

Finding Our Voice

Saskatchewan School Library Association

THE MEDIUM – SPRING 2012

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Inquiry and Technology

I jumped at the opportunity to work with my teacher-librarian to use technology and inquiry in my grade 2/3 combined classroom. Inquiry and the use of technology have impacted my teaching and the learning in my classroom in a multitude of ways. Though I had an idea of how such work would engage my students, I did not know that it would give my students such a powerful voice.

The Process

It was important to make cross-curricular connections in order to engage all of my students and have the greatest impact upon their learning. Our inquiry included outcomes from several Saskatchewan curricula including, social studies, science, and English language arts. Our two main questions this year have been “How does Brunskill School embrace its cultural diversity?” and “How does the interdependence of humans and living things affect how people should treat the environment?” These questions were posted in our classroom and helped us maintain our focus as we worked through our studies and wonderings. We also displayed a number of collected resources in our classroom to facilitate continual referencing and to reinforce an awareness of our learnings. Below are the steps that we followed for our inquiry, and we will be able to apply to future inquiries:

- Consider Topic: Select the outcomes and look for cross-curricular connections
- Invite Curiosity And Build Background Knowledge Around The Topic
- Develop an Overarching Inquiry Question
- Build Collective Knowledge: Students share what they already know about the topic
- Develop Student Wonderings: Students develop questions that they want answered
- Investigate: As a class, in small groups, and, at times, individually, we investigate and seek out answers to our questions
- Make Connections: Students discover answers by developing relationships with our authentic audience (survey, field trips, research online and books, experimentation, and interviewed experts)
- Assess Needed Skills: Teachers explicitly teach of skills needed to convey their understandings, such as writing strategies (persuasive arguments, organization, and concept mapping)

- Synthesize Understandings: Students draw upon their learnings to form opinions, draw conclusions, and construct relationships.
- Consider The Audience And Information To Share
- Co-Construct Criteria And Expectations For Final Product
- Go Public: Students create storyboards and digital products

(adapted from *Inquiry Circles in Action* by Harvey Daniels and Stephanie Harvey)

Powerful Learning

My grade 2/3 class taught me many new lessons throughout our inquiry adventures. I am proud of their eagerness to collaborate, ask questions, and share their opinions with their community. Some notable moments involve multiple English as an Additional Language (EAL) students who found a way to share their voice using technology and to celebrate their diversity which translated across languages. These students used images, special effects and music to express their ideas and opinions. My EAL students were not the only ones to develop their voice through inquiry and technology; all students exhibited high engagement in their learning.

I discovered that inquiry allows for student choice. Throughout the inquiry, students were able to choose the topics they felt were most important and they had an opportunity to connect and share their thinking with other learners who shared a similar opinion. These connections encouraged collaboration and team-work in their inquiry teams and throughout the classroom, and most importantly fostered an inclusive classroom community.

Reflection

As an educator, I believe in, and model, life-long learning. Prior to this school year, I was unsure how to foster an inquiry approach to instruction in my classroom while trying to meet the challenges of using technology with grade 2/3 students. I also had no idea how adopting an inquiry approach to instruction and embracing technology would provide me with a multitude of different learning opportunities for my students. We had many discussions throughout our journey; including how we can share our ideas, give credit to authors, and the definition of digital citizenship. I often answered questions with “I will look into that for you”, which, in turn, extended my learning. As we come to the end of this school year, I am saddened as I think about moving on from this group of students, but am energized dreaming of the possibilities for next year.

To view our classroom blog please visit: <http://brunskillmartin.blogspot.ca/>.

To view student exemplars, please see digital artifacts hosted on the SPS video server (<http://video.spsd.sk.ca/secure/Videos.aspx>). Direct links are listed below.

- **Books**
<http://bit.ly/Lwrfv8>
- **Celebrations**
<http://bit.ly/NkMTog>
- **Music**
<http://bit.ly/LFtISg>