



HIGHER ORDER THINKING SCHOOLS  
strong arts arts integration democratic practice

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Kinsella Super Stars demonstrate life skills through drill team performances at R. J. Kinsella Magnet School of Performing Arts.

## EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

—Eddie Duran, Artistic Director, Kinsella Magnet School

Arts Integration, as an approach to teaching, can be a foreign, and often intimidating, concept for some teachers. At Kinsella Magnet School of Performing Arts we believe it is the best way to teach because the arts are intrinsically and emotionally engaging. Research on *How Students Learn* and on *How We Can Help Them Learn* by John F. Kihlstrom at the University of California, Berkeley reveals that each student has his/her own best way of learning based on that student's individual intrinsic motivations. Through the arts, the probability of student engagement increases and likewise the retention of information. The more arts that are infused into a unit, the greater likelihood that students will retain, and more importantly, effectively use the information imparted. Step into any classroom at Kinsella and it is evident that students learn better when they are emotionally engaged through all the senses that the arts touch.

The arts optimally arouse emotional responses and students just learn better when they are emotionally engaged. Students remember information longer when they are made happy, mad, or even sad in the delivery of the information. So at Kinsella it is not just

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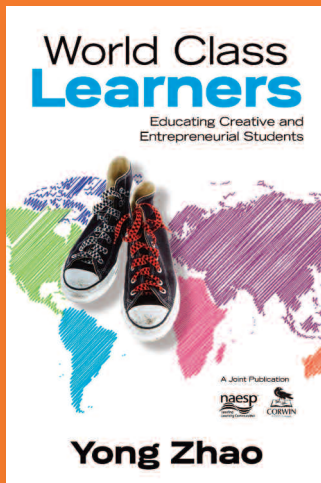
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## HOT RESOURCES

*World Class Learners*

Yong Zhao

Researcher and Professor Yong Zhao unlocks the secrets to cultivating independent thinkers who are willing and able to use their learning differently to create jobs and contribute positively to the globalized society.

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## HOT Approach Develops World Class Learners

—Bonnie Koba, Director, HOT Schools

Dr. Yong Zhao, author of this issue's featured resource ***World Class Learners***, delivered an inspiring keynote address "The Definition of a World Class Education: A New Paradigm" at the 2013 HOT Schools Summer Institute. Dr. Yong Zhao's endorsement of HOT Schools: "*The globalized society transformed by technology requires all children to become creative, entrepreneurial, and globally competent. The HOT program is one of the few innovative educational programs I have seen in the world with such a future orientation. It has the promise to lead the educational changes much needed for cultivating creative, entrepreneurial, and globally competent citizens.*" is particularly fitting for this issue, as each article provides a glimpse into how unique each HOT School really is.

Any educator will tell you that navigating the ever changing K-12 landscape is as challenging as it is rewarding—and particularly so amid the convergence of the Common Core, Smarter Balanced, and new teacher evaluation initiatives currently underway. The HOT Schools Program is "a process of becoming." While the program has no yellow-brick road guiding schools from point A to point B, it relies on the unique climate and culture of each participating school to design their own direction within the framework of our Core Components: Strong Arts, Arts Integration and Democratic Practice. We equip each educator—teacher, artist

and principal alike—with the tools to chart his/her own course, the confidence to pursue it, and a collegial network to help negotiate bumps encountered along the way. Over time, the articles and stories in each newsletter will paint a picture of the diversity of each school's HOT Schools journey.

The mission of HOT is to inspire life-long learning in, about and through the arts in a democratic community celebrating each child's unique voice. HOT Schools was not designed to increase student test scores, improve teacher and student attendance or boost student grade level advancement, but these are key attributes of schools that fully implement the HOT Approach. While HOT wasn't designed to support Common Core or myriad initiatives that have come before, HOT Schools works because it develops good solid teaching practices which educators use to engage students in meaningful discovery and deep understandings, and to empower students as confident, motivated, responsible learners.

With twenty+ years of continual progress, HOT inspires each school—whether a K-12 performing arts magnet like Kinsella in Hartford, a K-4 multi-aged suburban school like John Lyman in Middlefield, a K-8 charter school like Integrated Day in Norwich, or New Haven's social justice themed High School in the Community—all featured here, to each use the research-based common sense HOT tools and strategies to forge their own path in the process of becoming Higher Order Thinking Schools.

# The Importance of Town Meeting

—Thomas Ford, Principal, John Lyman Elementary School

One of the most distinguishing and rewarding aspects of the Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Approach at John Lyman School is our weekly Town Meeting. Town Meeting, or Weekly Assembly as it is known at Lyman, allows us to bring all three HOT Schools Core Components to the forefront: Strong Arts, Arts Integration, and especially Democratic Practice. When we come together on Friday afternoons as a community of students, parents, and staff, it is a strong representation of the teaching and learning that is happening at John Lyman School.



Students lead Weekly Assembly at John Lyman.

The format of our Weekly Assembly is relatively simple. In addition to two classroom shares, we sing familiar songs together, celebrate student accomplishments in a variety of areas, and recognize the work of our student hosts. What really defines our Assembly, however, is the role that our students play in its development each week, and that is what I want to highlight in this article.

Let's start with the Assembly hosts. Classroom teachers sign up to host a given Assembly, and three or four students from that class will take on the responsibility of creating the agenda and deciding how they are going to introduce the items on that week's agenda. With teacher facilitation, those three to four children work

carefully to prepare their remarks, determine which songs will be sung, and figure out how they are going to equitably share those responsibilities amongst themselves. During an Assembly, it is always amazing to watch how the individual voices and personalities of those students shine as they carry out the plan they created earlier in the week. Without question, it is student Democratic Practice in action.

Further exemplifying Democratic Practice is the centerpiece of our Weekly Assembly, the class shares. Once again, classroom teachers sign up on a rotation to share something that their students have been learning. From that point, however, the teacher becomes the facilitator of a great learning opportunity. Students collectively decide what they want to share with the school, and then determine how they are going to make that happen. At different points during the week, instructional time is devoted to this process. More often than not, students decide to bring an art form into the share, so Strong Arts and Arts Integration are also on display during the Assembly. Just recently, a first and second grade class used dance to share what they had learned during a teaching artist residency connected to a social studies unit and a third and fourth grade class developed a pizza parlor skit to share new learning about fractions. The share itself is usually no more than five to seven minutes long, but it is incredibly meaningful for those students because it represents some of the best aspects of learning and student voice at John Lyman.

In addition to sharing and hosting, the technical aspects of Assembly provide another Democratic Practice opportunity for students.

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**Emotional Engagement.** *continued*

*Fear Builds Walls:* Under the direction of Kim Bridges, Kinsella students perform with Roger Waters and Pink Floyd at the 12-12-12 Concert for Sandy Relief held at Madison Square Garden.

about combining music and math or reading and drama, it's really about students responding to information that is both thought provoking and emotionally stirring. Students must be engaged first and foremost. If they are not engaged then they are not attentive and if they are not attentive, then they are not learning with any real enduring permanence. At Kinsella we want our students to form arguments that are driven by their emotions, but structured logically with examples and evidence. At Kinsella we teach our students to be passionate, not only about what they learn, but also how they learn.

Recently, a group of sophomores at Kinsella had to read *Tuesdays with Morrie*. But they really had no good reason to read the book, or so they said. For these students at 7:45 a.m. reaching the ELA goals and meeting the common core ELA literacy standard just wasn't enough to hook them. None of them had heard of Morrie Schwartz. They did not know about the wisdom of his aphorisms or how he advised people to live their lives to the fullest. So we explored one aphorism in the book, "When you learn how to

die, you learn how to live." The students held living funerals like Morrie did in the book, they created obituaries that celebrated life, they saw their teacher act out behavior qualities from the characters in the book, they presented a monologue that they collaboratively wrote, they exchanged dialogue, they saw Morrie's interviews with Ted Kopel, took on the characters of Morrie and Ted Kopel, and reinterpreted the interview. The students engaged. They connected personally to the book and became invested on an emotional level. Inevitably, even the most reluctant readers in that sophomore class began to read the book! Authentic emotional connections were made and higher order thinking occurred. Students created. Common core standards were met. The process was fun and profoundly fulfilling and hopefully inspired students to read another book. Morrie said, "When you learn to die, you learn to live." I say, when you learn to feel, you learn to learn." Ignite the heart and the mind will follow. Integrate the arts.



Next Issue: Leslie Johnson's HOT story

## HOT SCHOOLS DIRECTORY

**Alcott Elementary School**  
Wolcott

**Columbus Magnet School**  
Norwalk

**Gaffney Elementary School**  
New Britain

**High School in the Community**  
New Haven

**Integrated Day Charter School**  
Norwich

**Jack Jackter Intermediate School**  
Colchester

**John C. Daniels School**  
New Haven

**John Lyman Elementary School**  
Middlefield

**Kinsella Magnet School**  
Hartford

**Lincoln Middle School**  
Meriden

**Martin Elementary School**  
Manchester

**Pleasant Valley Elementary School**  
South Windsor

**Samuel Staples Elementary School**  
Easton

**Worthington Hooker School**  
New Haven

**Bonnie Koba**  
Director

**Amy Goldbas**  
Associate Director for Programming

**Christopher Eaves**  
Associate Director for Professional Development

# Social Justice Radio

—D'Anndra Jones, Student, High School in the Community

*Social Justice Radio is the culmination of a 10-week media literacy residency conducted by Connecticut Office of the Arts Teaching Artist Richard Hill in collaboration with History teacher Dan Roque, Math teachers Thomas James and Cari Strand and Music teacher Nathan Trier under the auspices of HOT Schools. Students in this residency brainstormed content, researched topics and recorded their original ideas to create this curriculum-based show. This is D'Anndra Jones' reflection upon her experience in this residency.*



Listen to  
Social Justice Radio  
online! Click here  
and follow the  
links.

Teaching artist, teacher and students collaboratively create

High School in the Community Academy for Law and Social Justice in New Haven Connecticut has gone through many changes in the past two years. We have changed from a traditional grading system to mastery based learning school where students can take charge in the way they should be graded and where everyone, as a whole, can take part in the community to change it for the better. We have also become a HOT School which is a perfect match for our community focused learning environment. The HOT focus on arts and democratic process balances our law and social justice magnet. I am a junior at this unique school. I plan to graduate in the spring of 2015. One experience I know I will never forget is participating in creating a social justice radio show with a teaching artist who worked in our classes earlier this school year.

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## Shedding Light on Light & Equality

—Ann Theriault, Lisa DonDiego and Carolyn Kurz, Teachers, Integrated Day Charter School

The Integrated Day Charter School was excited to finally become a HOT school for the 2012-2013 school year. One of the greatest benefits of being a HOT school is having the opportunity to collaborate with skilled teaching artists who help teachers bring the curriculum to life through the arts. Last year, our 5th and 6th grade classes had the pleasure of working with Connecticut Office of the Arts Teaching Artist Derron Wood on a residency that incorporated science, social studies, poetry and puppetry! By developing and performing shadow plays, our students learned about the hard science of light and its perception in addition to exploring the social and political ramifications of light within different cultures.



Students explore light rays and shadow plays.

At the beginning of the residency, Mr. Wood taught our students about the properties of light and color through hands on activities like building their own light rays, creating wavelength rainbows and bouncing balls off of curved surfaces. Students who had never before been engaged or interested in school would excitedly ask, “Is Mr. Wood coming today?” His visits quickly became the highlight of our week.

As time went on, we started to look at our project in a new “light.” Students began to examine

the purpose and necessity of light in their lives and question some basic assumptions about light and darkness. They examined issues of race and equality, energy poverty and life both with and without power. As a product of their learning, each class wrote an original poem to adapt into a script for their shadow play.

In creating their shadow plays, students applied what they had learned about the properties of light—things like opacity, reflection, distortion and color—to communicate a message about the power and meaning of light in our society. Students were encouraged to experiment, take risks and collaborate with each other to achieve a common goal. Democratic Practice was clearly evident as teams worked together to decide how best to illustrate their scenes. Every student was involved in every part of the process, from planning to performance.

With this residency, the students gained a deep understanding of both the science and social implications of light through the arts. Mr. Wood helped our teachers design and implement lessons that reached all kinds of learners—using things like visual models and kinesthetic exercises—and then guided our students to demonstrate that understanding through visual and performance art. This residency was an incredibly valuable learning experience for all involved. The final performances were exemplary evidence of why we are proud to be a HOT School!

**Connecticut**  
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### The Importance of Town Meeting *continued*

Because the entire student body, staff, and parents attend each Assembly, sound and lighting are very important. That is where our student Tech Crew comes into play. This group of fourth grade students works with one of our teachers prior to Assembly to determine what the sound, lighting, and technology needs will be and who is going to be responsible for each component. During Assembly, the Tech Crew makes sure that hosts and presenters have working microphones, adjust the stage lights, raise and lower the projector screen, and even assist me when I go on stage to recognize students. The Tech Crew is another strong example of Democratic Practice at work and is essential to a successful Assembly.



The entire school comes together for Weekly Assembly.

As a principal, it is incredibly satisfying to watch Assembly each week because I know that it is indicative of teaching, learning, and student voice at John Lyman School. Watching as students develop the confidence to speak in front of an audience of peers and adults is equally gratifying. In short, Weekly Assembly is an opportunity for a whole school gathering where we can listen, learn, and celebrate together as a school community. Not only does Weekly Assembly help us to recognize students and their accomplishments, it is also a constant reminder of how fortunate we are to be a HOT School and the importance and value of Strong Arts, Arts Integration, and Democratic Practice.

### Social Justice Radio *continued*

From October to December, my fourth period class, *Justification of War*, worked with the Math and Social Justice and Music classes in order to create a radio show that raised awareness on a few current issues that are important to us as students. Our teachers and Connecticut Office of the Arts Teaching Artist Richard Hill helped us put our show together, brought us through the process of choosing our own individual research topics, researching those topics and their backgrounds, comparing our current events to other events that were happening in our nation today and exploring more on the Just War Theory. The essential question in our class was whether or not war is ever just in any case.

Next it was time to practice for the radio show. We practiced our interviews and segments multiple times, to decide if any of us wanted to add or delete content. During this revision process a lot of us laughed at how weird our voices sounded on tape. A lot of us were apprehensive about talking on tape but, as a class, we decided that it was an important project and agreed to do it.

Finally, it was the day to tape our show. Our feelings as students ranged from feeling shy to being nervous and excited. All our practice paid off because the actual taping of the show went very smoothly. When we returned from our holiday break, we listened to our official radio show as a class; we were very proud of the outcome.

Personally, as a student, when I first heard about the idea of having our own radio show, I didn't realize how talking about war in general with all of my classmates, interviewing a veteran and creating a talk radio show on this topic would allow me to learn that all wars start for the same few reasons. I also learned to take a risk and speak publicly. So far in my high school career, this is one of the projects that I'll remember doing the most.