



# the Creative Learning EXCHANGE

Volume 10, Number 5 - Late Fall 2001

## EVERYDAY BEHAVIOR OVER TIME GRAPHS

Prepared with the support of The Gordon Stanley Brown Fund by Gene Stamell with Debra Lyneis

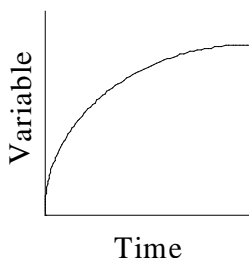
Based on work supported by The Waters Foundation

### INTRODUCTION

Gene Stamell, a third grade teacher in Carlisle, Massachusetts, uses behavior over time graphs throughout his curriculum. These graphs have become a tool in his teaching repertoire, and his students are becoming adept at using them to broaden and sharpen their thinking about change over time. This paper will give general suggestions and specific lessons for using behavior over time graphs in language arts, math, social studies, and science. Gene hopes to show other teachers that these graphs are easy and worthwhile to use with students.

### WHAT IS A BEHAVIOR OVER TIME GRAPH?

A behavior over time graph (or BOTG) is a simple line graph that shows a pattern of change over time – it shows how something increases and decreases as time passes. The horizontal axis on the graph *always* represents time. It can be in any units that fit the behavior: seconds, days, years, etc.



The vertical axis represents the variable in question, a quantity that can increase or decrease with time – an accumulation. It can be either “hard” or “soft.” For example, hard variables might be degrees Centigrade in a lab experiment, points scored in a game, dollars in the bank, fish in the sea, or miles traveled. Soft variables could be a person’s happiness or courage, a team’s morale, the cleanliness of a room, or the excitement of a story. The vertical axis is also labeled in units that fit the behavior. For the hard variables, the units are straightforward: degrees, number of points, number of dollars, etc.

For the soft variables, units must be defined first. “Cleanliness of a room” is a simple example. In discussion, everyone could envision a spotlessly clean room; they could also imagine an extremely messy room. The scale on the graph could use descriptive labels and range from “Terribly messy” to “Perfectly clean,” with “Medium clean” at the midpoint. Or, the scale could be numerical from 0 to 10, with zero for filthy and ten for immaculate. Students just need to be clear about what they mean when they label their axes. Soft variables are just as valid to graph as hard variables. Indeed, often they are more interesting, and even defining the scales can initiate a good discussion.

One final thing to remember about BOTGs is that they focus on *patterns* of behavior, not on particular

details. They look at how something is changing. Is it increasing, decreasing, or staying the same? At what rate is it changing; how steep is the line? Does it fluctuate? Once students can identify *how* something is changing, they can begin to ask *why* and make predictions about what will happen next.

Because BOTGs focus on broad patterns, they are often drawn quickly. Students are usually encouraged to draw the line freehand without getting bogged down in details. Of course, in graphing a science experiment data points need to be precise, but even then, the purpose of the graph is to reveal the overall pattern of behavior – how it is changing and why. In most cases, students quickly draw their axes, label them, and sketch lines describing how the variable changes with time. They can also draw lines for related variables on the same graph to compare them.

As an example, if students graphed the cleanliness of their own rooms over the course of a week, they would produce many different patterns, stimulating a discussion about why this happens. (Students might also graph the “Amount of Mom’s nagging” on the same graph to discuss the relationship between the two variables.) This example shows how students can use a graph to express and objectively discuss their ideas. It also shows that graphs can have many right answers. Finally, it shows that students

*Everyday BOTGs continued on page 3*

## UPDATES...

This was a K-12 listserv post from Steve Kipp, Waters Grant Mentor, Glynn County Schools, Brunswick, GA, answering Tim Joy's question about the use of SD in the classroom to address some of the issues raised by September 11.

A couple of middle school literature classes have lent themselves to addressing September 11 issues:

7th Grade - Short story "Barrio Boy" by Ernesto Galarza

We identified variables "pride in his own culture" and "acceptance of other cultures" (or something like that) from the story, where both variables increase overall in the story. Then students drew their own BOTG of what can happen with these two variables in real life. Although some graphs were "smoother" than others, two families of graphs emerged: those who saw it as a zero-sum (one must go down as the other goes up), and those who saw it as a win-win situation (both go up, as in the story). I drew these two general cases on the board, and we labeled them "competitive" and "appreciative" (you could also call them "nationalist" and "globalist", or whatever, depending on your desired results). Which one is more natural? Competitive. Which is more humane, a higher way? Appreciative. How do we develop this appreciative view? We ended up roughly outlining a progression:

intolerance → tolerance → showing respect & gaining knowledge → appreciation.

Note that mere tolerance (a popular buzzword) is much lower on the scale than appreciation! Do we always appreciate everything about other cultures, even after we have offered respect and gained knowledge? Keep it real. No. Is that OK? Yes. We finished with an in-class essay question "What can you do in your everyday life to help yourself and others to develop an appreciative view?"

## EDITORIAL

Here in the Northeast we have finally had our first snow of the winter, after an unseasonably warm and dry fall. The snow makes us actually feel as if the holiday season will come—and with it, winter. We are gearing up for the conference June 29 - July 1 at the New England Center, and for DynamiQueST on May 3<sup>rd</sup> at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. We would love to see you at them. Check out the website for more information on both events ([www.clexchange.org](http://www.clexchange.org))

Be sure to consider presenting at the conference in June. A complete description of the process appears on page 13. E-mail me if you have any questions. The digital abstract is due via e-mail on February 1.

Take care, and may the warmth of the returning sun bring peace to your hearts.

Lees Stuntz <[stuntzln@clexchange.org](mailto:stuntzln@clexchange.org)>

and a (way too brief) discussion to tie it all in with current events. This was a teacher and class new to systems, and I was starting slowly, but you could go much deeper with this, e.g. these are both reinforcing loops, appreciative view is "same-same" and competitive view is "opposite-opposite."

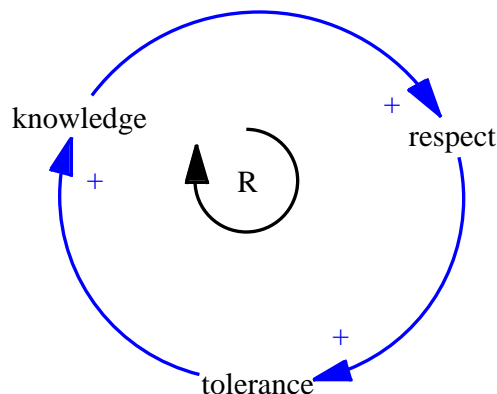
*From the CLE staff:*

Here are a few loops which can be constructed from Steve's work with the 7<sup>th</sup> graders, as he indicates in his narrative. It would be a good place to start a discussion with students. The loop below reads that the more knowledge, the

more respect; the more respect, the more tolerance; the more tolerance, the more knowledge is sought.

A second, figure eight, loop shows that starting out with one view reinforces it. An appreciative view generates MORE tolerance; the more tolerance, the LESS competitive the view; the less competitive the view, the MORE tolerance. Reading the loop the opposite way from competitive view creates more and more of a competitive view. The previous loop is one way of discussing with students how to get out of that cycle through knowledge.

*Updates continued on page 12*



## Everyday Behavior over Time Graphs continued from page 1

can use a graph to examine patterns of behavior and their causes. Once students understand how to use behavior over time graphs to analyze one behavior, they can easily transfer the use of this tool to examine change in many other areas.

### WHY USE BEHAVIOR OVER TIME GRAPHS?

Gene Stamell and other teachers have found that using BOTGs helps students *broaden* their thinking. Young students tend to focus on events detail by detail; they often do not see the big picture. With BOTGs, students develop the skill to see the forest as well as the trees. Gene has also found that using the graphs helps students *sharpen* their thinking. Finally, graphs give students another way to express and defend their ideas, leading to richer classroom discussions about topics in the curriculum.

Gene is participating in a Waters Foundation effort to assess more formally the impact of BOTGs on student learning. From his own preliminary classroom experience, however, he thinks that BOTGs have helped his students build skills in several ways:

- Students develop math skills reading and drawing graphs. They can read the value of the variable at any point on the line, often using interpolation.
- Students gain an understanding of axes and scales because they have to define them for themselves. They can define and label scales that are appropriate to the behavior being graphed.
- Students learn about slope. They learn that a “steeper” line indicates faster growth or decay; a “flat” line indicates no change. Using this knowledge, they can be more precise when they use a line to describe how something is changing.
- Students can find meaning in graphs. The graphs are not isolated math exercises. They hold information that

is of interest to the students because the graphs are in the context of the curriculum or apply to their own lives and opinions.

- Students use BOTGs to make predictions. They can continue the line on the graph to express what they think will happen to the variable in the future. (In contrast, pie charts and bar graphs are more static; they do not lend themselves to the richer discussions of predictions.)
- Students use BOTGs to ask better questions. They question why something changed and what might have caused it.
- Students can generate hypotheses, or “what ifs.” After they observe one pattern of behavior, they can discuss what might have happened if something had been different and express these alternatives as lines on the graph. (Third graders *can* think like that, Gene adds, although they are not often asked to do so.)
- Students develop another way to refine and communicate their ideas. Graphs complement reading and writing skills. For some students, they offer a more concrete visual way to form and express opinions.
- Students develop basic systems thinking skills. They learn to think dynamically—to recognize patterns of change over time. This is the first step in beginning to understand what causes that change. The discipline of system dynamics uses computer simulation to investigate those causes. Building a system dynamics model starts with drawing a BOTG of how the behavior in question changes over time; the model ultimately produces graphs as output to interpret. For Gene’s third graders, BOTGs are a valuable curriculum tool in their own right. At the same time, however, they lay the foundation for further system dynamics learning by helping students develop skills thinking about “what” is changing, “how” it is changing, and “why” it is changing.

### INTRODUCING LINE GRAPHS TO STUDENTS

Third graders are not usually adept at drawing or interpreting line graphs. It is a skill they must learn and practice. In Carlisle, primary (K-2) students learn to use bar graphs and pie charts, a common and concrete introduction to graphing, usually using manipulative materials. They are briefly introduced to line graphs through “The In and Out Game” (by Alan Ticotsky and Rob Quaden, 1999, available from the Creative Learning Exchange at <http://clexchange.org>.) Second graders also use a line graph to track the daily progress of the Iditarod dogsled races across Alaska. Although they have seen line graphs, arriving third graders are most familiar with bar graphs and pie charts. Early in the fall, Gene builds on his students’ understanding of bar graphs to expand their understanding of line graphs. With guidance, third graders make this transition easily.

### Reviewing Bar Graphs

For several mornings, Gene asks students to make graphs to answer daily class questions. At first they draw the graphs together on the board and progress to working in pairs or individually. Each graph stimulates a class discussion about what the graph says and why. Examples include:

- How many siblings do you have?
- How many pets do you have?
- What color hair do you have?
- What is your bedtime on a school night?
- How many hours of TV do you watch on a school night?

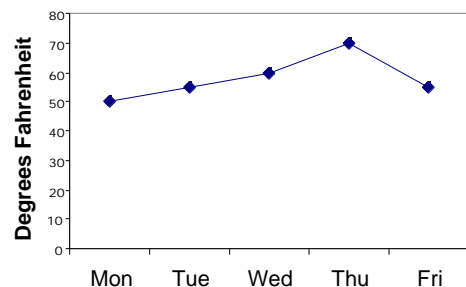
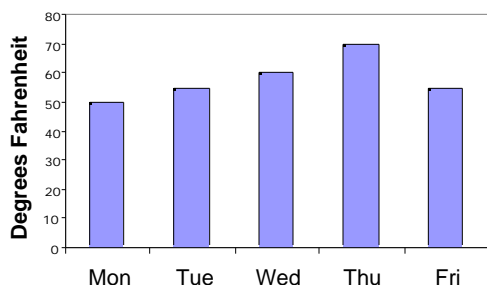
Note that these are all static phenomena. They do not change over time; they do not have time on the horizontal axis. These, however, are typical bar graphs for young students.

*Everyday BOTGs continued on page 4*

## Everyday Behavior over Time Graphs continued from page 3

### Making the Transition to Line Graphs

One way to help students make the transition to behavior over time line graphs is to present a simple bar graph of data changing over time that could be better shown as a line graph. One example is graphing the outside temperature over a five-day period. Students record the temperature each day on a large bar graph on the board. At the end of the week, Gene places a dot at the top of each bar and erases the bars below them, leaving only the five dots on the graph. After the class once again discusses what each dot represents, Gene connects the dots with a continuous line. Then the discussion focuses on the pattern of change from day to day as shown by the line: Has it gotten warmer during the week, or has it gotten cooler? Students also discuss how much easier it is to see the pattern of the temperature change with the line graph than with the bar graph.



This activity is repeated several times with different bar graphs until students can convert bar graphs to line graphs on their own. In each case, students discuss and compare the two

types of graphs with questions such as these:

- Which graph do you prefer looking at? Why?
- Which graph gives you a better idea that something is changing? Why?
- Have you ever seen line graphs outside of school?
- When would you rather use a bar graph? A line graph?

Other examples of graphs for this activity include:

- Daily class attendance.
- Number of students buying lunch each day.
- Daily precipitation amounts.
- The number of hours each student watches TV each day for a week.
- The time each student goes to bed each night for a week.
- The number of pages in a book read each night for a week.

The idea is to emphasize the central concept of change over time. Bar graphs have a very static nature. Line graphs are more fluid and accentuate patterns of change as time passes. Once students can identify patterns of change, they can compare patterns and explore their causes. They can ask “Why?” and “What if...?”

Another way to reinforce the purpose of a line graph is to discuss topics for which bar graphs are more appropriate. A bar graph is a good way to count things that do not change over time, like the topics graphed in the first review of bar graphs above. For example, counting and graphing the number of siblings of classmates describes only one moment in time, not a pattern of change over time. Numbers of siblings, not time, is on the horizontal axis. A bar graph is a good way to display this information, but it does not give clues about change. Throughout the

year, Gene asks students to decide which type of graph is more appropriate for each activity.

Following are nine examples of how Gene uses BOTGs in his curriculum. They include lessons in literature, science, math and current events. Some are formal lessons taking 30-60 minutes while others are quick 10-minute discussions. They are presented as Gene’s students would experience them in a typical autumn. Our goal is to show teachers how behavior over time graphs can be used as an everyday tool in the curriculum. Gene found that once he started using BOTGs with his students, he saw more and more applications for them. We hope that these lessons will help other teachers do the same. Some of the lessons are presented with specific instructions and student worksheets. Others are described more generally.

### 1. GRAPHING DAILY TEMPERATURES

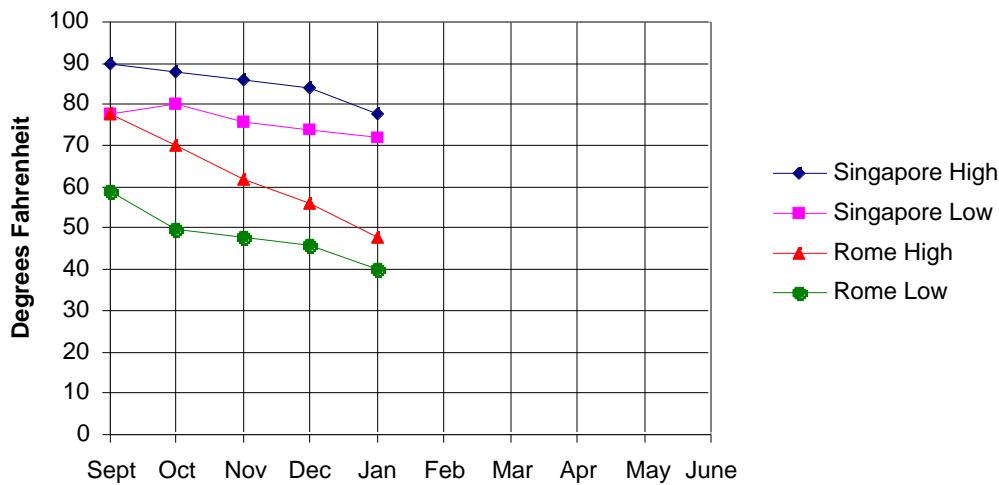
Curriculum area: Math

Time requirement: 15 minutes, once a month

As part of their math curriculum, students track the high and low daily temperatures in two cities once a month throughout the year using data from the local newspaper. Early in the fall, each student chooses two cities from around the world. On a lined worksheet, each student records the high and low temperatures for each city once a month.

Gene has added graphing to this lesson. After three months of data gathering, students draw graphs on graph paper. They label the horizontal axis with the months of the year starting with September. They label the vertical axis in degrees Fahrenheit from 0 to 100. They define their own legends distinguishing their cities with different colors or dotted lines. Then, they plot their data of high and low temperatures for the first three months (all on the same graph) and connect the points to draw lines.

**High/Low Temperatures**



Once each month, students research the high and low temperatures, write the information on their worksheets and plot the points on their graphs. As the year progresses, students can observe the patterns that are emerging and discuss questions such as these as a class, in pairs or in groups:

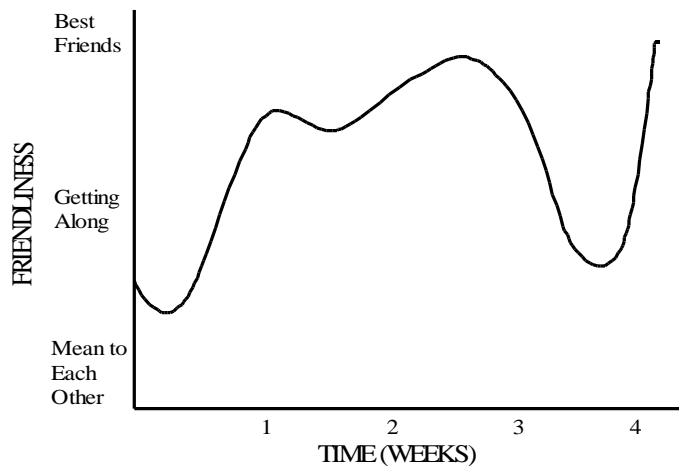
- What does your graph tell you?
- How is the temperature changing in your cities? Why?
- Are there differences in the patterns of your two cities? Why?
- What do you think will happen in the next few months? Why?
- How do your cities compare with those of other students?
- Why do some cities stay warm all year?
- Could you get all of this information just looking at the map?
- Where would you rather look to figure out this information, on your worksheet list of temperatures or on your graph? Why?

For variations, students could track particular cities that are related to the curriculum in other areas. They could relate their findings to a science lesson on climates and seasons. They could also use on-line sources for temperatures.

A complementary exercise would be to have students read a classroom thermometer once each hour for a day and graph the changing temperature. Students would have to change both the vertical and horizontal scales from the graph above, reinforcing their understanding of the scales. Reading the thermometer would reinforce that skill as well as relate the foreign temperatures to temperatures at home.

**2. GRAPHING FRIENDSHIP OVER TIME**

Curriculum Area: Language arts, poetry  
Time Requirement: 30-40 minutes



As part of a poetry unit, students read this poem by a former Carlisle third grade student:

**Friendship**

*By Lisa Yanofsky, 1998*

New, arriving coming, then  
 Older  
 Darkens  
 Lightens  
 Brightens  
 Dims  
 Wonderful  
 Horrible  
 My friend is perfect  
 Strange  
 My friend is right for  
 Me.

After students have read the poem, Gene begins the class discussion with the question, “What do you think this poem is about?” At length, students discuss the “ups and downs” of friendship. Gene then asks, “I wonder how else we could show that.” The poem suggests a graph.

Gene draws a large set of axes on the board and students generate the labels. The vertical axis shows the “Amount of friendly behavior,” or “Friendliness” between the two people. Students define the scale in their own

terms and discuss what the labels mean in their experience. The horizontal scale represents time; students need to specify what is appropriate—days, weeks or months—sparking another good discussion.

## Everyday Behavior over Time Graphs continued from page 5

Gene invites students to the board to sketch on the graph what they think the poem says about friendship over time. As several students express their ideas on the same graph, it becomes apparent that there are many different interpretations. Because students are authorities on the subject of friendships, they draw from their own experience. *There are no wrong or right answers*, as long as the line on the graph accurately depicts what they mean. (For example, if they say friendliness is *increasing*, the line should be going *up*.)

In conclusion, students gain a deeper understanding of the message of the poem and its meaning to their own lives: Friendships are always changing with time.

### 3. GRAPHING *SHOESHINE GIRL*

Curriculum area: Language arts, literature

Time requirement: 30-40 minutes

All Carlisle third graders read *Shoeshine Girl*, by Clyde Robert Bulla (1975, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York.) It is the story of a willful self-centered child named Sarah Ida who learns compassion, responsibility and generosity during her summer working for a shoeshine man.

As the story unfolds, Gene asks students to graph Sarah Ida's level of

happiness, chapter by chapter. Each student sets up a graph on a sheet of graph paper. The horizontal axis is labeled from 1 to 11 for the number of chapters in the book. The vertical axis represents Sarah Ida's happiness scale. The class brainstorms labels for this scale in terms that have meaning to them. Some students may use numbers while others may use descriptive labels from "Terrible" to "Terrific," with "So-so," "OK" and "Happy" in between.

Gene begins the graphing by asking students to put a dot on the graph wherever they think Sarah Ida's level of happiness is after the first chapter, sparking a big discussion among students who view the story differently. Again, Gene assures students that there are no right or wrong answers; every student is entitled to an opinion. The process is repeated at the end of each chapter and the dots are connected to form a line. Students often compare and discuss their graphs in pairs or in groups.

The graphing activity generates a good literary discussion at a level appropriate to third graders. It helps to make an abstract concept more concrete for the children. It also encourages students to think about their own interpretations of the story. For example, at age 8 or 9, it is common for some students to dwell on one bad incident rather than view the character's general happiness and maturity over time.

Without the graph, students might miss the main idea of the story: Sarah Ida is growing and changing.

Gene conducts a similar lesson with another book, *The Sign of the Beaver*, by Elizabeth George Speare (1983, Bantam Doubleday, NY). It is about a friendship between a Native American boy and a young settler. Gene reads the book aloud to the class. Students graph the developing friendship with a separate line for each boy's point of view. This helps students follow the thread of the story. It also helps them to think about the very different circumstances and perspectives of the two boys as they grow together.

### 4. GRAPHING SCIENCE OBSERVATIONS: LEAVES

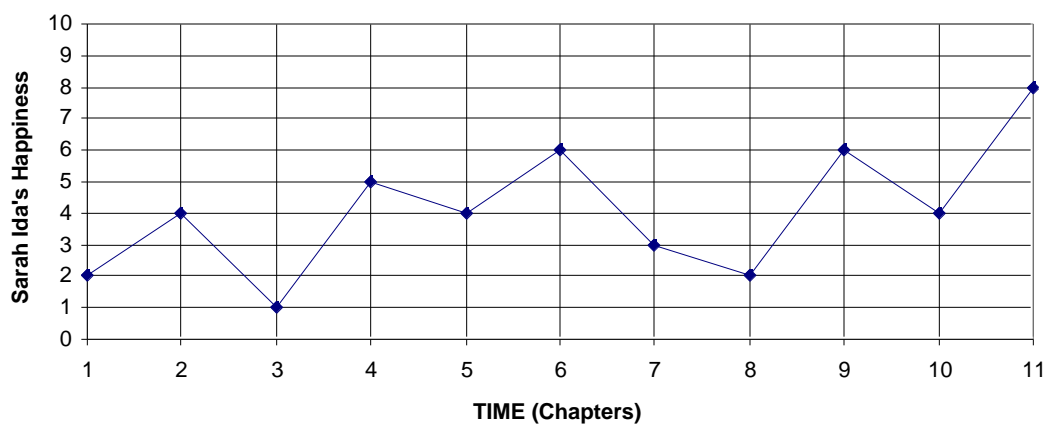
Curriculum Area: Science

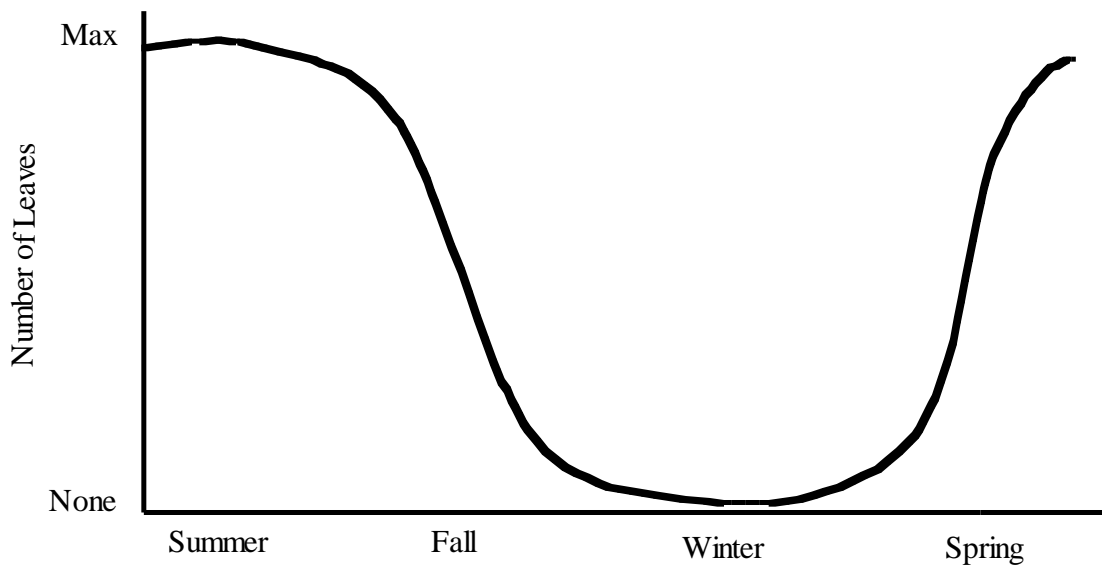
Time Requirement: 10-15 minutes

In New England, the leaves on the trees are always changing with the seasons. Throughout the autumn, students do several science activities with leaves. They also make observations and record them in their science journals.

In late fall, students use a large classroom behavior over time graph to examine how the number of leaves on the trees is changing. The vertical axis represents the "Number of Leaves" which ranges from "none" to "the most

The Shoeshine Girl





Graph of Leaves

possible.” The horizontal axis is labeled with the seasons “Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring.” (The scales do not need to be any more specific at first, because the precise numbers of leaves or the specific dates are not necessary to uncover the pattern of change throughout the year.)

Different students sketch their ideas on the same graph showing what they have observed so far and what they predict for the rest of the year. Again, students are encouraged to take risks and are assured that there are no right or wrong answers. When students draw slightly different lines, the discussion often centers on the slope of the line, with students delving more deeply into the *rate* of the change in leaves as the seasons change. Students may also decide that they need to label the horizontal axis in months to express their ideas more precisely.

## 5. FINDING STORIES IN GRAPHS

Curriculum Area: Math, building graphing skills

Time Requirement: Homework assignment followed by a 15-20 minute discussion

This exercise helps students stretch their ability to think in terms of graphs. Students are not ready for this activity until they have done several other line graph activities as a class.

Using the following worksheet, students are asked to generate at least five “stories” for an oscillating line. What could this graph be about? Again there are no right or wrong answers, as long as the stories are reasonable.

The following suggestions were given by four students and illustrate the breadth of their thinking as well as the depth of their understanding:

- How well friends are getting along together over months.
- The temperature outside in September.
- How well a toy is selling over a year.
- How clean your house is over a month.
- How happy you are over a week.
- How many boats are crashing every month.
- The amount of friendship in a school.
- How many smokers quit.

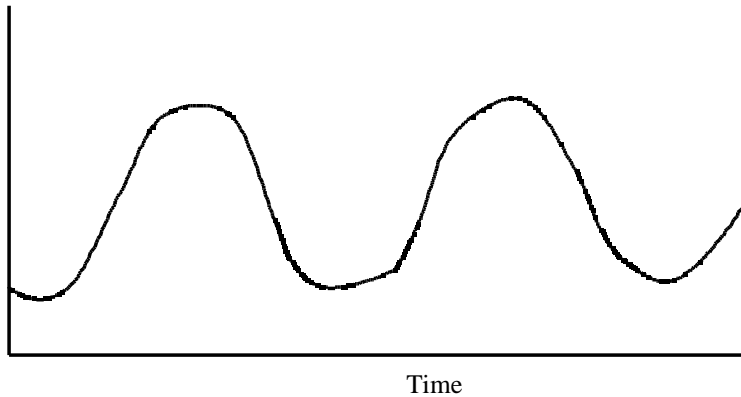
- How the 2000 presidential election went up and down for so long.
- How the price of a stock is changing.
- How many points a team is scoring.
- How many heart attacks there are over a year.
- How much air pollution there is over time.
- The temperature as seasons pass.
- How fast a plant grows in different months.
- How much it rains in different months.
- The number of hours of daylight.
- How much food a bear eats during different months of the year.

# Everyday Behavior over Time Graphs continued from page 7

## BEHAVIOR OVER TIME GRAPH

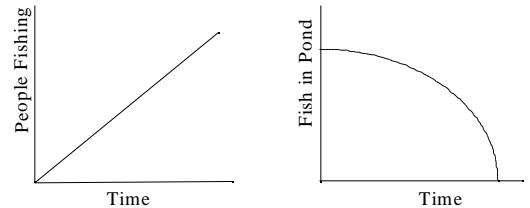
Write five topics this Behavior Over Time sketch could be about. What is changing and what is the time measurement?

There are no right or wrong answers. All reasonable answers are correct.



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Before introducing the article, Gene asked students to think about what would happen to the number of fish in a pond if the number of people fishing there increased every day. Students sketched BOTGs of the increasing fishermen and the decreasing fish population.



Then Gene handed out copies of the *Globe* headline and graph. Together they read the graph, and students proposed their own theories for the abundance of lobsters. Finally, Gene gave them the scientists' theories to evaluate:

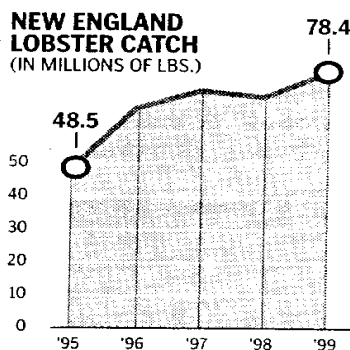
- Warmer temperatures cause more lobster eggs to hatch.
- There are fewer predator fish, like cod, to feed on lobsters.
- There may be hidden female lobsters that avoid traps and produce many eggs.
- When lobstermen catch lobsters, they use bait like herring and other bits of fish. Smaller lobsters may enter the traps, eat the bait, escape, and live longer.
- Lobsters may be producing eggs at a younger age than before.

### 6. GRAPHS IN THE NEWS: LOBSTER FISHING

On November 29, 2000, the *Boston Globe* ran an article titled "Abundance of New England Lobsters Baffles Biologists." The accompanying graph showed an increase in the annual lobster catch. In New England, depleted fish stocks are often in the news. Usually students hear that the supply of fish is dwindling as the demand is rising. This *Globe* article is intriguing because it states that the while fishermen are catching more and more lobsters, the population of lobsters seems to be increasing.

### Full traps

Bucking the trend of smaller returns in the fishing industry, the lobster catch is on the rise.



SOURCE: National Marine Fisheries Service  
GLOBE STAFF CHART

The graphs help students focus on a new twist to a familiar story in regional current events. They are drawn into the mystery and encouraged to think about its causes.

### 7. GRAPHS IN THE NEWS: SCOOTER INJURIES

Time Requirement: 30-40 minutes

On December 8, 2000, the *Boston Globe* published an article titled "2 Scooter Models Recalled As Reports

of Injuries Mount.” The Consumer Products Safety Commission had found rising injuries linked to handlebar design flaws. A line graph accompanied the article.

Gene photocopied the graph without its legend and scales. (See the sample worksheets.) He asked students to describe what this graph could be about and to define the time units. These were some of the student responses:

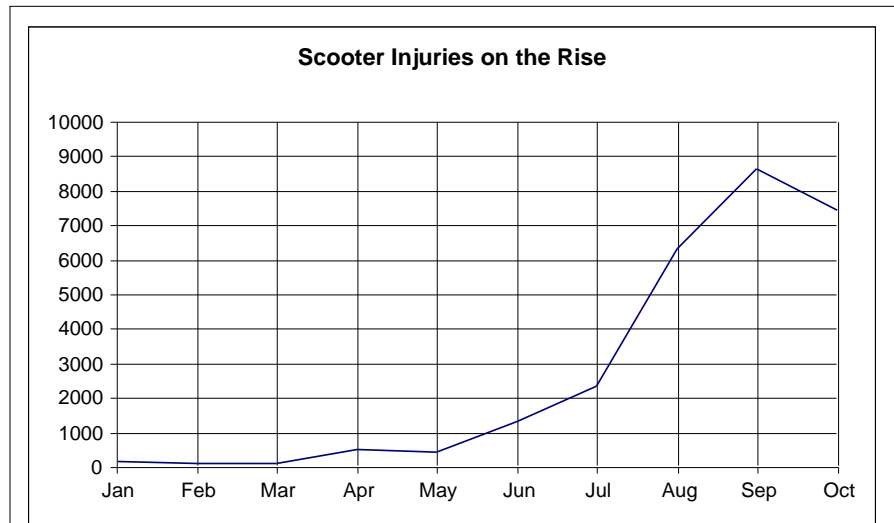
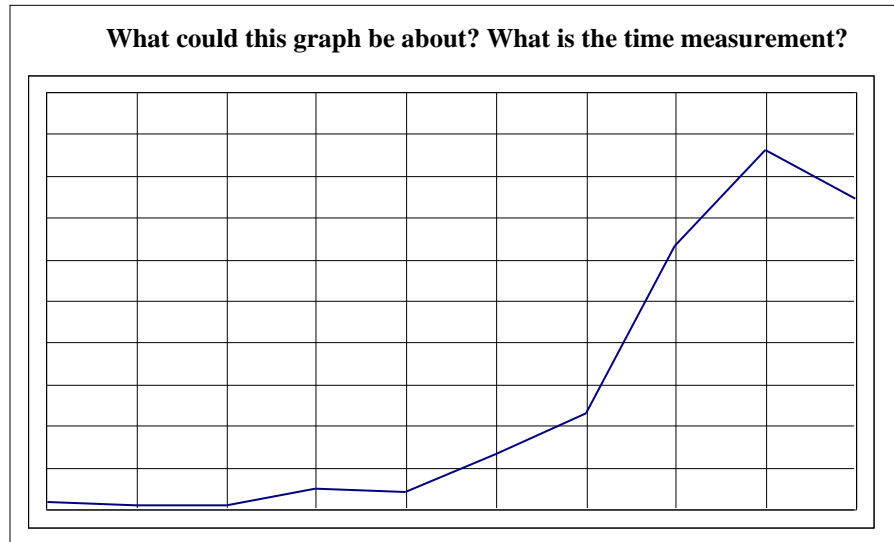
- Progress construction workers are making building a house. Months.
- Number of people buying tickets to a sports game. Years.
- Number of points scored by a football team. Weeks.
- Number of homeless people. Years.
- Number of rainstorms. Months.
- Toys sold at a toy store. Months.

After discussing the students’ ideas and heightening their interest, Gene distributed copies of the actual graph. Students read the complete graph together as a class. Gene then asked them to suggest reasons for the pattern of rising injuries. These were some of the student responses:

- “In January, scooters just came out and no one had one, but then a lot of people got them and tried tricks and got hurt.”
- “Maybe around school time kids ride scooters to school, and with a coat and backpack and with cars dropping other students off, they can get hurt.”
- “Some people are doing more stuff that scooters are not made for like trying to ride on the grass and snow or trying to do dangerous tricks without any safety equipment to look cool.”
- “Maybe older kids don’t wear equipment and they are teaching that to their younger siblings. Kids are taking bigger risks that they are not ready for.”

- “Scooters are getting more popular, and more, and more, and MORE, so there are more injuries.”

Finally, Gene asked students to predict what would happen in the next few months by extending the line beyond the edge of the graph and writing a sentence explaining their reasoning.



“Emergency rooms nationwide saw a sharp increase in injuries during the year from lightweight scooters popular with children.” Consumer Products Safety Commission. *Boston Globe* 12/8/2000

**Give 3 reasons why scooter injuries are increasing as shown on the graph.**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**What will happen next, and why? Continue the line on the graph for Nov. and Dec.**

## Everyday Behavior over Time Graphs continued from page 9

### 8. MORE GRAPHS IN THE NEWS

Throughout the year, Gene is always looking for good examples of graphs in the news. While some become the basis for complete graphing lessons like those described above, others make good ten-minute “quickie” lessons.

- **Voter turnout trends.** During the 2000 presidential elections, there were graphs about trends in voter turnout and other election issues. Students read the graphs and discussed possible reasons for the trends.
- **Student dropout rates.** A graph of student dropout rates led to a discussion about why students might choose to leave school and the possible consequences of that decision.
- **Income and happiness.** A graph about a study of the relationship between income and happiness over many decades led to a discussion about why rising affluence had not lead to a commensurate increase in happiness.

In each case, the graphs helped students get to the heart of the matter quickly. They could discuss current events objectively while building their graphing skills.

### 9. THE MAMMOTH EXTINCTION GAME

Curriculum Areas: Social studies, math, science

Time Requirement: Two 40-minute periods

The Mammoth Extinction Game is a lesson using dice, graphs and a system dynamics computer simulation to study the effects of human hunters on the demise of the prehistoric woolly mammoth population in North America. Gene developed the lesson in 1999 with the help of Carlisle Waters Foundation systems mentors Alan Ticotsky and Rob

Quaden. The complete lesson with student worksheets and modeling instructions is available free on-line at <http://clexchange.org> under Cross-Curricular Materials.

In the dice game, students graph the decline of their own mammoth herds (20 dice) over several years. The next day, they play the same game on the computer varying the probabilities of birth and death. They predict outcomes and eagerly interpret the behavior over time graphs generated by the model. Their engagement and sophistication are impressive. Along with sharpening their graphing skills, they learn the fundamentals of population dynamics, they are introduced to computer simulation as a tool for problem solving, and they are exposed to the concepts of exponential growth and decay.

Below is an example of a graph generated by the STELLA© simulation model.

#### CONCLUSION

We have presented examples of how Gene Stamell uses behavior over time graphs across his third grade curriculum in the early months of the school year. After an introduction and a little bit of practice, the students become very skilled at using the graphs to both

understand patterns of change and express their ideas about them. In the broader picture, students come to notice patterns of change in the systems that surround them. They also move toward a deeper questioning and understanding of the causes of change and the possible policies to manage it – ideas that will be reinforced in later systems lessons. As Gene continues to use graphs with his students throughout the year, we hope that these sample lessons will help other teachers do the same.

Note: For examples of BOTGs in fifth grade social studies and language arts, see “Getting Started with Behavior Over Time Graphs: Four Curriculum Examples,” 1998, by Gayle Richardson with Debra Lyneis, available free on-line at <http://clexchange.org>.

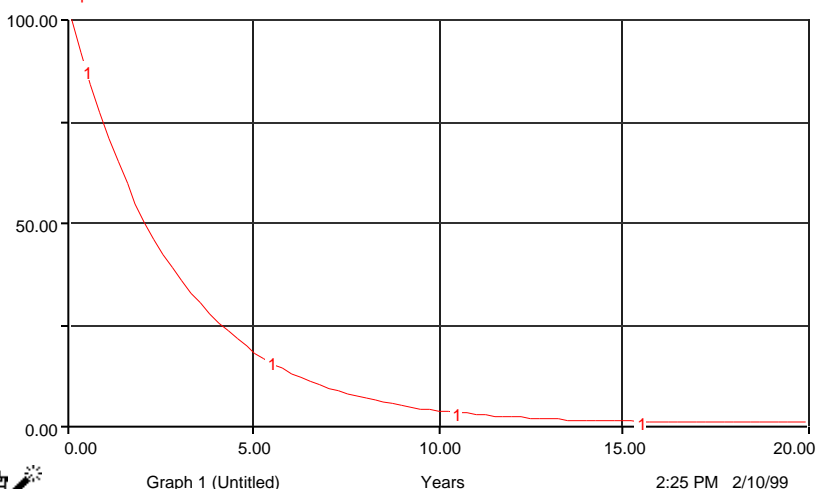
#### YOUR FEEDBACK

We welcome your comments and any suggestions for improvements on these lessons. Please e-mail us at [LyneisD@clexchange.org](mailto:LyneisD@clexchange.org). Thanks.

*This article, with full-sized worksheets, is available from the CLE and the Web site <<http://clexchange.org>> catalogued under Cross Curricular Materials as CC2001-11EverydayBOTGs.*



1: Mammoth Population



Graph 1 (Untitled)

Years

2:25 PM 2/10/99

## From the Mouths of our Students

**W**e would like to share with you some comments by students, gleaned by teachers, about student learning with system dynamics. Following are comments of students from a Systems Thinking class taught by Don Ziegelbauer in Sturgeon Bay WI.

### Collin J.

Systems thinking was an interesting class that helped me to see the big picture. I am now better able to see the interconnectedness and interdependence of all elements of a system. I found it interesting to see the long term repercussions of actions we take in the present. It was a very fun and exciting class that allows you to use your creativity and imagination, and take your knowledge to the next level. The concepts are simple, but the possibilities for application are endless.

### Greg G.

Systems Thinking was a good class. I had no idea what I was getting into when I signed up for it, but I am glad that I ended up taking it. I learned how to see the big picture instead of just focusing on the small things. This helps me because now I think of what might be the consequences of my actions. My favorite part of the class was using Stella to model certain problems to see what will happen in the long run. While building my own model I learned a lot by going out and researching it. If there was a Systems Thinking II class I would take it.

### Ben S.

Systems Thinking was a course that was a giant mystery. It wasn't until a week or two into the course that I figured out what it was all about. The course makes you think about things you have really never thought about. For example, I had the Door County Landfill for a final project. I learned that the landfill was shut down and we shipped our garbage to Two Rivers. My model wasn't all that good, but it made me aware of it. Systems thinking showed how just one small thing can affect an entire system. We were shown models of populations that died

off and found out why it happened and what can be done to prevent it. If you have ever taken any other course that Mr. Ziegelbauer has offered, you'll definitely like this one. If a second course was offered I'd take it so I could improve on my landfill model so it could possibly be used to solve the problem.

### Scott W.

I see the Systems Thinking class as an important addition to our offered courses at Sturgeon Bay High School. Systems Thinking taught us to look at the Big Picture, not to break everything down into little bits. The world would be a better place if more people would look at the big picture and not just what affects themselves. People think, oh well I'm not going to vote because one vote won't make a difference. Well, if they looked at the big picture they would realize that a lot of people say that, and if all of those people were to vote, it would make a difference. The most beneficial aspect of

this course for me was the use of the Stella software. It is extremely useful as a tool in our everyday lives and every student should have access to it. It serves many purposes ranging from predicting populations to planning for your financial future; realizing the beauty of exponential growth in a retirement fund and even planning for college expenses. I thoroughly enjoyed my nine weeks in Systems Thinking and if I were going to be here next year I would definitely take a Systems Thinking II class.

### James D.

The systems thinking course that I have been enrolled in for the last 9 weeks has really changed the way I think. For instance, I look at such things as over population. Seems like a pretty simple idea. When you look into it, though, you can see that there is more than just people moving into an area that causes over population. You can make it into a model

*Students continued on page 12*

## New Interactive Online Column

Dear Lees,

Greetings. I used to work at HPS and once published in the CLE newsletter. I'm writing today because Bill Harris and I are starting a new interactive online column, and I wanted to share the Pegasus Communications news release announcing it.

I invite you to subscribe to *Leverage Points*, to read and experience *At Any Rate*, and to join in the dialogue in the Pegasus Forum on that column. We'll be creating models we think would be simple enough for a novice to understand—just a few stocks and flows, a couple feedback loops. We hope this will illustrate the potential for system dynamics without the complexity that sometimes accompanies it. Perhaps some readers will gain or improve modeling skills; perhaps others will gain more appreciation for such an approach and know when to get others to help them.

You can subscribe at <http://www.pegasus.com/>. The first *Leverage Points* containing the column should be available within the next day or two.

Feel free to pass this news release around to people who might be interested. If you're so inclined, we'd welcome a posting by you to the Forum once you've read the first column. Our readers could certainly benefit from your insights, and we'd welcome your help in jump-starting the dialogue. I'd also appreciate any feedback you might be willing to share.

Regards,

Chris Soderquist  
Pontifex Consulting 11 Sargent Street  
Hanover, NH 03755  
Phone: 603-653-0228  
[chris.soderquist@pontifexconsulting.com](mailto:chris.soderquist@pontifexconsulting.com)  
[www.pontifexconsulting.com](http://www.pontifexconsulting.com)

## From the Mouths of our Students continued from page 11

as we did with the computer software STELLA. When you make a model, you must think of every possible aspect that could cause the population in an area to rise and eventually over populate. Systems Thinking taught me to look at the bigger picture in life and to stop my normal thinking of looking into detail. I have found out, though, to make a model on STELLA you must think in detail to make sure you find all the possible parts to complete your model to make it as accurate as possible. Overall, I think this course has been helpful to me in making me look outside my little bubble that I have in Sturgeon Bay, and to look at the "big picture."

I wasn't really sure what I was getting myself into when I signed up for this course but now that I have finished it I am glad I have taken it. There should definitely be a Systems Thinking II course available. During this course I have really gotten into making models on the AIDS virus, because that is something that is of great importance to me. So if I can make models on the virus I may someday be able to show people just how

deadly this virus is, which may change the way people think of the disease. I am hoping in the future that I would be able to find a cure for this virus.

I really enjoyed this course and some of the readings we did as part of it. One such reading I enjoyed was the one by Jay Forrester that had to do with the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I really got into the deep thoughts of Jay Forrester, and the things that he was touching on in the writing I also have thought of before, and I found out that many of our thoughts are much alike. I also liked doing the model of Easter Island. This graph/model showed how this ancient civilization died out. Like I said before, I was glad to be involved in this course and would like for there to be a course II if possible.

### Josiah S.

The systems thinking course offered by Mr. Ziegelbauer has been helpful in all aspects of life. It's helped me to look at all things not simply as occurrences that have no significance, but as patterns of an underlying structure. The course has taught me to think of

everything as an interconnecting web, which affects all things. The course, as I said, gives a different view of everything, and the Stella Modeling we did was simply a way of teaching it. The modeling showed us how things are woven into each other, and because of it we now have that understanding. Because of this course, now I've learned to appreciate the stability of the world, and I believe that a second course would be helpful in teaching me the rest of systems thinking and systems dynamics. I still have a lot of questions which couldn't be addressed in the current course. Still, the course was extremely beneficial, and a second one would be too.

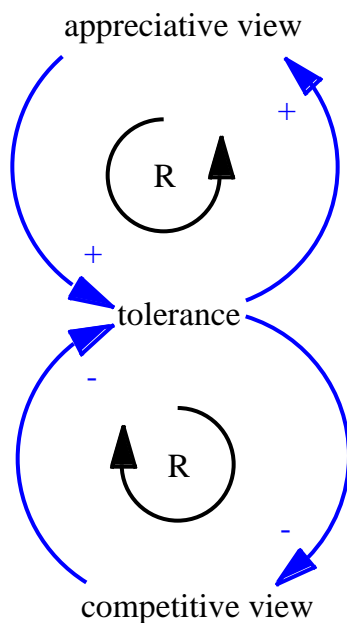
### Amanda M.

In the beginning, I didn't know very much about Systems Thinking. The only reason that I joined the course was because Mr. Z recruited me. I knew that if Mr. Z thought that it was a worthwhile course, there had to be a little something special about it. Systems Thinking is a whole new way of thinking. It is like learning a new, and more efficient way of solving problems. I cannot even begin to explain how much I have learned throughout the duration of this course. Stocks, flows, converters, space compression objects... It was like I was a freshman in high school again (not knowing very much and having to build up my knowledge).

Have you ever wondered if there was another approach to solve a problem? Take Systems Thinking and you will find out. I have used Systems Thinking at least 3 times to help me out with my personal desires, such as moving out and saving up cash. Anyone who wants to further his or her education and computer literacy should take this course. The education and understanding that you get from this course is remarkable. Mr. Z does a great job of teaching this course and ensures that at the critical periods of learning, the material is being absorbed and understood.



## Updates... continued from page 2



Thanks to the following 7thGrade Language Arts teachers and their students at Glynn Middle School: Sheryl Davis, J'Dean Ryfun, and Michelle Hall.

*Please send all responses to this article to the K-12 listserv so that we all can learn from you too. If you are not a member of the listserv, please sign up*

# Announcing SyM•FEST! 2002

## March 13... on the campus of University of Portland

The SyM•Bowl Foundation proudly announces a refining move in our event's seventh year—SyM•FEST! 2002. And this year promises to be livelier and more provocative than any before.

### Here are the particulars:

- March 13, a Wednesday
- University of Portland sponsorship that allows us use of Buckley Auditorium and a newer technology and presentation facility, Franz Hall
- Focus squarely, profoundly on sharing and learning rather than competing. Most models will be “works in progress.”
- Students will have the unprecedented advantage of asking, say, Barry Richmond or Andy Ford or John Sterman how to fix or extend or improve a model!

### A Day of Learning and Sharing

- students from Portland and beyond share **works in progress**
- teachers provide feedback to students and each other
- **national SD Masters** to work with students and teachers
- *Better food!* New caterer serving up a **BBQ Cookout**
- experienced students facilitating novice students
- experienced (and Forrester worthy) students presenting in afternoon sessions
- special Post-Event gathering with National Masters in late afternoon session (limited attendance)
- no single session longer than 60 minutes

FMI:  
Tim Joy  
La Salle High School 11999 SE  
Fuller Road  
Milwaukie OR 97222  
503.659.4155 {#604 voice}  
503.659.2535 {FAX}  
[tjoy@jps.net](mailto:tjoy@jps.net)

## DynamiQUEST 2002

The third DynamiQUEST will be held on May 3, 9 A.M. – 3 P.M., at the new Campus Center, Worcester Polytechnic Institute. The only international undergraduate system dynamics program is situated at WPI, so the connection is exciting for both the DynamiQUEST participants and WPI.

The DynamiQUEST organizing committee recognizes that students (and teachers) are at various places along the road to developing proficiency with thinking systemically and employing System Dynamics/Systems Thinking (SD/ST) to address complex issues and increase understanding. We seek to encourage students and teachers to develop an understanding of the use of SD/ST tools. We all also know that we need an environment, free from the “winner/loser” constraint, where kids can receive feedback from other kids as well as from teachers and professionals well versed in SD/ST. DynamiQUEST creates a venue both for celebrating what has been done and providing encouragement for all to continue!

In this spirit, DynamiQUEST was launched two years ago. DynamiQUEST 2002 will provide a venue for students in Grades 5-12 to showcase work in which they have employed the tools and method of system dynamics. This effort has several purposes:

- Provide a way for students to meet other students and see what they are doing
- Permit teachers from different schools to see evidence of student work in ST/SD

- Provide a venue for teachers and kids to network
- Have some fun and celebrate with kids!

Students may enter original work or their application of other work (CLE, CC-STADUS, etc.) This might include a unit, a lesson, or an application of one or more of the systems tools. Rubrics (available in the DynamiQUEST 2002 section of the CLE website - <http://clexchange.org>) will be used by coaches to provide feedback related to students' use of systems tools and development of systems understanding. The objective is to aim for the standards that apply to the work submitted for DynamiQUEST 2002, whether it is a BOTG or an extensive project with a working model.

Remember, the philosophy of DynamiQUEST 2002 is to improve student learning by honoring the work of students as they learn the tools and method of SD/ST. Collaborative projects are encouraged, but individual projects are welcome, too.

### What will happen

- A reviewed poster session where students stand by their work and respond to questions from coaches and visitors
- Students receive feedback from coaches experienced in SD/ST
- An afternoon session where student teams work spontaneously to solve problems using SD/ST tools and present their solutions to the larger group
- Lunch and Snacks provided. For those groups coming from far away, overnight stays in a nearby motel or with local families will be coordinated. Call (978-287-0070) or e-mail ([stuntzln@clexchange.org](mailto:stuntzln@clexchange.org)) Lees

Stuntz, Creative Learning Exchange.

### How students will submit work

- Submit an application (due April 26<sup>th</sup>). The application is available on the website.
- Write a short proposal for your project (due April 26<sup>th</sup>). See “Guidelines for Written Proposals” on the website.
- Prepare your SD/ST project as a poster that can be displayed on a 4' X 4' tabletop. (You may also include a laptop/desktop computer for display. NOTE: computers *will not* be provided for the poster session.) The poster should include:
  1. Title, school name, and student name(s)
  2. Diagrams, graphs, and/or tables of interesting behaviors
  3. Text describing important points, conclusions and “better questions”
- Write a brief summary (or alternative) of your project (1 – 3 pages, fewer for younger students) as outlined in “Guidelines for Project Summaries” on the website. The written summary (or alternative) is due May 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- All questions and concerns for clarification should be e-mailed to Lees Stuntz at [stuntzln@clexchange.org](mailto:stuntzln@clexchange.org)

### Key deadlines:

- Application due: April 26<sup>th</sup>
- Short proposal due: April 26<sup>th</sup>
- DynamiQUEST 2002: May 3<sup>rd</sup>

For more information and guidelines, go to the CLE website <http://clexchange.org>

## Interested in Presenting at the 2002 ST & DM Conference?

The theme of next summer's conference, to be held June 29 - July 1, 2002 at the New England Center in Durham, New Hampshire, will be "Meeting Challenges through Systems Thinking and Dynamic Modeling," emphasizing the learning gained from the last 12 years of work in K-12 systems education as well as the challenges we have encountered and those that remain ahead. The conference will include the following topics:

- Successive improvement—how have we done it, what are the markers of our failures and triumphs?
- Case studies approach—where has SD made a difference both in education and in the world?
- Many people enter systems education through various doors. How do we create paths from those doors? What paths have worked or have not worked?
- System Dynamics as a vehicle for collaboration and questioning.
- Tools for understanding.
- The future of SD/learner-centered learning in K-12. How can we contribute toward it?

Please consider presenting a session at the conference if you can contribute to any of the above themes or if you:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an effective piece of curriculum to present.</li> <li>• Have an administrative application of systems tools and techniques.</li> <li>• Have a progress report on a plan to get systems education implemented in your classroom, school or school district (or all three).</li> <li>• Have examples of learning achieved by students through systems education.</li> <li>• Have students who are willing to share insights into their learning through the use of systems.</li> <li>• Have created a sequence of curriculum that seems</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to work for your grade level in teaching systems concepts.</li> <li>• Have insights about or tools for assessing systems learning.</li> <li>• Have an overview of how systems education fits into a curriculum for a certain grade level and/or discipline.</li> <li>• Have used systems techniques to create interdisciplinary cooperation and curriculum.</li> <li>• Have an effective training session for neophytes or more advanced participants.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

Sessions will be approximately one and a half hours in length. Appropriate long sessions (3 hours) will be considered for the workshop session, especially for training at any level or games such as Fish Banks.

Process for submitting presentations for sessions:

- **Feb. 1, 2002** – Submit via e-mail an abstract that includes the context and history of the session topic and the experience level of expected participants.
- **Mar. 1, 2002** – All authors will be notified of the status of their submission.
- **June 1, 2002** – Final presentation or paper due in digital format for incorporation into the conference CD.

For more information, please e-mail Lees Stuntz. <stuntzn@clexchange.org>

## New Materials Available from the CLE and our Website clexchange.org

### **CC2001-11EverydayBOTGs      Everyday Behavior Over Time Graphs.** Gene Stamel with Debra Lyneis

This paper gives general suggestions and specific lessons for using behavior over time graphs in language arts, math, social studies, and science. After an introduction and a little bit of practice, students become skilled at using the graphs to both understand patterns of change and express their ideas about them. [Cross Curricular, English, Math, Social Studies, Science, Behavior Over Time Graphs, Elementary School] (\$1.00)

## Newsletter Subscription Information

**T**he Creative Learning Exchange Newsletter is available in three different formats:

- On the web page at [www.clexchange.org](http://www.clexchange.org)
- As an attached file to an e-mail
- In paper via US mail (\$15.00 outside the USA)

Since we vastly prefer electronic distribution to paper because it so much less expensive, please e-mail us at any time when you would like to have an electronic subscription.

<[milleras@clexchange.org](mailto:milleras@clexchange.org)>

## CALL FOR PAPERS 2002 INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM DYNAMICS CONFERENCE JULY 28-AUGUST 1, 2002 PALERMO, ITALY

Submissions for plenary, parallel and poster sessions, and workshop proposals, are invited. Submissions should be e-mailed to the Program Chair by **January 31, 2002**. For all sessions: preliminary version paper (maximum 30 pages). For poster sessions and workshop proposals: extended abstract (4 pages). Authors of abstracts may, subsequently, be invited by the program committee to submit a preliminary full paper.

Pål I. Davidsen, Program Chair  
Submission e-mail address: [isdc@albany.edu](mailto:isdc@albany.edu)

For more detailed submission information please visit our website at [www.systemdynamics.org/](http://www.systemdynamics.org/)

Or contact the System Dynamics Society office:  
E-mail: [system.dynamics@albany.edu](mailto:system.dynamics@albany.edu)  
Phone: +1 518 442 3865 FAX: +1 518 442 3398  
Mail: System Dynamics Society, Milne 300 – Rockefeller College  
University at Albany, Albany, NY 12222 USA

## INTERESTED IN INVESTING?

**I**f you would like to invest in our effort here at *The Creative Learning Exchange*, your contribution would be appreciated. You may donate any amount you wish; perhaps \$50.00 is a reasonable amount for a year. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Enclosed is \_\_\_\_\_ to *The Creative Learning Exchange* to help invest in the future of K-12 systems education.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you!**

*The Creative Learning Exchange*, 1 Keefe Road, Acton, MA 01720

*The Creative Learning Exchange*  
1 Keefe Road  
Acton, MA 01720  
Phone 978-287-0070  
Fax 978-287-0080  
[www.clexchange.org](http://www.clexchange.org)

### Trustees

John R. Bemis, Founder  
Jay W. Forrester  
George P. Richardson  
Stephen C. Stuntz

### Executive Director

Lees N. Stuntz  
[stuntzln@clexchange.org](mailto:stuntzln@clexchange.org)

*The Creative Learning Exchange* is a trust devoted to encouraging exchanges to help people to learn through discovery. It is a non-profit educational institution and all contributions to it are tax deductible.