

what is pedagogy?

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WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO TEACH OUR KIDS?



Throughout my career I have been fascinated by this particular question. At times I have simply referred to it as the “it” of good teaching, as in, “that

teacher has “it”, meaning I knew that the teacher was using good teaching practice but was not really sure what it was that provided me the evidence.

Others have described good teaching as an art, some as a science, or both. A few years ago Hanover School Division borrowed heavily from Charlotte Danielson’s work to develop a comprehensive description of good teaching in a Teacher Effectiveness Framework, that still forms the core of our Teacher Professional Growth and Assessment Program. I eventually settled on a triangular relational model of good teaching that received its inspiration from Parker J. Palmer. It featured the relationships between teacher, learner, and subject. This model still challenges my pedagogical thinking more than any other concept.

Wikipedia defines pedagogy as the study of the best way to teach. Michael Fullan challenges us to be precise in our pedagogy, to make precision a priority, and driving force in our work. In short, teachers are to be very purposeful as we design our classroom learning experiences. And then we need to know if our students actually learned what we intended for them to learn. And if they did not, we must adjust our instruction so that they will. So we look for new research-proven practices that we can add to our instructional tool kits and design them into the learning experience and repeat the cycle. And it is as we cycle

through this in a purposeful way, that we become increasingly effective and pedagogically precise teachers.

“In the context of Deeper Learning we want to focus specifically on how best to teach our students so that they will learn the eight competencies of critical thinker, citizen, character, learner, collaborator, creative, literate, and communicator.”

In the context of Deeper Learning we want to focus specifically on how best to teach our students so that they will learn the eight competencies of critical thinker, citizen, character, learner, collaborator, creative, literate, and communicator. And that will require all of us continued learning, exploration, and even inquiry. Enjoy the journey!

With gratitude,

Randy Dueck, Superintendent, CEO
Hanover School Division



Merry Christmas

The Board
of Trustees,
Administration, and
Staff of the Hanover
School Division
wish you a Merry
Christmas and
Happy New Year.





"Doing the self-reflection really made me think about how I can succeed more in the next term, and that's very helpful." *MMS Student*

IN OUR SCHOOLS

REFLECTING ON LEARNING at MMS



An old Chinese proverb says 'Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand'. Education is not something that should be done to kids. Kids need to be invested and involved in their own learning. The question is how do great teachers do this? The answer is in the methods or ways we teach or better yet, the methods or ways we engage our students in their own learning.

Isadora Duncan, a famous dancer and dance instructor in the late 1800s, said "I do not teach children. I give them joy." This quote resonates today perfectly. We want our kids to enjoy what they are doing at school every day so they want to learn more. We want them to learn to love learning, which encompasses the struggles and

successes of learning new things. To do this, teachers must design learning opportunities for students to think about what they are learning about. We want our kids to consider these questions:

- What have I learned so far?
- What am struggling with?
- What steps do I have to take to learn more?

Getting our kids to reflect on their learning and then share it, are important pedagogical practices (or teaching methods) we are using at Mitchell Middle School every day. Students in a Grade 7 Language Arts class took the chance to ask themselves those important three questions. They took a video of themselves responding to the questions, posted them to a class SeeSaw account so their classmates could then watch

and provide further feedback to each other. The engagement while students were doing their videos was extremely high. They were open with their successes and things they want to learn more about. They also learned that they weren't the only ones struggling with certain things and borrowed each other's steps to improve their learning.

This method, or pedagogical practice, helped give kids the opportunity to have a voice and choice in their own learning, to think about what is going well, to think about what needs to get better and to make a plan to make things better. Making this work public (at least within the class) also drives up the interest level as all kids want to show off their best when others get to see. Parents also have access to see their kid's reflections and also make comments on their child's work.

This is a great way for students to inform themselves, their teachers and parents, about how and what they are learning, and what steps they need to take to learn more.

- **Andrew Mead, Mitchell Middle School**

"I feel like we finally get to have our own opinions on stuff, and finally agree with the teacher on things. We get to say what we think and see if the teacher agrees." *MMS Student*



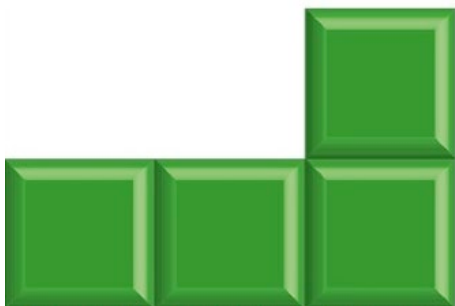
FEATURE ARTICLE

WHAT IS PEDAGOGY?

The kids walked into class. The desks were clustered in groups of four. They sat down, each in a different desk than the day before – they knew the routine.

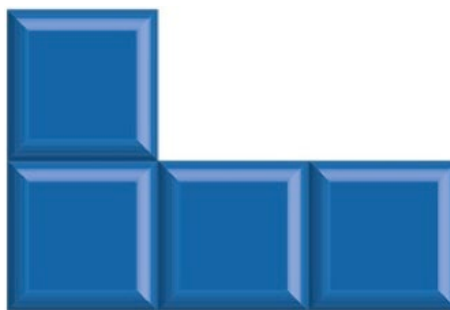
Each set of desks had a pile of cubes, the kind you can stick together, and three envelopes marked A, B, and C. The teacher held up a shape she had constructed from some cubes. She held one face of the construction towards the class and said, pointing, “This is the front face. Draw the way it looks to you looking at it straight on.” They all drew this:

FRONT

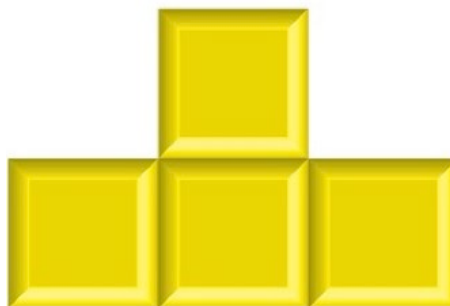


She showed them the right side and the view from the top. They all drew these pictures:

RIGHT



TOP



You could probably rebuild the construction she showed them from these pictures.

Next each person in the group was given one of the envelopes. The fourth person was the only one allowed to touch the cubes. Each of the envelopes contained one perspective: front, right side, or top. While everyone could say anything they wanted out loud, no one except the person holding their particular envelope was allowed to see the picture in the envelope. They couldn't show the pictures to each other, they could only talk about what they saw. Each group had to construct the object from these three clues with only one person manipulating the cubes. The room began to buzz, while she walked about, mostly listening and deliberately attending to the students use of language to communicate their ideas and reflect on their contributions.

Where does the pedagogy live in this story? Is it in the activity? Is it in the mindset of the teacher? Is it in the mindset of the students? Is it in the

teaching techniques used? What pedagogies do you see here?

WHAT'S PEDAGOGY?

Pedagogy, sometimes defined as the art and science of teaching, is a slippery word. Sometimes we think of it as a series of learning activities. Other times it's about developing a mindset – such as an inquiry mindset – and it's also about using specific, deliberate techniques designed to elicit learning on the part of students.

A friend struggling to help their kids learn recently asked me: “So, what are the best ways to teach?” The more we talked about it the more I realized, the question doesn't make sense. A better way to phrase it might be: what are some effective ways for **me** to teach **this** student? Teaching isn't rocket science, it's far more complex. There are so many variables, and the most relevant ones (teacher and student) are always changing. The strongest pedagogues know a lot about themselves as teachers and about their students as learners. So I think the best answer we can give to a question like that is: it depends.

That said, learning is something done by a learner. While we can't force people to learn we can try to actively engage them in learning. Dylan Wiliam is one of my favourite authors on this subject. He talks about five principles of active learning.

START FROM WHERE THE STUDENT IS

When we learn something new we are changed by that learning, in the way we think, behave, or

understand. All learning has to start by getting the ideas, preconceptions, and misconceptions that students have on the table. Laying new ideas on top of old ideas can more often lead to confusion. Learning involves restructuring how we think.

LEARNING HAS TO BE DONE BY, NOT FOR THE STUDENTS

Listening carefully to all the students ideas, particularly their misconceptions, challenging them, and talking through inconsistencies helps them do the mental heavy lifting. They have to be the ones who make the mistakes and who fix the mistakes. Sometimes being less helpful is the kindest thing we can do for students. Letting them run into a mental wall and then talking them through finding their own way around it, or over it, leads to more sticky learning.

STUDENTS NEED TO TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY'RE LEARNING

When I attend professional development and I'm not given the chance to talk about what I'm learning with others around me I get frustrated. Students need the same opportunity to talk about their ideas with one another, and with their teachers. I know if I'm not talking about it, I'm not learning it. It's the same for Our Kids.

STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW THEIR LEARNING TARGETS

What does good work look like? How does my work compare? These are two criteria students need to monitor and steer their learning in the right direction. This isn't about writing down the learning outcomes for the day. It's more about

living in the intersection between talking about what we're learning and getting feedback so students can make their own course corrections. Often the best way to find out if students know their learning target is to ask them at the end of class. If their answers match what the teacher had in mind then mission accomplished! If not, then the lesson plan for tomorrow is clear.

FEEDBACK HAS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON HOW TO IMPROVE

Getting feedback right is tough. If students hear feedback as comments about their own abilities they may have a negative emotional reaction. Feedback that focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of the work, and what needs to be done to improve, is more likely to be well received and acted on. Providing feedback through the lens of a growth mindset helps students see how they can do better by trying, and learn from their mistakes and failures.

PEDAGOGY ISN'T AN ACTIVITY

Pedagogy isn't an activity. Pedagogy isn't a mindset. Pedagogy isn't a technique. It's all of these. Working together in tandem in an environment where students are actively engaged in their learning. Classes like the one described above live and breathe throughout our school division. Pedagogy is both an art and a science, and we've got some fabulously passionate artists and scientists helping Our Kids flourish as learners.

- Darren Kuropatwa, Director of Learning



STEPPING UP FOR NUMERACY at Blumenort School



During the month of November, Blumenort School celebrated numeracy month. The theme for the month was “Stepping Up for Numeracy”. Students explored the connection between physical activity in conjunction with mathematical data collection. Mental math practice and estimation were also emphasized throughout the month.

The link between physical activity and mathematical data collection was fostered through the use of Fitbits and pedometers. Students collected data about their own physical activity by wearing a step-counting device throughout an entire school day. They estimated how many steps they would take by first recess, lunch and the end of the day. They also recorded the actual data obtained from their step-counting devices at the same intervals; this allowed students to compare their estimation to their obtained data. Classes experimented with taking a data sample in order to make informed estimations.

The final collection of student’s physical activity data was a springboard for meaningful conversations about math and physical activity/healthy living. Classrooms discussed the accuracy of one’s data collection and possible ways the data could be skewed.

Some additional discussions were about how physical activity is connected to our health, as well as, ways that we can continue to add more activity into our daily

lives. In addition to wearing Fitbits and pedometers, students participated in a school wide estimation challenge. A large jar of treats was displayed in the school trophy case. Students earned ballots to enter into the estimation challenge by practicing their mental math facts both at school and at home. They then used these ballots to enter their estimations of how many treats were in the jar.

Numeracy month concluded with a visit from the Steinbach Pistons, a highlight for many of the students. Players from the team visited classrooms and took part in a variety of numeracy activities. The Piston players helped the students of Blumenort create pictographs of player’s statistics, gather data within classroom mini stick games and answer mathematical trivia questions based on the team’s record. The whole school gathered in the gym for a floor hockey game where some students were able to play against the Pistons. Each Piston player wore a pedometer and continued to give updates throughout the game of his step count. The end of the game was marked by ballots being pulled from our school’s estimation challenge and students earning some exciting prizes for numeracy month. Thanks Blumenort School, for “Stepping Up for Numeracy”.

- Kayla Dupont, Blumenort School



THE SPIDER IN OUR WINDOW

A mini-class inquiry at Mitchell Elementary School

A beautiful large spider web glistened in our window. A large spider with a growing egg sac lived there. “What does it eat? Where is it when it isn’t in the web?” “Let’s find out.”

We took close up photos to discover details and to help in identification. Our spider with striped legs and a fleur-de-lis design on its belly could not be found with the internet searches we tried. Looking through pictures of Manitoba spiders and describing it with words did not get us answers.

Now we had to think about how to find out when Google doesn’t help. We tried books without success. We asked other teachers. We asked a farmer and a veterinarian. A barn spider seemed like a possible idea but when we found information about a barn spider we found out they eat and rebuild their nest each day and our spider was not doing that. We learned that people who know about insects and spiders are called entomologists. We sent a text to the Head of Entomology at U of M with pictures of our spider. He replied that our spider is a cat faced spider and sent us some information about it. Now that we knew what kind of spider it is we could find more information about it online. Last time we checked our egg sac was tucked up near the window frame waiting for spring.

- Karen Hiebert, Mitchell Elementary School

INQUIRY THROUGH DRAMA at GVS



The drama production at Green Valley School (GVS) took a different direction this year, in that it was the first student-led production in my time here.

I set up the structure: a number of one-act plays were given to students to read. They then had to choose one and with a co-directing partner, pitch to me their production concept for the play and why I would even dream of letting them run with their idea.

Two pairings of grade 12 students came forward to meet the creative challenge, and while each group presented a strong case for their chosen play and why they should be the group to run with their idea, Jenna Chamberlin and Jessica Hiebert ended up heading things up for their chosen play "Hamlet Hears a Who."



I sat down with the girls at the outset and we broke down the production into its various moving parts (auditions, scheduling, rehearsals, costumes, props, sets, etc...). While I sat in a few of the initial rehearsals, I stayed out of the room unless they asked me to be there to help trouble shoot. As part of our initial meeting about the production, I suggested that they touch base with other teachers in the building for help with any of the aspects of the performance (sets, makeup and such) though left it to them to make the connections.

We had regular meetings to talk about what was happening (or not) with the production, and I made suggestions accordingly. As crunch time hit, they ramped things up and had their cast of 18 students (grades 9 through 12) show ready. I asked them what their greatest take away was from the experience and they both said that while it was an enormous undertaking, that it was immensely satisfying to have the reins and to be trusted to run with something like this.

As I consider the production through the lens of Deeper Learning, I see the experience hitting each of the rings of the HSD diagram. When I asked the girls to think about their experience in light of the competencies (Learner, Critical Thinker, Communicator, Collaborator, Citizen, Literate, Character, and Creative), they felt that the opportunity provided them an authentic chance to 'grow much(!)' in each of the areas.



"When I asked the girls to think about their experience in light of the competencies (Learner, Critical Thinker, Communicator, Collaborator, Citizen, Literate, Character, and Creative), they felt that the opportunity provided them an authentic chance to 'grow much(!)' in each of the areas."

Was it risky for me as a teacher to get out of the way and let the students go? Absolutely. The whole effort could have gone sideways. That being said, I knew the students, and trusted that they were invested in the work. A staff member mentioned in passing that the girls had set the bar extremely high for any future student led productions. I agreed, but am left to wonder just how high the next prospective group may go if I take the risk and get out of their way.

- Brett Schmall, Green Valley School

BOOKSHELF



“What is Inquiry? Why would I teach that way? How in the world do I do it? If you’ve ever wondered any of these things, Kath Murdoch’s book, *The Power of Inquiry*, is a fantastic resource for you.”

The Power of Inquiry

by Kath Murdoch, Seastar Education, 2015

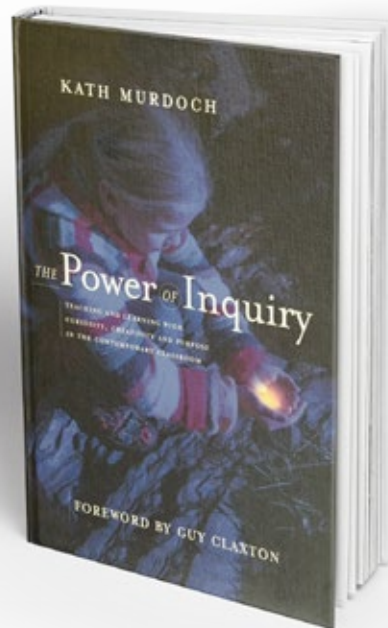
What is Inquiry? Why would I teach that way? How in the world do I do it? If you’ve ever wondered any of these things, Kath Murdoch’s book, *The Power of Inquiry*, is a fantastic resource for you. She has written a very practical guide to understanding the process of inquiry for teaching and learning and she includes a great number of strategies for teaching that will be useful in classrooms of all grade levels and subject areas. If I were to recommend just one book on inquiry learning, this would be it.

Inquiry is certainly not a new concept. Murdoch quotes John Dewey, writing in 1938 that, “the future of our civilization depended on the widening spread and deepening hold of the inquiring mind.” Reformers in the 1960’s and 70’s argued for inductive approaches to learning wherein the learner is challenged to gather and analyze information, review it against existing knowledge, seek connections, notice patterns and gradually build an understanding of a concept (p. 14). Inquiry learning, writes Murdoch, is an approach that places the learner and learning central to what the teacher thinks, says and does. Learning happens through investigation, which in itself is driven through powerful questions often framed by authentic contexts and real-life problems and purposes. Students move beyond facts and come to understand deeper concepts (p. 15). She goes on to describe that

all aspects of an inquiry classroom will come to be deeply impacted by this approach – from classroom environment, to culture, to learning tasks, to assessment.

Why inquiry? Murdoch provides a list of gains to be made, from the increase of student motivation when we engage their curiosity, to the development of key “6C” skills, to a focus on applying learning to real-world, meaningful issues and authentic contexts, to the opportunity to leverage digital, to improving student agency, and many more. She also describes some of the reasons why inquiry learning has sometimes been less than stellar in its application, and how we need to guard against “either/or” false dichotomies that limit learning.

Each chapter of *The Power of Inquiry* delves into important aspects we need to consider as we introduce this approach to learning into our classrooms. A chapter on designing learning environments provides many practical suggestions on using available classroom space both inside and outside. It also recognizes that the most important aspect of the classroom is the culture. How do we build community and connect with our students as we develop a culture of learning? How do we create a collaborative community (p. 30)? Murdoch provides many suggestions for how to develop flexible spaces that nurture curiosity and wonder, that develop what she calls “spaces of possibility”. Further chapters deal with subject matter and curriculum.



What is worth inquiring into? How do we develop powerful, open-ended questions? How do we develop inquiries within subject area disciplines? How do we grow a culture of questioning and curiosity? How do we assess student learning in a culture of inquiry?

“Murdoch provides many suggestions for how to develop flexible spaces that nurture curiosity and wonder, that develop what she calls ‘spaces of possibility’.”

The Power of Inquiry is a powerful, accessible book. Murdoch has done a superb job of providing the principles behind inquiry learning, and then moving on to the practical application of how we can make this work in our classrooms. If you are at all considering furthering inquiry in your practice, this is the book for you.

- Rick Ardies, Assistant Superintendent

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IN OUR SCHOOLS

THE WORRY MONSTER

Worry. As adults and children, we all have our own worry lists. Some worrying is necessary; it keeps us from danger and helps us set goals. It becomes problematic when it begins affecting our relationships, our work, and school performance.

Alex Russell, author of *Drop the Worry Ball: How to Parent in the Age of Entitlement*, says that pressure on children to perform, combined with the modern parenting model, creates a catch-22 worrying cycle. “Parents do all the worrying about reality, so kids tend to fall behind in learning how to adapt to reality, which can lead to anxiety.” In other words, adults that experience chronic worry and anxiety is directly correlated to how children will adapt to anxieties in their world.

California-based clinical psychologist Daniel Peters, is the author of *From Worrier to Warrior: A Guide to Conquering Your Fears* (For Kids and Teens) and *Make Your Worrier a Warrior: A Guide to Conquering Your Child's Fears*, directed at parents. Peters describes worrying as “a useless mulling over things we cannot change” that “drains energy and prevents us from taking risks. I’m talking about levels of anxiety and worry that limit kids and adults from living their lives - because they’re

crippled by doubt and fear of things that will never come and likely will never come.” He instructs children to see worry as a bully, “the worry monster.”

Research shows that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can be very effective for adults and children suffering from chronic worry and anxiety. It is a short-term, goal-oriented treatment that takes a hands-on approach to problem-solving. Its goal is to change patterns of thinking or behaviour that are behind people’s difficulties, thus changing the way they feel.

TAKE THE WORRY MONSTER DOWN

There are simple and effective strategies that kids (and parents) can learn to help drive away the worry monster. Kids can learn how fear and worry work in their bodies and learn strategies to take a stand against this bully. Try:

1. Identify what your body does when you feel worried.
2. Make a worry list or keep a worry diary.
3. Develop a Coping Tool box to help when you feel worry coming on. Suggestions include: deep breathing, use a calming sequence for example: squeeze your hands together, close your eyes and rub

your head, then rub your legs and repeat the sequence five times, take a walk while carrying a weighted object, or doing a push-up standing up against the wall pushing with all your might.

4. Don’t give up!

- Carolyn Peters and Courtney Baudry,
Southwood School

For more information, check out these links:



The Anxiety Toolkit



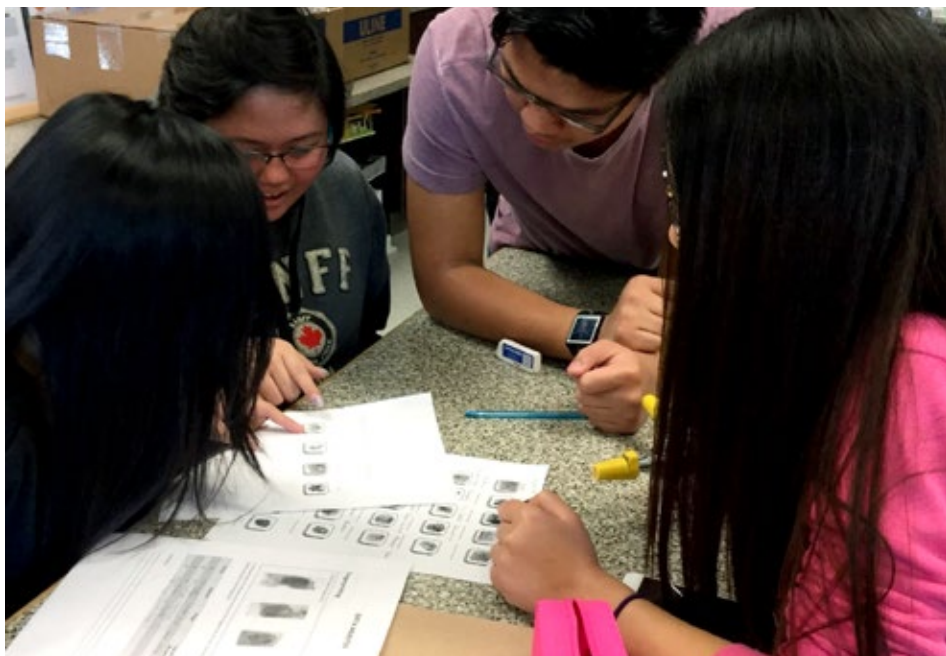
Anxiety BC



Macleans Article, “The New Worry Epidemic”

INFUSING INQUIRY LEARNING INTO SENIOR YEARS CLASSROOMS

at Steinbach Regional Secondary School



Picture this - a Steinbach Regional Secondary School forensics classroom with crime scene tape stretched across the classroom door and the sound of CSI's theme song playing in the background. Just before class, as the students funnel their way in, there is a feeling of curiosity and excitement in the air. They wonder "What's going on?" As they take their seats, they're told that today they are solving a fictitious crime and their job is to familiarize themselves with the suspects, analyze the evidence and finally make a digital presentation to present "in court" as to who the evidence is linked to.

They arrange themselves in small groups and then open their folder that contains the case file. A member from each group quietly reads aloud the scenario along with each suspect profile to the other group members. You can hear students speculating who they think committed the crime and why. One group shouts out with certainty "It's Annie the athlete!", while another group proclaims "We think it's Freddie GPA 4.0". They're reminded by their teacher, they must explore the evidence!

The students begin by carefully dusting black fingerprint powder over an object for prints. They use magnifying glasses and take pictures to compare the lifted prints with those of the suspects. Sadly they realize no suspects can be eliminated from their results. Next they move on to analyze another bit of evidence. Walking to the cupboard students grab a microscope and begin to analyze hairs found at the crime scene. They hold their smart phones' camera lens up to the microscope to take pictures of the slide image. They compare them to samples from the suspects. One group in the back of the room mentions that none of the hairs match, while another group at the front finds one match and yet another group tells of multiple matches. The different groups begin to discuss what could account for the discrepancy. They collaborate and use critical thinking. Students are asking "How can this be?" With the teacher probing and prompting they realize the reason and keep going. They then move onto the final bit of evidence, ink analysis. Again, they take pictures and document their findings.



Having now explored all the evidence, students diligently compile and sift through their documentation and reflect on what they've learned. They develop a conclusion as to who they think is the likely criminal. Members from each group open their Chromebooks and begin to simultaneously develop a digital presentation that collates their findings. Now sitting in multiple groups in a small circle, they present their digital report to one another, discussing in a congenial way their conclusions and account for reasons of the varying results.

The crime scene analysis lesson happened during Innovation Week at the SRSS this year. Observing the students excitement through problem solving, collaborating, and using critical thinking, they showed that inquiry learning was incredibly beneficial!

- Ainsley Côté,
Steinbach Regional
Secondary School



GROWING AS INQUIRY LEARNERS



Trying to make the best Italian meatball. Designing a teacher workshop using the provoke-explore-reflect framework. Raising chickens in the backyard. Facilitating a PLC. Perfecting the golf swing.

As a middle years learning coach team, our learning journeys involve much discussion, trial and error, purposeful practice and reflection. Our understanding of inquiry has significantly grown in the last couple of months because we recognized the truth that to be inquiry teachers we needed to be inquirers ourselves. We began a learning journey to purposefully develop ourselves as inquirers; we looked for inquiry opportunities in our personal and professional lives.

For each of us our inquiry journeys began with our “owning” the idea that we are learners. We started to see ourselves as curious, as having a voice in our learning, and we began to make conscious choices in what we wanted to learn. We began to ask ourselves, “What are we interested in? What are our wonderings?” Our learning about inquiry became richer when we started to see ourselves learning for a purpose in authentic contexts.

As we talked together about our learning we saw some other common threads; we had all begun to reflect more. We reflected on what we were learning, how we were learning it and what our thinking looked like. As we talked about our metacognition we realized how much we were learning from each other. We naturally

moved toward collaborating. Moving from our shallow understanding about inquiry to a deeper understanding was complex, and this complexity made us realize we needed each other! We needed each other to give feedback about our thinking: Were we headed in the right direction? Were our intuitions about inquiry accurate? Did our thinking still need to shift?

Another “aha” along the way was how joyful learning could be. Even if it’s challenging or difficult, learning is invigorating and the feeling of accomplishment once something has been learned often fuels our desire to learn more.

We have spent much time (and we are by no means finished) wondering what some of the values of an inquiry learner are. Our values list comes from our learning journey:

Own your learning
Develop your interests
Reflect on your learning
Make it authentic
Collaborate and get feedback
Don't forget the joy!

It was when we began to see ourselves as inquiry learners that we could begin to see ourselves as inquiry teachers. Knowing how it feels to develop and live with an inquiry mindset is an important place to start if we are to model

this type of learning for our students. We believe this is also crucial if we are to transform the way we learn with our students in our schools.

“Make this a year of growth – whether you are in your first or last year of teaching. Show your students that you too are an inquirer and that learning never stops...”

“Inquiry teachers see themselves as learners. It is our responsibility to continue to grow ourselves and our thinking along with our students. Make this a year of growth – whether you are in your first or last year of teaching. Show your students that you too are an inquirer and that learning never stops... We can ALL grow ourselves as learners more easily than we have ever been able to before. Learn something new. There is a world of wisdom in our pockets, at the touch of a button. Grow!” - Kath Murdoch, *Just Wondering*: www.kathmurdoch.com.au/blog/

- Russ Dirks, Charmaine Mackid, & Barb Galessiere (Middle Years Learning Coaches)



Kath Murdoch's Website



Kath Murdoch's Blog



Core Principles Chart



CALENDAR

Last Day of Classes Before Christmas break - Dec. 22

First Day of Classes in New Year - Jan. 9

**Provincial ELA Exams
Jan. 10-13**

Provincial Applied Math Exams - Jan. 24

Provincial Essential Math Exams - Jan. 25

Provincial Pre-Calculus Math Exams - Jan. 26

**Kindergarten Registration
Feb. 6-10**

IN OUR SCHOOLS

DEEPER LEARNING at Woodlawn School

Where do polar bears go when it is cold? Do wolves always travel in packs? Does a black bear sleep the whole winter? How many predators do moose have? The room was filled with these questions and many more as I led my students through the design process as part of the Grade 4 Science curriculum.

With the challenge of constructing a model (diorama) of a local/regional habitat and its associated population of plants and animals, students furiously dove into their research of animals native to Manitoba in an effort to unpack and gain an understanding of a chosen animal and accurately represent it in the creative model they would make. Their keenness to explore and study an animal/habitat that suited their own interests, allowed me to question and guide their learning which in turn provided them the opportunity to find and discover information on their own.

When I consider what they did through the lens of Deeper Learning, I realize that while I was interested in them tackling a Science specific outcome, they were acquiring so much more. They were demonstrating critical thinking and creativity skills as they weighed in the balance

“When I consider what they did through the lens of Deeper Learning, I realize that while I was interested in them tackling a Science specific outcome, they were acquiring so much more.”

what they would show (and how) in their diorama. The various group discussions allowed for an abundance of ‘give and take’ exchanges of ideas, as they collaborated with myself and each other about the information they were learning. As a result of these in-class partnerships (not to mention the at home contributions of parents and grandparents) and an inquiry bent, they were not only being engaged intellectually, but socially and emotionally as well (especially when they thought about the impact that humanity has on any/all of the habitats studied).

A question is a powerful tool in the hands of an inquisitive learner. Inquiry really allows for students to live in their own questions.

- Simmy Gandhi, Woodlawn School



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