longer.

ACSI launched its Pre-Field Orientation (PFO) training program in 1987 and literally thousands of new overseas appointees and their receiving school communities have benefited greatly from the training. Today, PFO lives on in our [PFO2Go online course](#). Never has it been easier or as inexpensive to get the core of the original training as it is now. Since we launched PFO2Go in 2020, 400 adults, learners and advisors have taken the course.

I know it's August, but it's not too late to [register your new hires](#) to take PFO2Go now. Knowing the strength of our program, I wish it had been available for me back in 1986. Please read a few of the course testimonials [here](#).

Blessings upon you,

Tim for the international school team.

Tim Shuman, Senior Director, International Division, for the [International School Team](#)
Follow on social: [@acsiintschools](#) [@acsiglobal](#) [@acsiusa](#)

*Your international schools team.

[Tim Shuman, Senior Director, International Division](#)
[Caitlin Taylor, Global Activity & International Events Coordinator](#)
[Tim Thompson, Director](#) of Accreditation, International Division
[Kimberly Park, Accreditation Specialist, International Division](#)



- **Register NOW** for [ICEC Asia 2023](#) in Jakarta, 26–29 November 2023. We have assembled a great keynote team that will challenge and encourage your heart. **We are also accepting your workshop submissions NOW.** [Click here to get your workshop included](#) at ICEC.
 - **Register NOW** for the [International Schools Job Fair Tour](#) in November 2023. Liberty University on 7 November, Dallas Baptist University on 9 November, and Grand Canyon University on 13-14 November.
 - Save the date. [ICEC Europe, 20-23 March 2024](#) in Prague CZ. Details are still in progress.
 - **NEW! Announcing a mid-summer price discount** and an all new track on [PFO2Go](#). A track on Cultural Intelligence™ has now been included. PFO2Go is our asynchronous online course designed to help your new hires transition to your school. And if you have questions about PFO2Go, we have answers – [check out our FAQs](#).
-

NEWS, ARTICLES & OTHER IDEAS



- ACSI's posts and resources:
 - [Roles in Spiritual Formation](#) – Dr. Debbie MacCullough, ACSI Global
 - [The Resource Paradox](#) – Dr. Scott Rodin
 - [ChatGPT Presents Opportunities for Schools](#) – Fisher & Phillips, LLC
 - [School's Over, But We Didn't Finish Everything – And that's a Good Thing.](#)
Lynn Swaner
 - [Flourishing Series: Questioning](#) (podcast) – Swaner, Justin A. Smith
- School Heads - Now is a good time to update your school staff rosters, primary contact, and enrollment numbers in your ACSI.org account. See instructions [here!](#)
- If you have a particular focus on TCKs you might consider attending the International TCK Conference: 2023. [Learn more here.](#)
- I love this: “We’re Michael and Kim Essenburg, and we want international Christian school students, staff, and leaders to flourish in Jesus!” Enjoy...
 - Looking for some [good books](#) to read (like [Hacking Group Work](#), [The Will to Learn](#), and [Insight](#))?
 - [How clear are you on your school's approach for helping students grow strong in the Lord?](#)
 - [How clear are you on why and how you use expected student outcomes?](#)
 - [We can flourish without a plan, right?](#)
- Must read article for your incoming young families: [Welcome to Raising a Family Overseas.](#)
- This article on Korean education is eye-opening. [South Korea is cutting 'killer questions' from an 8-hour exam some blame for a fertility rate crisis.](#)
- “What I learned through COVID is that traditional strategic planning is dead; however the need to plan strategically remains.” Leaders please read, [Why Your Next Strategic Plan Needs Agility](#). And: [Seeking God's Will in Board Meetings](#) by our friends at Resolve.
- I found this video mesmerizing: [the making of large-batch Kimchi](#). I'm not sure how I feel about this.
- Why wasn't I taught this so much earlier: [The Mathematically Correct Way to Tie Your Shoes.](#)

HEADSHIP OPENINGS ONLY:

- Carthage Classical Academy, Tunisia. [Learn more here.](#)
- Christian Alliance International School, Hong Kong. [Learn more here.](#)
- Faith International Academy, Philippines. [Learn more here.](#)
- International Community School – Singapore. [Learn more here.](#)
- Kigali International Community School, Rwanda. [Learn more here.](#)
- Mountainview Christian School, Indonesia. [Learn more here.](#)

If you have a head of school opening coming up, please let me know. Be sure to check our [member school vacancy page](#) as well as the [ACSI Job Board](#). The ACSI job board is currently showing almost [7279 resumes](#) from job seekers, up again by approximately 100 since early May 2023! Use the filter to see the most recently updated resumes. If you are interested in a position at an international school check out the latest non-USA opportunities [here](#).



Please see Dr. Larry Taylor's Quarterly video.

The Burj Khalifa of Pasta Towers

By Dr. David Balik, VP of USA

During a recent trip to Dubai for historic prayer and planning meetings with our ACSI global leaders, I read an excellent article by Jessica Stillman of the 'Understandably' blog. In it, she asked a question and shared an illustration that really captured my attention: Why do we (statistically speaking) become more susceptible to "paralysis through analysis" as we get older?

Imagine for a moment, that I gave you some pasta, some marshmallows, some tape, and some string, and I told you to build the tallest possible tower in 45 minutes. How well do you think you'd do? Certainly better than a 5-year-old, right? But when researchers actually tried this experiment, pitting kindergartners against CEOs, lawyers, and MBA students, it was the kids who came out on top. The score went like this:

- Kindergartners: 26 inches tall on average.
- CEOs: 22 inches tall on average.
- MBA students: A puny 10 inches.

Now, you can read this story as an adorable illustration of the scrappiness and creativity of kids. Indeed, children—like my grandson Knox—are legendarily fearless and imaginative...

[Continue reading below.](#)

FSi Charlotte Recap

The most recent Flourishing Schools Institute (FSi) in Charlotte, NC, took place on June 20-22. This FSi event was the first of a renewed FSi cycle featuring dynamic keynote speakers and an all-new teacher track for breakout sessions most applicable to teachers.

The gathering began on Tuesday afternoon with sessions led by Lynn Swaner and Matthew Lee about the flourishing school journey. That evening, the Opening Session formally kicked off to a crowd of over 350 participants.

[Continue reading below.](#)

Maximizing the ACSI Community & Networking

ACSI Community offers Christian educators with opportunities to Connect, Collaborate, Compel, Captivate, and Comprehend through our free online forum for members. Join thousands of like-minded education professionals around the globe as they grow in knowledge, sharpen skills, and deepen their faith in a safe, authentic, virtual environment. [Create your account today!](#)

In the same vein, ACSI Leadership Network Meetings...

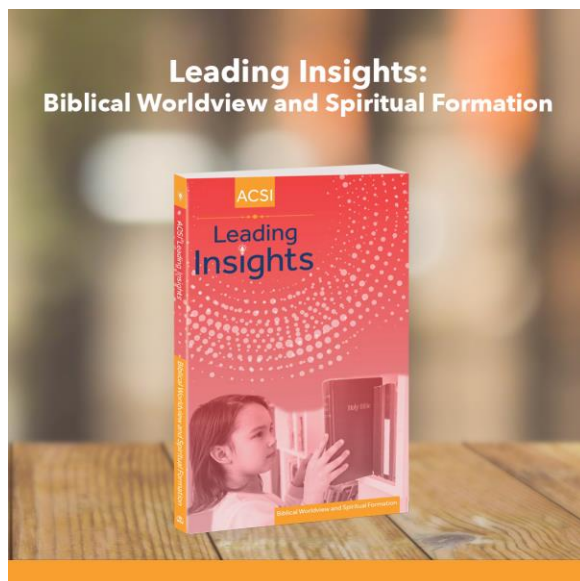
[Continue reading below.](#)

Cultivating an Effective Student Assessment Program

As educational leaders, we hold the key to promoting both academic and spiritual growth in our students and are responsible for promoting an effective student assessment program as a valuable tool to support that goal. To establish an effective student assessment program, leaders should emphasize meaningful measurement, establish a consistent cadence for assessment, and provide teacher training and resources.

Emphasize Measurement: Leaders must emphasize the proper role of measurement...

[Continue reading below.](#)





[ACSI | Association of Christian Schools International](#)

Post Office Box 62249, Colorado Springs, CO 80962

Connect with us on social media and fellow Christian educators through the [ACSI Community!](#)

We respect your privacy. We do not sell, rent, or abuse our customer email list.

We strive to send valuable, timely emails to our members and friends.

[MANAGE SUBSCRIPTION PREFERENCES](#)

If you no longer wish to receive ANY of ACSI's emails, please globally unsubscribe [here](#).

The Burj Khalifa of Pasta Towers Continued

But according to entrepreneur and author [Luni Libes](#), who wrote about the experiment, there's a far more actionable lesson to take from the tale of the pasta towers. Kids don't just come out on top because of the way their brains are wired, Libes writes. It's more about how they approach the challenge. "The key reason the children won is that they spent their limited time trying and failing, versus planning," he declares.

Give the diligent MBA students weeks to build a pasta tower and they likely would nail the assignment. Out would come the engineering textbooks and the graph paper; a careful plan would have been developed, tested, revised, and revised again. The end result would have been the Burj Khalifa of pasta towers.

But when the experimenters restricted the time for the task, the MBA students and even the CEOs, to a lesser degree, got stuck, while the kids got working. Rather than scratching their heads and assigning roles, they just started building towers (and likely noisily crashing), learning all the while. Kindergartners learn by doing, which is the key takeaway for Libes. "The lesson here isn't that MBAs are stupid," he writes. "It's that iteration and experimentation is the winning strategy."

Now, you can certainly take this lesson too far. Crashing a rickety pasta tower is fun. Crashing critical software infrastructure is not. The point is that there is certainly an important place for analysis, planning, and deliberation in our schools, and the creative process more generally. (And if you've ever been the parent of a kindergartner, I'm willing to guess you've exclaimed at least once to your child: "Will you please just THINK first?")

But if you're in the learning and discovery phase of a project, rather than in execution, then the pasta tower challenge is a healthy reminder that most adults err too much on the side of analysis and not enough on the side of action.

This point has also been made memorably in other contexts. There's a similar anecdote in which an art school professor told half of his class they would be graded on the quantity of work they produce while the other half would be graded on the quality. Guess which half wound up producing the superior art. As the pasta tower story suggests, the students who were told that they needed to churn out as much work as possible actually churned out better quality work—even if it was surrounded, so to speak, with some lesser quality work. In the course of trying and failing, this group honed their skills and eventually created the finer finished pieces.

When it comes to innovation and fast learning, quantity beats quality, at least sometimes. The more you're willing to experiment, stumble, and try again, the faster and more effectively you'll improve. Kids understand this idea intuitively. The rest of us sometimes need a reminder. ☺

As you start a new school year, take heart! God's word tells us in Joshua 1:9, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." 'Failing forward' is the key to growth and to finding the preferred future God has for you and your school so you can truly [flourish](#) for His glory. Know that all of us at ACSI are praying for you—and stand ready to serve you—every step of the way!

FSi Charlotte Recap Continued

The most recent Flourishing Schools Institute (FSi) in Charlotte, NC, took place on June 20-22. This FSi event was the first of a renewed FSi cycle featuring dynamic keynote speakers and an all-new teacher track for breakout sessions most applicable to teachers.

The gathering began on Tuesday afternoon with sessions led by Lynn Swaner and Matthew Lee about the flourishing school journey. That evening, the Opening Session formally kicked off to a crowd of over 350 participants.

During the conference, keynote speeches by John Stonestreet ("Truth Never Gets Old: Refuting Relativism"), Dennis Eastman ("The Three Essentials of a Skilled Educator: Relationships, Relevance & Rigor"), Nick Vujicic (on managing emotions), Emily Pigott, John Eastman, and Schuyler Lehman educated, encouraged, and inspired a rapt audience made up of schoolteachers and administrators who traveled to Charlotte from neighboring states and around the world (Uganda and Panama).

Breakout sessions were led by Jerry Nelson, Billy Hutchinson, Debbie MacCullough, Jason Rachels, Krista Wallace, Becky Wiley, John Patterson, Jay Ferguson, Betsy Winkle, and Becky Miedema on a variety of topics, such as finances, hiring practices, insular culture, and resource constraints.

Rainy weather created cool temperatures during the week, but spirits inside the Hilton Embassy Suites were high as a lively group of conference goers made new acquaintances, developed connections, and learned more about creating flourishing schools and personal well-being. The week was capped off with an Urban Schools Gathering on Friday.

Be sure to join us for the next Flourishing Schools Institute in Phoenix, AZ, November 7-9. [Click here](#) for more information.

Maximizing the ACSI Community and Networking Continued

ACSI Community offers Christian educators with opportunities to Connect, Collaborate, Compel, Captivate, and Comprehend through our free online forum for members. Join thousands of like-minded education professionals around the globe as they grow in knowledge, sharpen skills, and deepen their faith in a safe, authentic, virtual environment. [Create your account today!](#)

In the same vein, ACSI Leadership Network Meetings are an opportunity for school leaders to meet with local peers to build connections and learn together. This year the focus will be on:

- Well-Being for Leaders – ensure you are filled so you can pour out into your staff, students, and stakeholders
- Legal Issues – take a deeper look at relevant legislation and the legal climate so you can prepare and guide your school well
- Customizable Content – one of three topics you and your peers will select as being most relevant to you

[Sign up today](#) for the meeting nearest to you!

Cultivating an Effective Student Assessment Program: The Role of Educational Leaders Continued

Emphasize Measurement:

Leaders must emphasize the proper role of measurement in instructional decision-making. Steven and Joanna Levy, in their blog, "Rethinking Assessment: A Tool for Learning and Spiritual Formation," explain how leaders must recognize the significance and importance of both assessment OF learning and assessment FOR learning.

Assessment OF learning, summative in nature, occurs after learning and provides valuable insights into the quality of instruction and student achievement. However, overemphasizing assessment OF learning can lead to a narrow judgment of success or failure, undermining the potential for growth and redemption.

In contrast, assessment FOR learning is formative and occurs during the learning process. It provides immediate feedback, enables students to appreciate their strengths, and identifies areas for improvement. By embracing assessment FOR learning, leaders foster an effective and motivating environment where students and teachers understand the value of progress and continuous learning.

Establish a Cadence:

Consistency is crucial in an assessment program. Leaders should establish a predictable pattern for assessments, enabling the school community to obtain actionable data. This cadence ensures that assessments become an integral part of the teaching and learning process, facilitating continuous improvement.

Provide Teacher Training and Resources:

To ensure effective assessment practices, leaders must provide comprehensive training to teachers. This includes score interpretation, data analysis, utilizing data to enhance student learning, designing effective assessments, and employing assessments as teaching tools. Leaders can tap into resources from organizations like ACSI, test publishers, staff experts, community educators, and digital platforms. Leaders should also schedule dedicated time for faculty to collaborate in analyzing data and formulating action plans. Monthly or quarterly meetings can facilitate content area and grade-level discussions, enabling horizontal and vertical alignment.

Conclusion:

Educational leaders play a crucial role in cultivating an effective student assessment program that promotes growth in students. They achieve this by emphasizing meaningful measurement and recognizing the importance of a balanced approach to assessment OF learning and assessment FOR learning. Consistency in assessments enables the gathering of actionable data and supports continuous improvement. Providing comprehensive teacher training and resources empowers educators to use assessments as powerful teaching tools, enhancing student learning. Collaboration among faculty members through dedicated time for data analysis and action planning strengthens the assessment program. These efforts create a culture of progress, continuous learning, and excellence within schools.