

THE TORO GAZETTE

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FOCUS ON: CREATIVITY

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**Uruguayan
American
School**

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

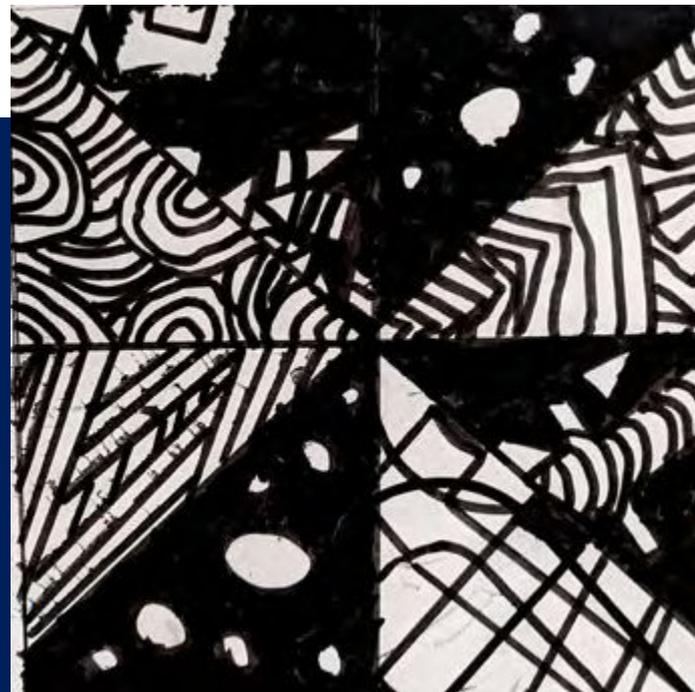


Matthew C. Beata, Director

HOW CAN WE CULTIVATE CREATIVITY?

Pablo Picasso once famously stated that “all children are artists.” If I had heard that comment when I was an elementary or middle school student, I would have heartily disagreed. After a quick glance at my rudimentary attempts at self-portraits and two-point perspective in art class, even the most generous art critic would have to admit I was the exception to Picasso’s rule.

Recalling Picasso’s quote now as an adult, I see that he meant that all children have innate creativity, and the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, and patterns. In this sense, all children are indeed artists. Children naturally possess a sense of wonder and curiosity and are not limited by “how it has been done before.”



Ink drawing, Joaquin Z., 5th Grade



Ink Drawing by Benicio C., 4th Grade

As shared in our UAS Learner Profile, one of our aims is to cultivate creativity in students. While creativity may most naturally be associated with art, music, and drama, the creative mindset can be developed in every discipline. The key is the way in which we teach.

So how can creativity actually be taught? There is a huge toolbox of instructional strategies that are designed to foster a creative mindset in students. Perhaps the easiest is to clearly define the learning goals, then permit a student to choose how they will demonstrate their learning. For instance, rather than taking a test or writing an essay, a student might prepare a video animation or perform a skit or a song to show the growth of a character throughout a novel. Or, as Ms. Wilkinson mentions in her article in this issue, by letting students use their own technique to design their square of the UAS Hope Quilt.

One of the most effective ways to teach creativity is to pose complex problems and then allow students to ponder and suggest solutions. In the Middle School Innovation Fair, for example, students are introduced to the United Nations Sustainability Goals, a list of 17 challenges facing the world today. Many of the world's finest minds are grappling with these issues intending to reach solutions for all 17 by 2030. In the

Innovation Fair, our Middle School students seek to design and test a solution that will address one of the sustainability goals. For a more in-depth look, see "Science at its Creative Nature" by MS Teacher, Mr. Chris Wilkinson, on page 04.

There are numerous benefits to teaching in a manner that promotes creativity. First, students become more active, motivated learners because they can engage in an activity or tackle an issue that naturally interests them. Secondly, students are engaged in questioning, problem-solving, evaluating, and analyzing - all higher-order thinking skills. And finally, through the process of experimenting, failing, and re-trying, students become aware of limitations but push through them to see possibilities. What better way to prepare children to maneuver in an ever-changing world than to give them the chance to think originally and believe they can create something new and better?

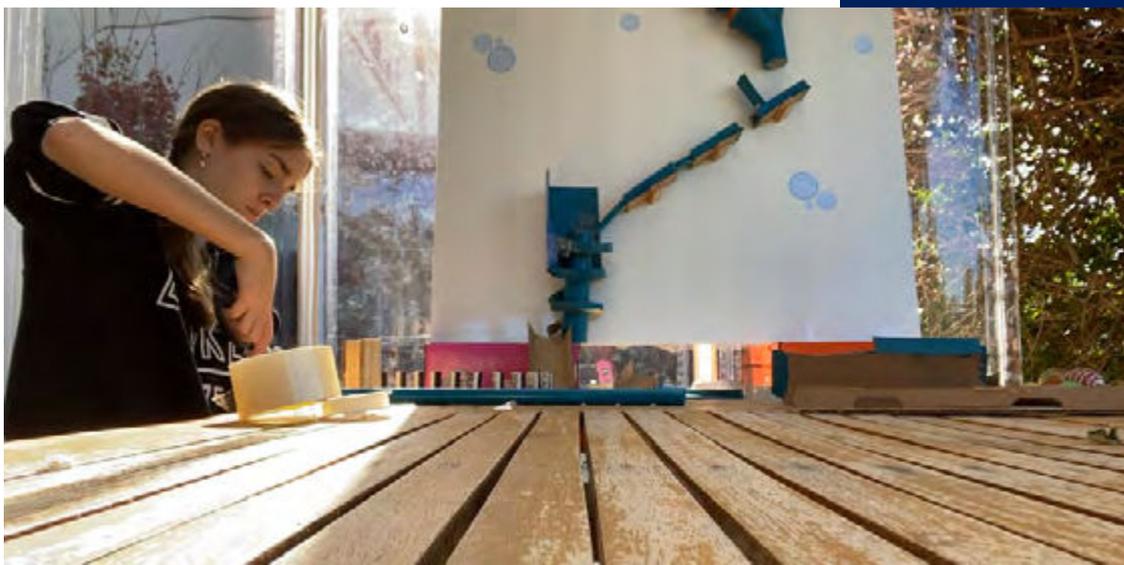
At UAS we empower students to think independently, be courageous in their learning, and appreciate, as Picasso teaches, that they are all artists.

SCIENCE AT ITS CREATIVE NATURE

Christopher Wilkinson, UAS MS Science Teacher

Albert Einstein once said, *“To raise questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks a real advance in science.”*

This quote at first glance seems to make a connection to the middle school Innovation Fair that we have each year at UAS. Over the past 6 years, I have watched young middle school students go through the creative process of choosing a question, imagining and designing a procedure, and then craftily conducting an experiment that sometimes has never been done. The design process is a clear demonstration of creative imagination but students do not stop there. After collecting data for up to 4 weeks, they then have to analyze the data, draw some conclusions and finally present their findings to the UAS Community. If the creativity was not evident in their choice of topic and their design, then it becomes more evident with their display boards and their original presentations.



The grade 8 students bring their Rube Goldberg projects to life with their innovative combination of simple machines and energy transfers to carry out a common task with a bit of a twist. Crowds of students, teachers, and parents gather around to see the success or failure of the contraptions, and cheers ring out through the hallways as student teams are successful. The Innovation Fair has become a rite of passage for Middle School students and prepares the students for the rigors of high school.

During the pandemic, students had to be a little more creative in their approach to the Innovation Fair. Students may have started working at school in February on their innovations and, Investigations but in March we went into lockdown. Students had to adapt and adjust their projects, find ways to work together if they were in groups, and stay motivated throughout the process. 70 participants across 6th, 7th, and 8th grade took up the challenge to innovate during the lockdown. The students all created video presentations that were judged by secondary students and teachers, and a handful of volunteer parents. The science department worked together to help the secondary students to judge consciously and to provide thoughtful peer feedback to our young scientists. Creativity and originality were key areas that were assessed by the judges.



It is not just in the Innovation Fair experience that students have opportunities to be creative. When I think about the middle school science program at Uruguayan American School I can see opportunities for creativity and originality throughout the year. Project-based work is valued, often more than quizzes or tests in middle school, because through project-based work students become responsible for their own learning. Through choice, students learn by connecting new knowledge with concepts they already know.

Shining glimmering,
With power pulsing,
Solid, hard, and strong,
Stretch'd round and long,
Hammered flat and thin,
Metals all akin,
Dull and bland,
Power banned,
Gaseous, weak, and, brittle,
Shattered pieces little,
Melted soft in flame,
Nonmetals all the same,
Dull with luster,
A semiconductor,
Solid, brittle, and weak,
Shattered pieces bleak,
Yet useful too,
Metalloids very few,

Poem, by Jacob S., 8th Grade

In science at UAS, we have started using the 5Es: Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Evaluation, and Elaboration to immerse students in a topic. Students have opportunities to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways through Student Choice Projects and Challenge opportunities. Although the content expectations are there; how a student shows their understanding is entirely up to them. It is here that students' creativity comes to life and marks real advances in science. Whether it is an inventive poem comparing metals and nonmetals or an [original podcast](#) about how scientists use the scientific method. Students can demonstrate their understanding and knowledge about a topic creatively.

These kinds of creative experiences are often what students will remember well beyond the experiment and even refer back to when reflecting on Middle School Science.

Einstein was right. Creative imagination is a key ingredient in asking new questions and thinking of new possible solutions to our current reality. It will be key to future advancements in science and our society.

Our UAS Middle School Science program provides opportunities to not only gain confidence but also to try new things and be creative.



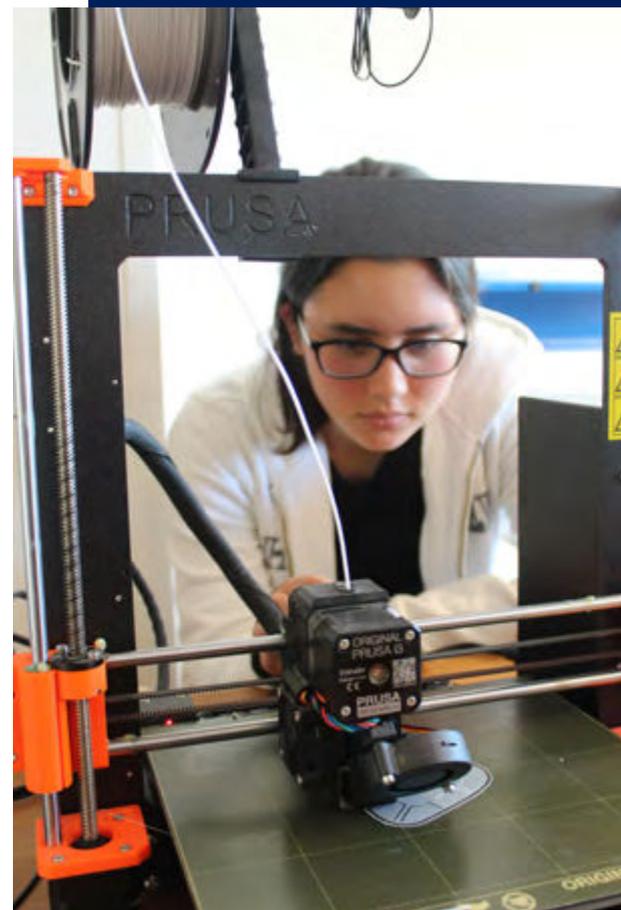
STUDENT VOICE: CAROLINA CANTOLI

UAS Communications Officer, Ms. Alyssa Lorch, enjoyed meeting with 8th Grader Carolina Cantoli for this issue of *The Toro Gazette* to find out what goes on in the UAS Design Lab.

Hello Carolina, I'm really glad we could sit down and talk today because there is new Design Lab equipment on campus this year that most of us haven't had a chance to see or use yet, like the 3D Printers and the Laser Cutter. I hear from Mr. Turner, who teaches our Robotics and Design, Tech, & Media (DTM) classes, that you have taken a couple of classes already using the equipment and would be a great student to help us all learn more about what those classes are like and what the new technology can do!

I understand you took the DTM 1 class last year in 7th grade and are now taking DTM 2. What is it that interests you most about these classes?

With the 3D printer in DTM 1 I like that we are testing out our ideas. For example, once I dislocated my thumb playing volleyball. I needed to immobilize it. And then I remembered I had learned how to use the 3D printer and decided to try to make a mini cast for my thumb. It was pretty hard to make because of all the curves and the complicated shape of a thumb but I did manage to make a little cast that worked! So that's what I really like, that I can turn my ideas into something concrete.

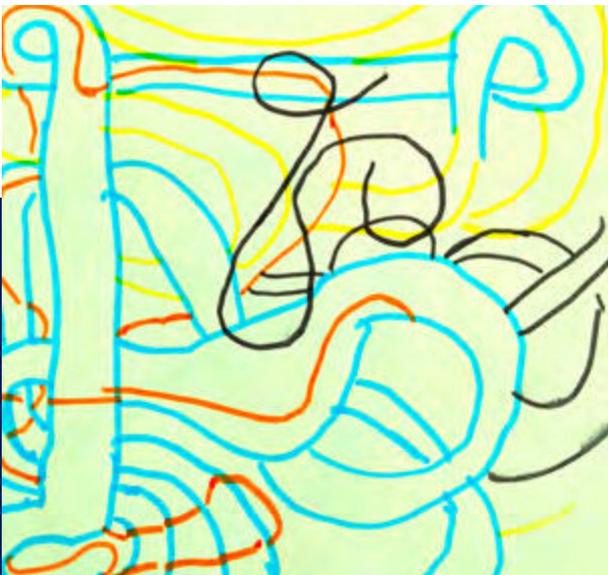


Please share with us one of your favorite project assignments.

One of my favorite projects was assigned right at the beginning of the semester in DTM 1. Mr. Turner asked us to make a 20cm by 20cm chair for a fictional character. He used Homer Simpson from the Simpsons cartoon as an example. He asked us to think carefully about what Homer would want his chair to be like. He would want to relax in it, and it needed to be comfortable. We should keep in mind that he is an older person. It really challenged us to think creatively about how to design the best chair for our fictional character. I loved that project.

I've never printed anything on a 3D printer. How long did it take to print a 20 cm by 20 cm chair?

It takes a long time. I remember it took about 4 hours for my chair to print.



Paths of Peace, by Gabriel C., 3rd Grade

And what about the DTM 2 class, what do you focus on in that class?

In DTM 2 we're doing a lot of coding. This semester we did 13 Arduino projects. We start with learning wiring. It's difficult and sometimes the mechanics take time to figure out. We troubleshoot a lot. And we have team projects.

What kind of projects are you working on currently?

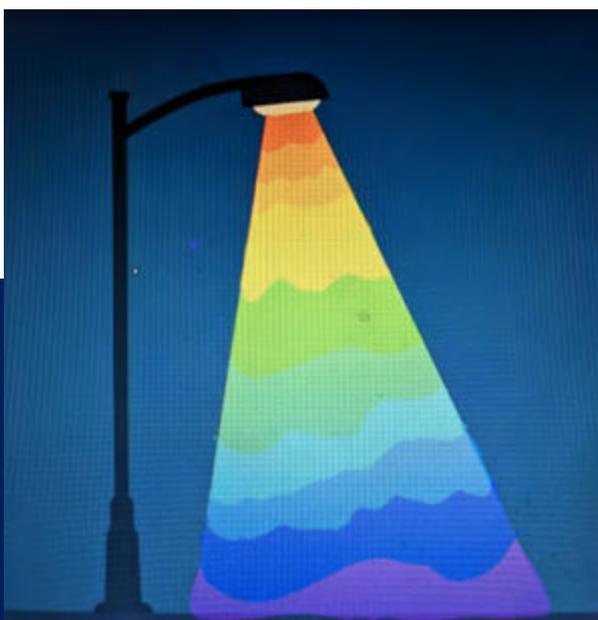
For the end of this semester in DTM 2 we are working on 4 projects. One is to study Python and design a project to make a turtle that moves. And in the second project we are to design a product for a client we choose. I'm making an Onigiri - it's a Japanese food a little like sushi but in a triangular form. And then me personally, just for fun I'm also making a Nigiri mold for my Dad so he can make perfectly shaped sushi easily at home!

Note: For those interested in the specs, our students in the UAS Design Lab are using the Ultimaker 2+ 3D Printer, Prusa i3mk3 3D Printer, and the 6040 Sharp Laser Cutter.



ALUMNI VOICE: DANIEL MELLA

It was a pleasure for *The Toro Gazette* to speak with author Daniel Mella who attended UAS in the 1980s. Daniel has published five novels and two anthologies, and holds the distinction of being the youngest winner of the prestigious Bartolomé Hidalgo award for his short stories book called *Lava* (2013). He would later go on to win the award a second time in 2016 for *El Hermano Mayor*, an intimate fictionalized autobiography about losing a loved one. Care to check out his books? His work can be found in our library, on the UAS Author Bookshelf where we are proud to have all the books written by UAS Alumni!



Digital Peace, by Mailys M., 7th Grade

*What years did you attend UAS?
Which grades did you complete
at UAS?*

I studied at UAS from 1981 to 1988, nursery to sixth grade.

*What do you recall about your
time at UAS?*

I remember going from not understanding a word in English to, all of a sudden, understanding most of what was being said. I remember the playground, the gym, the fire drills, some of my friends and some of the girls I had a crush on.

*Were you also passionate about
literature as a student? How did
you get involved in writing?*

I wouldn't say I was passionate about literature when I was a kid. I did like reading and writing, though. I would always get a book for my birthdays, and I began to keep a diary at the age of 7. I enjoyed the feeling of aloneness I got when I was reading or writing, the same feeling I get right now, probably one of the main reasons I still read and write. I started writing more seriously when I was a teenager. Especially love poems which I never showed anybody, least of all to the objects of my adoration.

*What are you currently working
on?*

I finished a book called *Visiones para Emma* a while ago and it left me pretty exhausted, so I'm currently resting. I've got a project in my head, but I can't talk about it. Never talk about a project, that's my rule. Maybe it's superstition, but I think if you talk about your projects too early you can ruin them.

*What is one piece of advice you
would tell a young author?*

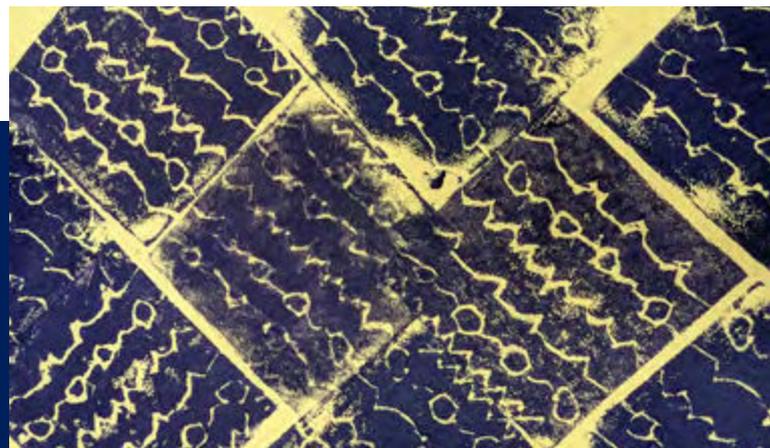
Write a lot. And buckle up.

*Do you stay in touch with your
UAS classmates or anyone from
UAS?*

My parents, who used to work there, and my brothers and sisters, who also went to UAS. Sometimes we reminisce.

*Thank you for sharing your time
with us, Daniel. Would you
like to add any final thoughts?*

Thank you for the invitation, and happy holidays!



THINK LIKE AN ARTIST

Tendai Gumbo Wilkinson, UAS Middle School and Elementary School Visual Art Teacher

The UAS Learner Profile identifies 5 key skills that as a school we help all UAS students develop while studying at UAS. And one of those 5 skills is Creativity. In this issue of *The Toro Gazette*, many will speak about the importance of creativity. But I think we can all agree that Art and Creativity are inextricably connected.



Hope Quilt, by Elementary and Middle School Art

The Elementary and Middle School Art Program at UAS starts with an appreciation for the fundamentals of visual art. Our students learn how to use the correct terminology and to identify the Elements and Principles of Art such as the use of impasto in achieving textures, the use of shapes and collage in cubism, and the differences between abstract and realistic work. We learn to confidently and meaningfully discuss and enjoy the visual arts. One way we do this in the Elementary school is by exploring these elements through the art of famous artists such as: Britto from Brazil, Mondrian from France, Kandinsky from Russia, Torres García from Uruguay, Jasper Johns from USA, and indigenous cultures artists of Australia and Africa. Through these examples students learn a range of ways to approach the creative process in their own art. But beyond learning to recognize, appreciate and define what they see, the students' exposure to art from all over the world helps them to be globally aware and knowledgeable about different cultures.

In our Middle School students begin to give purpose to their artmaking. They observe that art can have a far reaching effect and can be used to raise awareness and shed light on local or even global concerns. One example of this occurred recently when as part of a science project our Middle School students were exposed to ocean pollution and challenged to make artistic and creative solutions with plastic waste. The previous year the group made an installation called “Amazonia” which educated our school community about the beauty and importance of the Amazon and the constant and tragic loss during the terrible annual fires. In both installations I personally enjoyed the students’ fresh ideas and creative ways in which they reused and upcycled materials.

Of all the art projects I’ve been involved in at UAS, the one I am most proud of is our Hope Quilt. After the pandemic we returned to school but had to keep our distance from each other. Collaborative work had always been such an important aspect of all studio work done in both

the Middle School and Elementary. But how could we be collaborative with the mandated distance? And at the same time students and teachers were all seeking hope and a sense of togetherness. The Hope Quilt was a textile fabric art piece created by all the art students at UAS. Each student used a technique of their choice to design a square piece of fabric. The result was a collection of wonderfully original art squares. Made completely apart but sewn together to represent our resilience and positive attitude through these difficult times. The Hope Quilt was a glowing depiction of our emotional intelligence in vibrant, positive colors.

Creativity is a key ingredient in art and life. By nurturing and encouraging it in everything we do it can blossom and bring out our individuality. Be creative and expect the unexpected!

For more on the subject of creativity in art please watch this passionate TEd Talk: [On the Topic of Art Education and Creativity](#). Think like an Artist.

Amazonia, Art Installation at UAS



Upcycled Canisters, by Soujiro K., 8th Grade

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: ADRIÁN VARELA

Nearly all of us parents and students have had a quick hello with him, but not everyone has had a chance to get to know him. He has a key role here at UAS. Managing the full campus facilities must be a big job and with lots of unexpected challenges. In this issue of *The Toro Gazette*, we are examining Creativity. It's easy to imagine that creativity likely plays a large role in his solutions to facilities problems. We'd love to learn more about him and some of the creative solutions he has come up with over the years.



Please tell us a little about yourself personally?

I've worked at UAS since July, 2013 and am the proud father of two UAS students, Avril in third grade and Bautista in second grade.

I am a native English speaker because although I was born in Uruguay, when I was 2 years old, my family moved to the United States where we lived for 13 years.

In my free time, I love to be involved in sports. In the past 20 years, I've enjoyed competing in karate several times in Uruguay, Brazil, and Japan and achieved third place in a Kyokushin national championship and was a two-time Seiwakai national champion. More recently, I have been practicing Krav Maga.

Can you describe for us what are the key responsibilities you have in your job at UAS?

I'm responsible for keeping the facilities and campus operative, healthy and safe for students, staff, and visitors. I propose and participate in developing new projects. And I prepare events and supervise the preventative maintenance schedule, so everything can be accomplished successfully.

How many people work with you to manage the UAS facilities?

Between the maintenance and cleaning crew, I have 10 people on my team. In addition, I manage and supervise quite a few outsourced companies and people when they are on campus.

What are you most proud of in your work?

After finishing a project, seeing the students use that facility is very gratifying. For example, the new gym was a large and challenging project. My team and I put in a lot of hours and teamwork to support the project. Receiving the "job well done" from the Director and the congratulations from people in the community is something that comforts me.

I'm also very proud of the teamwork among the maintenance staff at UAS and with the rest of the school staff. It's very important to the quality of our work.

In all your years managing the UAS facilities, please share with us a complicated problem you've had to solve creatively. What was the challenge and how did you solve it?

UAS is a 7,800 m² facility, which houses around 430 people on a daily basis. Different and unexpected things can occur! For example, once we had a serious problem where suddenly the water tank was dry on campus. Imagine that happening during a SAAC soccer tournament, with over 600 people here on campus. At first, I noticed the water coming out of the faucets was weak. Shortly after, I discovered that our two water pumps were failing, at the same time!

The first step for a problem is always to not lose control, to think quickly and think smartly.

I decided the best plan was to find a way to quickly fill up our 8,000 liter water tank, so we would have water in the school and the problem wouldn't affect anyone. I remembered that we have 18,000 liters of water always in reserve, designated for any fire hazard.

So along with my maintenance team, we connected fire hoses all the way from the reserve tank to the water tank and were able to fill the school's water supplies for the short term. The good thing about this solution was that no one noticed the issue and school was able to go on normally all the way until we were able to repair the failed water pumps.



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