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A Publication of the HSD Superintendents Office Randy Dueck · Chris Gudziunas · Rick Ardies



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

LEARNING TO LIVE IN A WONDERFUL WORLD!



As I write the introduction to this edition of Learning Matters on the topic of learning, I am sitting at a cabin window overlooking a wild and wavy Lake Winnipeg. And what runs through my mind over and over again is the song, "What a Wonderful World" (I can hear Louis Armstrong right now). The process of teaching and learning is really all about introducing our students to the wonderful world that they live in, one they will play an active role in shaping.

It is a world of natural wonders and human wonders. A world of relationships between individuals and groups. It is a world of communication through multiple languages, including numbers. It is a world that builds on its own stories, taking from the best and learning from the worst. It is a world of engineering and designing anew, to meet new needs and changing times. It is a world of living together as humans in ways that bring out our best, and overcome our worst. It is a world that our children engage in with all that they are; socially, intellectually, physically, and emotionally.

We as educators have the great privilege and responsibility of helping our children do this important work of learning. Introducing our students to the world they inhabit, in the way that one would introduce a friend. Guiding our students to develop the skills, knowledge, values and dispositions, to make the most of their world. I do believe that children are truly natural learners (this is so obvious as I watch my grandkids grow and learn). But I also believe that educators have a responsibility to purposefully provide the learning opportunities that will allow for our students to richly engage with their wonderful world. I trust we will all continue to learn with a spirit of wonder as we engage in this noble endeavor of teaching and learning.

Over the next many editions of Learning Matters we will focus on each of the eight core competencies that we plan to develop in Our Kids. I thank those of you who will share your experiences and learnings, and trust they will be deep and rich conversations.



Randy Dueck, Superintendent, CEO Hanover School Division



IN THIS ISSUE

Our Kid as a Learner

This edition of Learning Matters marks the first in a series exploring the eight core competencies that describe *Our Kid.* Throughout this issue we explore what it means to be a learner, and see several wonderful examples of student learning in our classrooms and schools.

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Grade 1 Teacher, Michelle Wiebe of MES writes about her students learning the power of their student voice. **Grade 8 Teacher, Chloe Tate** of Clearspring Middle School explains how student learning can be facilitated through a focus on assessment as learning. Grade 1 Teacher, Ruth Lees describes engaging Early Years students in learning about "Watermelon Science" at Blumenort School.

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Grade 6/8 Teacher, Al Harder describes the creative learning that goes on in the Makerspace at Stonybrook Middle School. Assistant Superintendent Chris **Gudziunas** reviews the book, *The Teacher's Introduction* to Attachment. The book highlights important ideas

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Grade 7 Teacher, Robin Marchadour writes about an example of authentic learning in Math at Niverville Collegiate Institute, while Vice-Principal Kimberley Funk, of Landmark Collegiate writes about the importance of bringing a sense of wonder back into the classroom. This issue closes off with Monica Martens, Learning Coach sharing an encouraging story about persistence and tenacity of Grade 2 students.

Thank-you to all of our contributing authors. Enjoy your reading...

HUNGRY FOR FEEDBACK

I love playing guitar. Learning how to play was crazy hard. I really wanted to be able to play "Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard" and to get that cool, choppy, ringing sound Paul Simon plays so distinctively in the chorus. A friend showed me how to "damp" the strings using both my strumming and fingering hands and everything took off from there. I play a mean version of Jim Croche's "Bad Bad Leroy Brown" using the same technique. I wanted to learn this stuff. And I was hungry for the feedback, so I sought it out. When we want to learn something well, we're always hungry for feedback from a "knowledgeable other."

How can we help grow *Our Kids* as deep learners hungry for feedback? Because feedback, when we're hungry for it, is what helps us all learn.

I have spent countless hours writing feedback on my students work only to share it back with them and they completely ignore it. They just look at the grade. Has this ever happened to you? So I went looking for ways to give feedback that made my student's learning more sticky.

The John Dewey-esque sentiment captured in this widely misattributed quote captures the essence of the interplay between feedback and learning: "We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience." I've often wondered how can I bring that kind of reflection into my teaching?

I have collected several strong feedback ideas. Here is one you might want to try in your class: Find & Fix.

When a student completes a page of work, whether it's a quiz or anything else, don't tell them what they have right or wrong. If there are five

questions/problems on the page, and the student got three wrong, just write on the top of the page: "Find & Fix 3." I'd encourage them to compare their work with their classmates and I'd give them some time in class to do so. Particularly if no one in the class has a perfect paper, I'd like the class, as a group, to generate the "correction copy."

One of the key shared characteristics of our best learners is their hunger for feedback. This is one way we can create a feedback loop that helps *Our Kids* learn. How do you make your kids hungry for feedback?

- Darren Kuropatwa, Director of Learning



IN OUR SCHOOLS

CHARACTER DAY at Mitchell Middle School

We believe that all children can learn, they all have their own strengths, and these strengths are their superpower. On Friday September 22, 2017, MMS students celebrated Character Day.

Character Day is a global event for people to screen films on the topic of science as it relates to character development. MMS students and staff started the day with an assembly (to introduce Character Education), and watched a video called *The Science of Character* by Tiffany Shlain & The Moxie Institute Films. The film explains how different character strengths that we all have, help us live happy and productive lives. These character strengths are shown in the Periodic Table of Character Strengths.

After the assembly, students returned to their homerooms to learn more about the Periodic Table of Character Strengths. Each student determined their own 'super power' based on these strengths. Students chose one strength from each column that they felt best suited who they are. Then, from those choices, students picked the one word that they felt epitomized them. This was their 'superpower.' This is the trait that makes them who they are and who they want to be. Students learned that by showing their strength off to others, it makes themselves and the world around them better. It was a great day of learning about others and ourselves.

- Andrew Mead, Principal Mitchell Middle School





FEATURE ARTICLE

OUR KID AS A LEARNER

Who do you think of when you picture a particular student and think, now that is a learner? What are the characteristics that work together to make them a learner? Are there things we can do to help all of our students develop those skills and dispositions that seem to characterize good learners? These are some of the questions we look at when we choose to refer to *Our Kid* first and foremost as a learner.

The inner circle of our HSD Deeper Learning graphic lists the eight learning competencies that describe *Our Kid*. On the graphic, the competency that was purposely listed at the top is Learner. We see Learner as an over-arching descriptor that serves as an umbrella covering the other seven competencies. For the purpose of our Deeper Learning plan, a learner is essentially one who demonstrates the knowledge, skills, dispositions and values included in being a literate, creative, critical thinking, collaborating, communicating citizen of good character. We should be able to see our kids developing the requisite knowledge and skills in each of those areas.

There are many educators who have attempted to list characteristics of successful learners, often in an attempt to identify for us student behaviours that are conducive to learning. While many of these lists

focus on compliance behaviours such as being on time, handing work in on time, asking questions, taking good notes, etc., some also get in to the dispositions or habits of mind that tend to characterize life-long learners. The following list highlights some of those.

Learners are **curious**. Whatever their age, they ask "what if" and "I wonder" questions. This desire to know, to learn, to understand the world and the people around them is probably the most important characteristic of learners. It appears that all children begin with an innate sense of curiosity about the world around them and that this spurs young children to learn at an incredible rate. How can we stimulate our students to rekindle their sense of curiosity in our schools and classrooms?

Learners are **engaged**. The type of authentic learning that stays with us long term, changing what we know and how we behave, is effectively learned when we are emotionally, intellectually, socially and academically engaged in the learning process. Neuroscience shows clear links between emotion and long term retention. Students who are motivated and interested in what they learn are more attentive, more focused and more committed to what they are learning. How can we ensure that our classes are engaging our students in these ways?







Learners are **persistent**. Successful learners recognize that there is meaning and value in the tasks in which they are engaged. They persist even when the task becomes difficult. They recognize that there may be hard work and even drudgery involved in the process of learning, and willingly enter into it because they value the learning that will result. They also recognize that the satisfaction and even joy of learning is worth the investment of hard work. Are we setting up experiences in which our students can experience the joy of success after they struggle with a worthwhile learning experience?

Learners are **resilient**. They recognize that as they work towards challenging goals, they will experience failure at times. Successful learners will learn from their mistakes and continue with the process of learning.

Learners have a **growth mindset**. They are characterized by the word "yet," believing that they will learn to understand that challenging concept in time, even if they are not there yet. They believe they can learn and because of this belief, they are willing to persist with a challenging process.

Learners are **flexible**. They are able to change their understandings, assumptions and behaviours as they learn. They recognize that learning represents a change in knowledge or behavior and hold loosely enough to their ideas that they are able to make these shifts as they learn.

Learners are **disciplined**. They develop the dispositions necessary to be successful and pursue learning accordingly.

Learners are **self-directed**. They own their learning. At some point, most learning occurs because the learner has chosen that it matters to them enough to invest themselves in the learning. How can we help our students to take this level of ownership over their own learning?

There are, of course, many other characteristics of successful learners that you may wish to add to this list. Please feel free to do so. Our challenge remains to help all of our students to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions that equip them to be great lifelong learners.

- Rick Ardies, Assistant Superintendent



INVOKING CHANGE at Mitchell Elementary School

Grade 1 class learns about student voice and the power of agency

Before you even enter our school, you'll likely notice the abundance of trees adorning our schoolyard. You'll walk past thriving planter boxes lining the pathway which leads into our building. Once inside you'll be met with the happy buzz of staff and students experiencing another great day of learning together. Growth and learning - that's what we're about. However, prior to last June, if you happened to be in our hallways at the buzzer sound, you'd also encounter the disconnect between this hospitable learning environment, and its bossy and intimidating bell system. Bossy and intimidating? That's not what we're about.

None of this disconnect was lost on a class of Grade 1 students at our school. After considering what images of the assertive buzzer came to mind, they went to work, limitlessly imagining what a new buzzer could sound like. Why not imagine purring kittens? The ice-cream truck? The sound of violins or wind in the trees? The class loved their ideas so much that they took it upon themselves to write a letter to the HSD Superintendent, Randy Dueck, giving voice to their feelings about the intrusive buzzer system, but



also sharing their great suggestions. You can only imagine their sense of pride and accomplishment when in mid June our buzzer sound changed to a kind and invitational tone, instead of one that angrily demanded us to

"It was a valuable opportunity for some of our youngest learners as they experienced their collective potential to affect a positive change."

move along. Later in June Mr. Dueck visited the class to thank them for their letter, and to affirm to them the power and agency of their words, to invoke a meaningful change for themselves and others. It was a valuable opportunity for some of our youngest learners as they experienced their collective potential to affect a positive change.

Today if you visit our school, everything about your visit, from our beautiful community, schoolyard, friendly staff, happy students, and even our buzzer system will tell you that Mitchell Elementary School is indeed, a great place to grow.

- Michelle Wiebe, Grade 1 Teacher Mitchell Elementary School

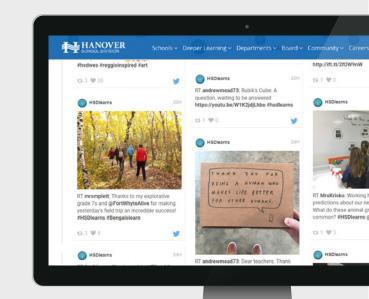
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LEVELLING UP at Clearspring Middle School

At CMS, a number of Grade 8 teachers are trying out a different method for testing in math that focuses less on a traditional performance-based approach, instead falling into the assessment as learning category. Trevor Paton, our former Grade 8 team member, began to test his students by using levels reminiscent of the provincial one to four scale (though a fifth level is added for ninety percent and above) and a few of us decided to try out his system. Every student starts at level one, answering the basic questions to show core understanding, and brings their paper up to the teacher for correction when completed. Mistakes are circled and the student goes back to attempt another answer. In order to move from one level to the next, the student must answer each question correctly, though multiple attempts are acceptable. If the student requires a bit of guidance from the teacher this is recorded on their page as a reference for grading later on.

Students are allowed to stop at any level they choose--though encouraged to push on as far as possible--and they understand that if they finish at a lower level, their grade will fall within that

specific percentage range. In order to reach the ninetieth percentile, they must persist and make it to the level five sheet.

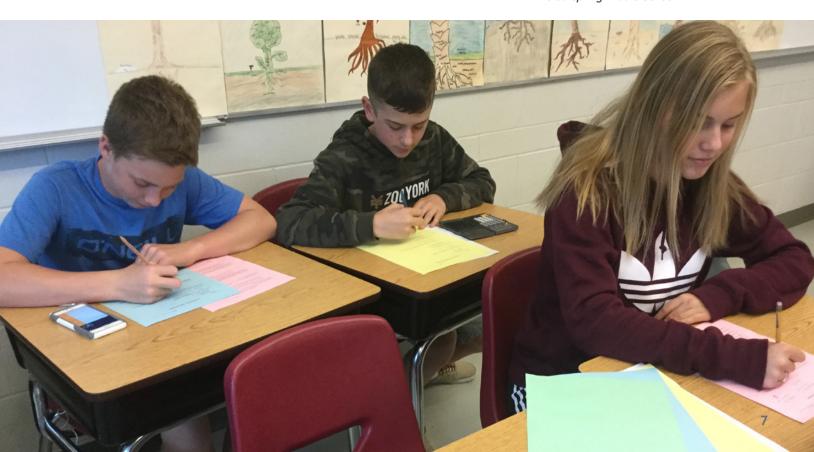
"In my experience, the levelled testing initially felt quite frenzied and disorganized, but over time, its value outweighed the sacrifice in structure and desire for completely silent testing."

In my experience, the levelled testing initially felt quite frenzied and disorganized, but over time, its value outweighed the sacrifice in structure and desire for completely silent testing. Students were not able to dismiss entire sections of the test because they received small portions at a time, and the easiest challenges came first. Strong math students did not whiz through in half the time of their peers because level five needs to be reached to attain those coveted top grades. I was concerned that the coloured sheets (different for each level) would embarrass

some students, but they chose to focus on the achievement of making it to the next colour rather than perceiving it as failure to stop on a specific one. Furthermore, not a single student in my class was content to give up on level one--despite this being an option.

At the end of last year, I received several notes in my yearbook from students thanking me for the levelled tests. This came from the high achievers that hated losing marks on silly mistakes, and from those who struggled and needed that extra chance to try again. By Grade 8 they are already familiar with traditional testing methods, so I don't see it as a disservice to high school preparation, but rather an opportunity for them to continue to learn during the testing process. Additionally, it allowed for some of that rare and precious one-on-one math time with every student. Though the levelled testing takes longer and students--never mind the teacher--are pretty exhausted by the end, this testing fits with the model of *Our Kid* as a Learner by giving them a chance to develop growth mindset, set goals, and learn to persevere when they don't get it right the first time.

- Chloe Tate, Grade 8 Teacher Clearspring Middle School



ENGAGING IN WATERMELON SCIENCE at Blumenort School

For the past several years, I have brought a watermelon to my Grade 1 classroom on the first day of school. I make sure to display it in a conspicuous place to ensure that all my students see it. I catch many curious glances, but it usually takes until after first recess before anyone is comfortable enough to ask me about it. After the first query, we are on our way! I tell them that we will have fun watermelon investigations to do all week. Cheers erupt when they learn that our final investigation will be to cut it open to eat it too!

Over lunch recess, the watermelon disappears! This is noticed pretty quickly by observant Grade 1 students. The disappointment and concern is huge! Thankfully, we quickly discover that the watermelon has left clues to its location.

Following clues to hunt for the missing watermelon gives the class an opportunity to meet staff members and discover new places in the building. We eventually find it in the library "reading" a book about the watermelon life cycle.

Back in the classroom, we make and record observations, ask questions, predict, and experiment. Each day we continue investigating our watermelon as we work through the scientific process. We sing "Down by the Bay" and work on rhyming words. We brainstorm descriptive words for all parts of the watermelon. Students record and glue all their findings onto pages of an interactive lapbook.

Ultimately, we share the yummy treat together at the end of the week. The watermelon serves as a catalyst to get students thinking,



sharing, hypothesizing, and testing while connecting to the curriculum and to the classroom community.

- Ruth Lees, Grade 1 Teacher Blumenort School

HSD SUMMER LEARNING INSTITUTE

The annual Summer Institute for Early-Career Teachers was held Aug. 22-24, 2017. The focus of the Institute is to prepare new teachers for a strong start to the school year, by creating a culture of learning for the first days of school and beyond.

Attended by 44 teachers, sessions included a general introduction to teaching in Hanover School Division, and an overview of various

curriculum initiatives. Participants had the opportunity to engage in active learning experiences with the Superintendents, Director of Learning, and the Learning Coaches.

As is tradition, the event also included the Superintendent's BBQ. Good food and great conversations.





STUDENT DIRECTED **LEARNING**

at Stonybrook Middle School

The words to describe Makerspace are: chaotic, engaging, creative, critical thinking, 10 questions at once, collaborating, communicating, and constantly learning - just to name a few. A one hour class in Makerspace needs to be facilitated, not programmed by the teacher. Teachers take a deep breath, step into the class and allow the creative juices of students to ooze throughout the class and make everything messy. Makerspace is a student directed (instead of teacher driven) class, and the results can be can be inquiry projects capturing the heart of learning. To me this is the essence of deeper learning. Here are some thoughts of students concerning Makerspace:

"Makerspace is a place where your imagination comes to life and flies. It is where you can be creative and express your talents. Makerspace is like an art class, but taken to the next level."

"Makerspace means fun, creativity, and WILD projects! It is like a paradise of supplies. I would never, ever want to leave because it is so so so much fun!"

"Makerspace is a place where we all can let our imagination flow! A place where we can see our creativity grow! Sometimes we have so many creative ideas it's hard to remember them all! Makerspace has soooo many opportunities of things to make and build! My class and I are very lucky to have a Makerspace. Roses are red, violets are blue. We love Makerspace and so will you!"

- Al Harder, Grade 6/8 Teacher Stonybrook Middle School



BOOK REVIEW

BOOKSHELF SUPER'S PICK

The Teacher's Introduction to Attachment: Practical Essentials for Teachers, Carers, and School Support Staff - by Nicola Marshall

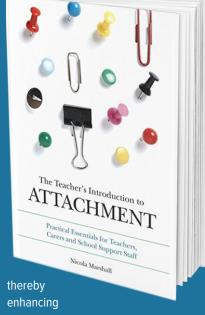
What is education? What is the most important thing for our students to learn? Before going any further in this article, take a moment to jot down three or four of the most important things you believe we should be teaching our students, as well as, what you consider important for at-risk students to learn?

The Teacher's Introduction to Attachment: Practical Essentials for Teachers, Carers, and School Support Staff is one of the best resource books I have read on how to deal with at-risk students. This book examines the planning process through the lens of attachment, while explaining how attachment difficulties can disrupt, hinder, or even prevent learning.

Marshall's message is clear. Teachers need to understand and recognize what attachment is (the four types of attachment), what trauma is and how it effects attachment, and their role as a key adult in the life of a student. Teachers also need to know how to relate to students (based on their attachment style), and how to help them become resilient, resourceful and secure.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part provides the foundational material on attachment and trauma. The second part identifies five guiding principles that should be pesent in an 'attachment friendly' school, and the last two parts deal with areas of concerns and final thoughts.

How can this book help you? Planning becomes easier when you can identify the attachment style and difficulties a student is experiencing, and have a better understanding of how any past trauma can affect a student's behavior. Recognizing these key influences will help you adapt your interaction with students,



trust in the student-teacher relationship.

The take-a-ways from this book will be many. My favorite was the five guiding principles that Marshall provided. Those principles are; relationships over programs, emotional age over chronological age, structure over chaos, time in over time out, and sensory less over sensory more. If followed, these principles will make the learning experience for any student with attachment difficulties - a positive and successful one.

For those of you who would like to know more about the impact of attachment in the learning process, this is a great read!

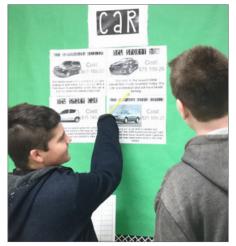
- Chris Gudziunas, Assistant Superintendent

ENGAGING STUDENTS THROUGH AUTHENTIC LEARNING EXPERIENCES

at Niverville Collegiate Institute



How does a teacher really know if his/her students are engaged? The answer is really quite simple. The students want to learn! You look around the room and they are buzzing with excitement and urgency to get started on the activity you have presented to them. When you circulate, you notice that they are actively engaged, collaborating with their peers, participation is at an all-time high and they are



thoroughly enjoying it. The evidence is their conversations, their actions and their questions. You can tell that they have taken the task seriously and they are immersing themselves in the learning. The evidence is undeniable! Meanwhile you are standing there grinning from ear to ear because you know that you have just hit the jackpot. You have managed to hook your students whilst learning the curricular outcomes set forth by the province. That is no easy task!

This September, at NCI, Grade 7 students reviewed adding and subtracting decimal numbers by playing The Game of Life. This game was designed to allow students to make real life purchases that catered to their interests. Students were given a hypothetical \$1,000,000 and the autonomy to choose a career path and a desired lifestyle. With that money, they had to make a purchase from each of the following categories: college, house, car, vacation, entertainment and electronics. Students were

"These real life scenarios contributed to the authenticity of the game. It transformed the ordinary task of adding and subtracting decimals to an extraordinary experience that allowed the students to be creative and follow their dreams."

required to track their credits and debits on a bank sheet and stay within budget. Mathematical calculations were made manually, and recorded on a sheet similar to what accountants would use with a credit and a debit column. Stations were set up around the room on vertical surfaces. Students circulated in groups making a purchase from each category. Students were required to make estimations to ensure that they had

enough money in the bank account to make all of the required purchases.

Some students were lucky enough to win the lottery while others suffered the inconvenience of a fine or ticket. These real life scenarios contributed to the authenticity of the game. It transformed the ordinary task of adding and subtracting decimals to an extraordinary experience that allowed the students to be creative and follow their dreams.

Why was The Game of Life so appealing for students?

- Authenticity The learner explored, discussed and completed calculations in a real-life context.
- Autonomy The learner was responsible for all the decisions regarding his/her lifestyle.
- Collaboration Students worked in groups and assisted each other with important decisions.
- Movement Physical movement has been proven to have cognitive, psychological and behavioural benefits for the learner.

The Game of Life was purchased from Meredith Schaar online at https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/ and modified to suit the needs of my classroom.

Robin Marchadour, Grade 7/8 Teacher
Niverville Collegiate Institute

A WONDER FULL DAY at Landmark Collegiate



The first day back to school after summer holidays always brings a certain level of excitement and enthusiasm with it, even for high school students, and each year our intent is to capture that feeling and use it to its fullest potential. The theme for this year was "A Wonder Full Day" and our desire to bring childlike wonder back into the classroom was delivered through children's picture books. Students participated in three different cross-grade experiences based on Not a Box by Antoinette Portis, I Wonder by Annaka Harris, and *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds. Purposefully crafted "wonder experiences" focused on student collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and growth mindset, as we

ahead. They were provoked, they explored, and they reflected. It was a bit of a busy day but we wanted to be clear about what we value at our school.

We are committed to the goal of deep learning for our students. We are striving to create rich learning experiences that are authentic and relevant in ways that will help them understand the world in which they live. Wonder and curiosity are highly valued as we actively work to develop an inquiry mindset for both our students and ourselves.

- Kimberley Funk, Vice Principal

Landmark Collegiate

"The theme for this year was "A Wonder Full Day" and our desire to bring childlike wonder back into the classroom was delivered through children's picture books."





LEARNING COACHES

PERSISTENCE, TENACITY AND NOT **GIVING UP**

Last year, my Grade 2 class worked collaboratively on investigations around simple machines. One theme that I observed and recorded as the children explored the materials, was one of impressive character.

There were frustrations. There was starting over. There were designs falling apart over and over, and over again. There were tears. I heard,

- "The wheels didn't line up so I had to take it apart."
- "The marble keeps stopping."
- "The blocks keep falling."
- "I can't get it to stand up, but it doesn't spin on the table."
- "I don't know how to do this. I thought this would be pretty easy, but it's not."

On the second day of this exploration, we spent a full hour on the carpet reflecting. I shared with the children the photos and quotes I had collected from them. I shared their messages of strength and struggle. And then I asked, "What advice do you have for your classmates who might feel defeated, or like giving up or like crying because it's so hard?" The resounding response that echoed around the circle was, KEEP GOING. Just Keep Going. Just keep going.

This is where I just want to bask in the wisdom of children. There was this unspoken acknowledgement of the struggle. It was not minimized in any way and no easy answers were given. What a privilege it is to learn from these little humans.

As you finish off the first month of school, I'm sure some of you are feeling the same way, and saying the same things these students did. You are made of strength, and struggle just like they are. Take their advice and just keep going.

- Monica Martens, Learning Coach

CALENDAR

MTS Day (No Classes) Friday, October 20

HSD Budget Public Consultation Tuesday, October 24

Admin/PD Day (No Classes) Monday, October 30

HSD Public Board Meeting Tuesday, November 7

Admin/PD Day (No Classes) Monday, November 13



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Hanover is a student-centred school division striving for excellence while developing skills and promoting values for a productive and wholesome life.

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