



TEACHING ATTENTION (Presentations by Teachers in the “Attention Curriculum” Initiative) 6 December 2024

14:38:45 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
On Jonathan’s stuff: LOVING IT!

14:38:52 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
And passing along a very cool reverence:

14:38:57 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
https://www.google.com/search?q=daston+and+lunbeck+history+of+observation&rlz=1C5GCCM_en&oq=daston+and+lunbeck+history+of+observation&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQIRigATIHCAIQIRigATIHCAMQIRigATIHCQQIRigATIHCQUQIRigAdIBCTE0OTQ2ajBqNKgCALACAA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

14:39:17 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
That is Daston and Lunbeck, HISTORIES OF OBSERVATION...
Roberto Tejada: 👍

14:39:24 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
Super cool book....

14:42:29 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
Loving all of this!

14:42:34 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
Another quick ref:

14:42:39 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
https://www.google.com/search?q=listening+in+paris+a+cultural+history&rlz=1C5GCCM_en&oq=listening+in+paris&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqCggAEEAY4wIYgAQyCggAEEAY4wIYgAQyBwgBEC4YgAQyBggCEEUYOTIICAMQABgWGB4yCAgEEAAYFhgeMggIBRAAGBYHjIKCAYQABgKGBYYHjINCACQABiGAXiABBiKBTINCAgQABiGAXiABBiKBTINCAkQABiGAXiABBiKdIBCDY4NTJqMGo5qAIGsAIB&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

14:42:51 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
One of the VERY GREATEST BOOKS on the history of attention....

14:43:13 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
"LISTENING IN PARIS" by James Johnson.
Roberto Tejada: 👍

14:43:55 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
A history of symphonic music, which focuses on the WAYS AUDIENCES HAVE LISTENED to that kind of music, together, since 1650....

14:45:45 From Michael Stratechuk he, him, his to Everyone:
Reading it now ! Fascinating book.

14:46:35 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:
Stroop test = so cool! If you don't know it, LOOK IT UP!

14:46:48 From Lisa Siegmann to Everyone:
With apologies, I am about to board a flight...

As the Director of Hunter College Campus Schools, I am so proud and so grateful by this generous work of my teachers, Jonathan, Rebecca, Michael, Caitlin and Mimi. I have been sooo wildly inspired by their engagement with the contemplation of Attention in the classroom and the work with Graham and Peter.

THIS is the work of our generation of schools.

THANK you for inspiring this work and for doing it!!
David Landes, Larry Berger's iPhone (2): 🍷

14:49:35 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:
Rapporteurs: save your notes on your computer! Not the break-out chat - that will delete upon your return. Weird Zoom glitch! Save your notes on your computer!

BREAKOUT #1 (Feedback & Questions for our educators?)

15:00:36 From Larry Berger to Everyone:
Impressed by exercises, liked the orchestra idea, played in one. Disciplines of attention are required, feel feet on the ground, other too abstract. Quantum particles, we large relative to them. Sci observation? What were the exercises? Need to be grounded by way of attention first, stay with that, and then do exercises like the ones presented.

This was a practicing scientist versus just learning what has been done, that was very good. What scientists actually do. Culture and what we take for granted, opens us up to other perspectives. Devoting attention to an object makes it strange, out of the ordinary.

Idea of heavy handedness, hard problem

15:00:39 From Jac Mullen to Everyone:
Caitlin: One thing we worked on was a framework for thinking about lessons: not every lesson will be solely focused on attention

An attentional culture across the school.

So that everyone can reference and reinforce it.

In biology, when do we want to use this vocabulary that's specific?

The big one is academic advisory program—if every single 8th grader does it, then you have this opportunity for everyone else to be able to reference it. That’s the dream.

10 min/day. 40 min/every other week.

[[Jac: are there styles or forms of attention specific to biology? should we consider this?]]

Meta-attention ← practice with bell, was the idea. was not necessarily implemented as planned. We should follow up (We = FoA) to get this plan. Bell rings everyone stops and records what they were paying attention to when the bell rang.

1/2

15:00:43 From Jac Mullen to Everyone:

nina: You can’t force focus—so how did they go?

Caitlin: Focus areas were: noticing attention; tolerating distress; practicing focus (acknowledging boredom, acknowledging apathy, finding intrinsic motivation, returning to original target of focus)

Elisabeth: Also, for part three: if you can be curious about your own boredom, you can push yourself to find something to be interested in.

[[Jac: also you can push yourself to figure out why you are bored. work your resistance.]]

Ana Cristina: also you can have ownership over your own boredom. People say, “we’re bored,” and then we push back—how is this possible? We are talking to middle schoolers here. It is not possible to be bored in middle school. There is too much turmoil internally. It is insanity. 2/2

15:01:09 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

(Group 4; 1/3)

Kim: I found this super interesting. I have lots of questions, especially about Caitlin’s work. It seems like the experiments she was doing were very interesting. In Brazil, we’re just starting to talk in schools with parents and kids. We expose the attention economy (we call it the “extractive attention economy”) and kids share their experience. We haven’t dived into attention experiments.

Kristen: I was struck by Caitlin’s note that the inability to resist distress was a key feature of the attention crisis. A question that I had was: How much groundwork is she laying for that? Is she identifying that as a problem? If so, how? Do the students themselves feel that that’s a problem? How much context is she providing for that particular experiment?

15:01:28 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

(Group 4; 2/3)

Brit: A general thought: it seems like it would be easy to fall into the idea that talking about attention falls into a good/bad, attention/distraction scheme. How explicit is that distinction made to students? We learn from an early age to punish ourselves for not “paying attention”. But attention is a flowing thing. Education is about learning the tools and learning to recognize that feeling.

Kim: It’s interesting to bring in these exercises because attention in schools is often seen as an oppressive word. You’re teaching students to obey and submit to the teacher’s knowledge.

Brit: Passive!

Kim: Understanding the broader sense of attention in a classroom is very empowering. It’s about more than obeying. When kids and especially adolescents struggling for independence don’t want to be indoctrinated, it can be very empowering.

15:01:36 From Maura Sullivan (she/her) to Everyone:

Things that stuck out:

Making creativity out of chaos

Active vs. passive listening and attention

Inability to tolerate distress

Audacious: to encourage students to stay in ambiguity! That's bold!

15:01:50 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

(Group 4; 3/3)

Kristin: I have a strong interest in attention and fostering it with other people. And Kim - you solicit, right?

Kim: And my students love sharing it!

Kirstin: In my classroom, I always want to KNOW MORE about how they experience attention in their own lives...

15:02:03 From Maura Sullivan (she/her) to Everyone:

This is so Inspiring!

1. School and music: should be in a certain way? Let students understand from multiple points of view. What was the lasting impact of the exercise of music teacher?

2. "Sitting in ambiguity" – great. Did that exercise impact students who weren't even present?

15:02:22 From Maura Sullivan (she/her) to Everyone:

Water being sticky: conveyed when attn. was held – living in this age of misinformation. It's maybe easy to convey misinformation if you have someone's attention. Separate the content from attention.

15:02:29 From anya yermakova to Everyone:

A question about teaching theatre: concentration is always important, but how are attention exercises different from sheer "focus" or "concentration"?

And how do we adapt, after we pay attention? In the question of music: illustrated well how we adjust one's role in an ensemble.

Are there exercises in theatre like that? Or in other disciplines? Having paid attention, how to adapt one's own role within the collective - ensemble, role, class - based on what you experienced?

1/2

15:02:33 From anya yermakova to Everyone:

Maybe attention is widening your presence. You're connected with other bodies. And envisioning yourself somewhere else.

Struck by the similarity and throughline across the disciplines!

But maybe disciplinary distinctions are important too. math vs music - solitary vs collective

Maybe an application of attention practices is not necessarily thinking about a goal. And then see what happens to the outcome, and how it can help reconfigure your relationship with and within the set. Seems like the orchestral re-seating exercise did exactly that!

In theatre: how different is the attention in the case of improv vs scripted performance?

2/2

15:02:49 From anya yermakova to Everyone:

(conversation among

Jaime O'Connor

Raphael Jeune

Elisa Tamarkin

Melissa Galvez

anya yermakova)

15:03:05 From Maura Sullivan (she/her) to Everyone:

Training students to observe and reflect.

Helps students to understand what's already happening with the internet – the coding, the algorithms

Have students self-reflect on their own attention quality; attn. is a State of Being.

The universe as a metaphor for attention! Does it matter that we have the ability to attend to the universe? YES!

15:03:35 From Vitória Oliveira to Everyone:

Jonathan was in our room. Silvia asked him about the challenging experience of trying to engage with the size of the universe and whether students posed wildly different questions. Jonathan shared that most students hadn't even grasped where we are within the universe.

Stefan asked when the kids tended to lose focus. Jonathan found this question of the prompt the most interesting—it highlighted how distractions varied widely. Some students were mentally elsewhere, like thinking about their pets at home. This wandering helps to show that it is not necessary to be hyper-focused every single day at school.

15:03:54 From Vitória Oliveira to Everyone:

Vitória then asked how Jonathan had developed his approach. He explained that his inspiration came from figures like Carl Sagan. He had long been exploring whether it's meaningful to understand our position in the cosmos. The students' questions were varied, with some feeling small and forgiving themselves for bad things in life, while others resisted, arguing that such thoughts didn't seem practical for the tasks at hand.

Stefan asked whether the students faced difficulties. Jonathan acknowledged that some did struggle, but their honesty about it was valuable—it allowed him to recalibrate and provide clearer guidance.

BREAKOUT #2 (Imagine the attentional high school curriculum of your DREAMS)

15:11:35 From Vitória Oliveira to Everyone:

My group: I accidentally left too soon!

15:11:40 From Larry Berger to Everyone:

Put Thich Nhat Hanh's work on the syllabus, on simply paying attention to walking, breathing, other things we do in life, not alone but with your statement. Collective attention experience important, makes your own attention richer.

Interactive things, team building can arise collective attention, need for different parts of the day, advisory, beginning, middle, end of day.

Key for doing things together, the power of that. Active collective attention. Private reflection plus sharing, commonality in what we see, plus disparities, things we don't see, bring it out, the magic of collective attention.

15:11:52 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

(Group 4; 4/6)

Brit: A classroom experience on sensory deprivation. And laying down on the floor!

Kim: A challenge I confront in my workshops is seeming to slam capitalism. But I do think it is central for kids to understand that the world that they're living isn't necessarily the world as it needs to be or should be. Things have been different and could be different.

Kristen: Two things come to mind. Since I came to parties, I thought, this is not how parties should be. It should be a long hallway with rooms, and people rotate through the rooms to get several 1:1 experiences talking about some theme. The other idea is (my high school had something like this) an outdoor education program. Once or twice a year we went on a one or two week trip.

15:11:54 From Jim Manly to Everyone:
Replying to "My group: I accidentally left too soon!":
same

15:12:00 From Ana to Everyone:
something that came up in Group 5 after our rapporteur got abducted before the end: attention with the whole body, kinesthetic attention

15:12:01 From Maura Sullivan (she/her) to Everyone:
Focusing: what's coming from the outside of awareness; a soft focusing on the unknown and the mysterious ; Eugene ____; listening skills to notice what's on the outskirts of awareness.

15:12:12 From Alyssa Loh to Everyone:
1/2 Amy told us about an amazing attention exercise she did in high school! That she remembers to this day. A teacher asking them to all look out the window — "everything is connected"

David - any time attention was a instrument of freedom I would wake up — anytime I could widen the walls of my prison through attention — music class was one...

15:12:13 From Maura Sullivan (she/her) to Everyone:
Students working 1:1 to really feel that space of attn to One person and One thought!

15:12:24 From Maura Sullivan (she/her) to Everyone:
Negative of that – paying attention to what is drawing their attention away, i.e. the phone. To be aware of that COST, it takes away from the student's purpose in the class. Develop a meta-cognitive capacity for attn.

15:12:30 From Alyssa Loh to Everyone:
2/2 Alyssa - I would love an attn curric that helped me connect what I was studying to the physical space of the school. I ignored physical environment in hs. Gives you a disempowered relationship, being forced to be in the same place very day. Would have been wonderful to have time set aside/scaffolding for taking on board physical space of school. First thing that comes to mind. I was there for years, and just did the exact same thing every day. So many days blur together—memories are so few and far between.

Dr Deans - Things that helped me in high school - a math teacher telling her that there was reason there was window in the classroom - you sometimes need to look out the window // another one giving permission for the mind to wander // then an actual journaling lesson —

15:12:30 From Jac Mullen to Everyone:
Elisabeth: In an ideal high school, there would be incremental stints where you practice longer and longer stints of sustained attention. It would increase with each year.

Nina: I'm doing my PhD on philosophy of education in relation to attention. Emphasis now on the teacher itself. I think when I look back—the importance of the teacher who is standing in the classroom, who can invite you or excite you to attend to the things in the world, and the things in the world. Teachers play a very important part in the student's attention, awakening it.

Ana Cristina: If I had teachers who would've helped me see how my organization and my attention was—who helped me to see myself in a bigger way, as attentive, as organized, had the teachers been more knowledgeable about attention, and could they have helped me to see myself in a different way...

Caitlin: One of my most important duties as a teacher is to model being an adult with ADHD.

AC: I think you have to have ADHD to be a teacher!

15:12:34 From Maura Sullivan (she/her) to Everyone:
Emotionally secure place to attend to common experiences and feelings.

15:12:48 From Maura Sullivan (she/her) to Everyone:
Pay attention to the society, politics. Listening ACROSS classes, not just in one class, isolated.
Nested attention modes – nesting, small to larger space

15:12:55 From anya yermakova to Everyone:
Elisa:
I imagine doing exactly what these teachers are trying to do - just the exercise of sitting with, dwelling, listening to something

Raphaële:
Include everyday activities! E.g., cooking, making clothes, and other daily basic needs. Also being outside - sidewalk study is very appealing. Soundscape work, listening.

Jaime:
Thinking about the nature of breaks. Time to process what just happened in one class before going into the next class. To think, to be quiet, to process - to shift your attention in a meaningful way.

Anya:
allow teachers to choose their tools and create their paths of paying attention that are unique and bring out their personalities - so students connect with teachers as humans and not only as people that give them information to learn for the exam.

1/2

15:12:57 From anya yermakova to Everyone:
Raphaële & Jaime:
Autonomy of students is very important.
Attention can look very different from one student to another, as they start to take autonomy to create or co-create circumstances for their attention, to construct their tools.

Melissa:
Difference between students and us having this conversation - technological mediation that they're so engaged with. Essential to know how to deal with that.

2/2

15:13:03 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:
(Group 4; 5/6)
Peter: an activity that shows just HOW MANY questions can be generated from sustained attention to... anything at all! The ability to attend to the world and to generate questions, answer those questions, and then discover MORE questions... that is the life of the mind!

Kristen: My friend had an idea for “crush studies.” Imagine you have a crush on an object and attend to it accordingly.

Brit: The prompt was for a high school experience, but it occurs to me that most of the attentional experiences in my life are at a younger age. Worth reflecting that we DO attention work at a young age group - what would this look like in middle and high school?

15:13:05 From Alyssa Loh to Everyone:
Notes from session 1 - 1/2 Dr. Deans told us about the “southbound on the freeway” poem she taught early in the year - kids were coming in from all over the city, used this as her “hallway study” - a poem where aliens come down to earth and think cars are creatures - and the kids were sent into the hallway to loop through the hallway, twice, trying to look with those fresh (alienated) eyes. An introduction

to each other and the school. And then did a second one, looking at people in the hallway, toward an exercise about writing characters

David asked for insights about the next generation —attention-related or otherwise ('you get them as teens, I get them afterwards at 18'); how are these kids generationally different than us?

15:13:11 From Molly Zapp to Everyone:

Dreams: 1/2

1. Having done an art high school myself, doing any kind of art practice is always attention-driven. How you make the subject alive, how you connect it with the rest of the world. Trying to answer the attention dream is trying to connect the importance to its connection to something outside of the school.

2. The system here with 40-minute classes means that all teachers are vying for students' attention for a very short period of time. In utopia, we'd have much more time, without the urgency to cover certain curriculum. That could be less stressful for some students to not be hurried.

15:13:13 From Alyssa Loh to Everyone:

Notes from session 1 - 2/2 Alyssa was curious about how to help kids have a relationship with their attention that isn't about "judgment" or "evaluation" — even adults who come to the Strother School associate school with "disciplinary" attention.

Dr. Dean told us about an exercise about trying to fill the space evenly - watch each other, what do we need to do to do that well and collectively, instead of judging whether we did it right —

David - Yes, theater is extremely useful to us, the justification for theater in education, it isn't exactly instrumentalized, might actually have baked in a justification for attention education too

Dr. Dean - Everyone has to learn to work with other people. At Hunter theater is required for everyone.

15:13:15 From Molly Zapp to Everyone:

3. At 14, what would have been beneficial would have been someone to show the attentional in the discursive, and the discursive in the attentional.

4. More time outside, and in physical movement. A pro-curiosity invitation from the teachers, with more options to pursue what interested us. I wish we would have had teaching about awareness – bodily, spatial, awareness of how our choices impact others.

15:14:10 From Vitória Oliveira to Everyone:

Vitória and Silvia felt this was a tricky question, as it seems like the past was much better than the present. Jonathan said he felt quite constrained in the building, suggesting he would probably be happier if they could spend more time outdoors.

Stefan mentioned that he would appreciate having more autonomy in choosing the materials they engaged with.

Vitória reflected that it would be a valuable message to encourage nurturing a relationship with attention and striving to sustain it in college—a time when the political economy had already shifted.

Stefan noted that his choices back then would likely have revolved around playing video games rather than doing homework.

15:14:15 From Jim Manly to Everyone:

Thank you for having me. Excited about the potential of this work to help our students

15:16:35 From Larry Berger's iPhone (2) to Everyone:

<https://www.poetryinamerica.org/episode/cascadilla-falls/>

Brit Naylor: ❤️

15:17:06 From Larry Berger's iPhone (2) to Everyone:

poem about attending to place in scientific cosmos