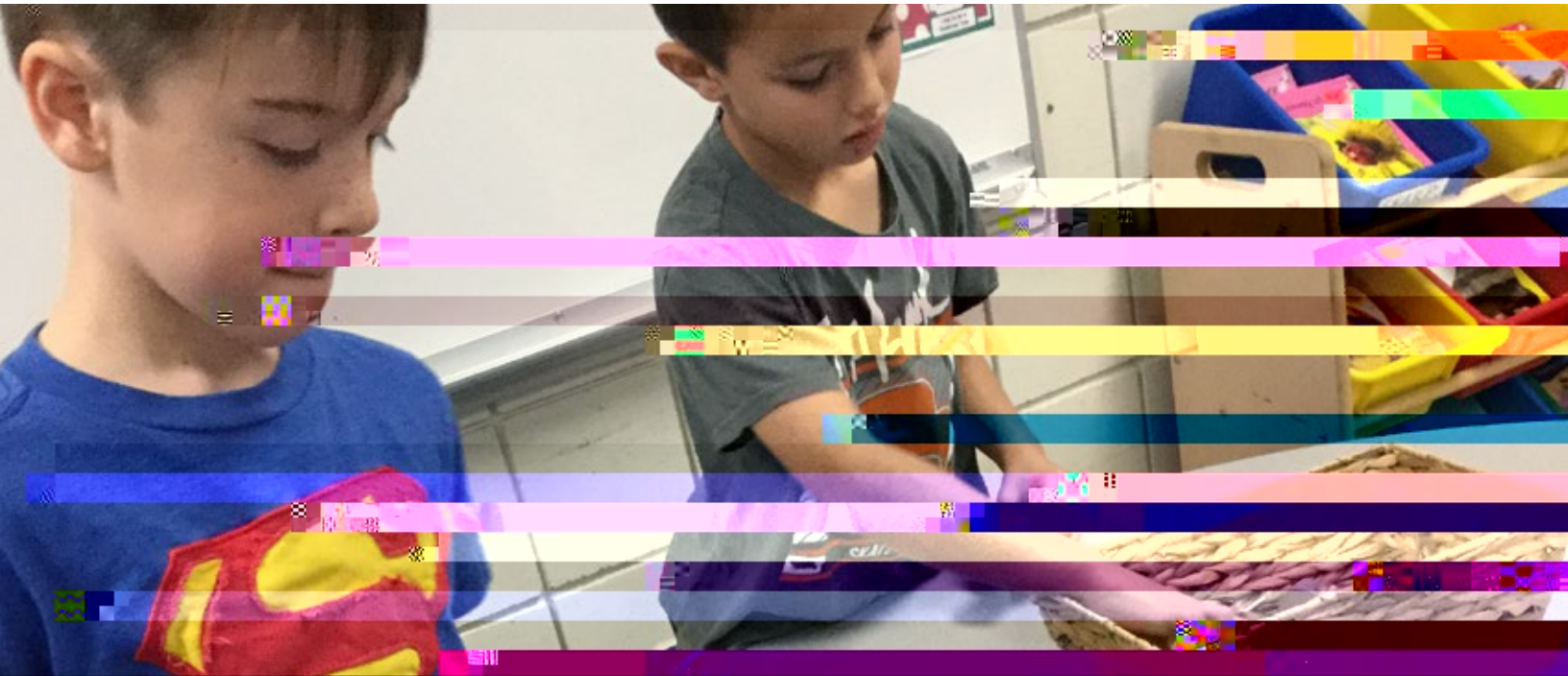




2016 DECEMBER EDITION



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 bring precision 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







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 cl.48 Tm(d)O.or ma1p(m1t)0.0.tt6 314.48 Tm estimation challenge. A large h md14 Tc 0.057 Tow11 (r1/1

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.

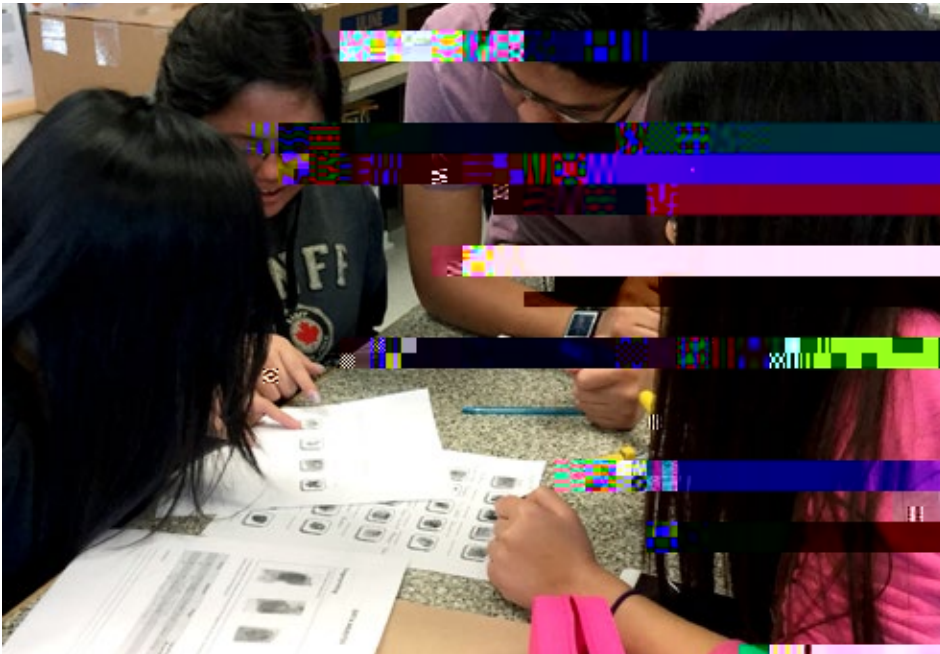
Two pairings of grade 12 students came forward to meet the creative challenge, and while each group presented a strong case for their chosen play and why they should be the group to run with their idea, Jenna Chamberlin and Jessica Hiebert ended up heading things up for their chosen play "Hamlet Hears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





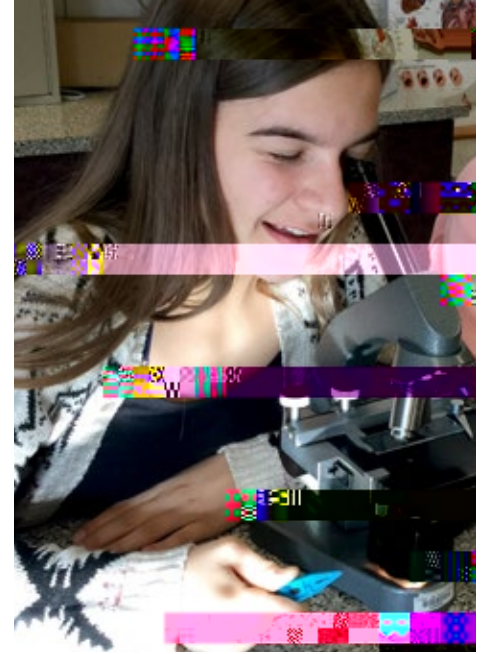




Picture this - a Steinbach Regional Secondary School forensics classroom with crime scene tape stretched across the classroom door and the sound of CSI's theme song playing in the background. Just before class, as the students funnel their way in, there is a feeling of curiosity and excitement in the 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.



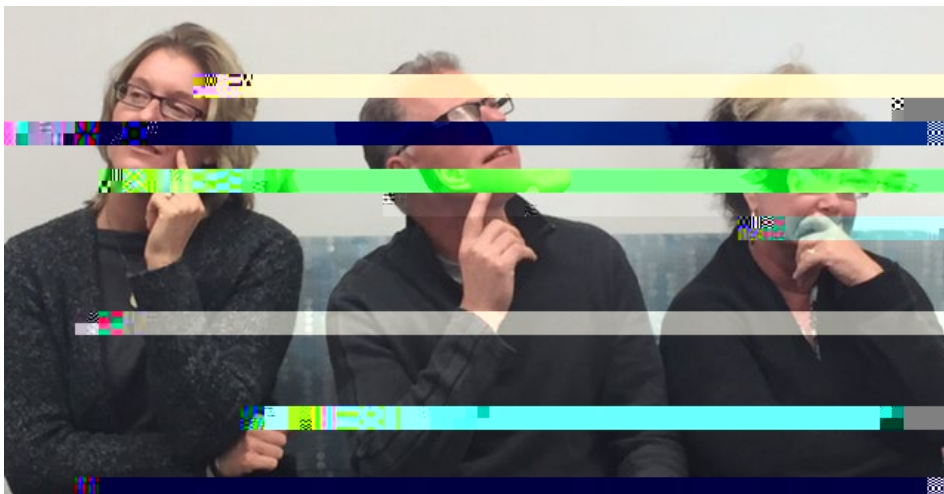
Having now explored all the evidence, students diligently compile and sift through their documentation and reflect on what they've learned. They develop a conclusion as to who they think is the likely criminal. Members from each group open their Chromebooks and begin to simultaneously develop a digital 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!

- Ainsie Galt,  
Steinbach Regional  
Secondary School



## LEARNING COACHES



Trying to make the best Italian meatball. Deciding on 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 understandings about inquiry to 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:

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 a challenge we are here to transform the way we learn and live in our schools.

"Inquiry teachers see themselves as learners. It is our responsibility to continue to challenge ourselves and our thinking along with our students. Make this a year of growth – not just for 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/](http://www.kathmurdoch.com.au/blog/)

- Russ Dirks, Cheryl Mackie, & Barb Galessiere (Middle Years Learning Coaches)



Kath Murdoch's Website



Kath Murdoch's Blog



Principles Chart

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