



2017 DECEMBER EDITION

A Publication of the HSD Superintendent's Office
Randy Dueck • Chris Gudziunas • Rick Ardies



Professional Learning Magazine for Hanover School Division Educators

Really? Are we really sure we want our kids to learn how to think critically in our classrooms? What if they get really good at reflecting on what we teach them and develop their own well-structured arguments to debate our teaching with us? What if they insist on better evidence than we can provide? What if they ask us really relevant, pertinent and tough questions? What if they expose our own personal biases? What if they arrive at their own conclusions? What if

they sort out the difference between our facts and opinions? What if they stump us, on a regular basis? What if they figure out better ways?

Absolutely! Critical thinking skills are essential for them to make connections and identify patterns to construct deep understanding so as to effectively navigate the massive sea of knowledge in their interconnected global world. Critical thinking will provide them the tools to make better sense of a world where many will want to make sense of it for them. Critical thinking will guide them toward the productive and wholesome life that we want for them. Critical thinking looks and sounds a lot like wisdom. Especially if they learn how to put their critical thinking into action.

Let's not just teach them to think critically, let's provide them plenty of

IN THIS ISSUE

OUR KID'S CURRICULUM

This edition of Learning Matters is the second in our series exploring the eight core competencies that describe Our Kid, and focuses on critical thinking. Throughout the issue we will inquire into what it means to be a critical thinker, and see some great examples of how this competency is being developed around HSD.

Page 2

ROBERTA R. D. asks whether we actually want critical thinkers in our classrooms, and fortunately concludes that we absolutely do.

Page 3

NICOLE N. D. describes how students working on a project in an Essentials Math class needed to collaboratively construct new knowledge in a meaningful real world application.

Page 4-5

ARON R. A. explores various dimensions of critical thinking and how they can apply to different ages and subject areas.

Page 6-7

Two interesting classroom perspectives on critical thinking skills at the SRSS come from **B.** and **A. W.** Schinkel describes the challenge of developing a meaningful learning experience for pre-school children, and Unger enters into the conversation of how we equip students to be able to distinguish whether or not information is trustworthy.

Page 8-9

G. 1, **J. C.** from Woodlawn School, writes about the challenge of creating the conditions in a classroom that will engage students' curiosity and at the same time encourage students to think critically. Director of Learning, Darren Kuropatwa adds to the exploration of critical thinking, focusing on how we can help our students develop their thinking skills.

Page 10

On the bookshelf, **A. C. G.** profiles the book *Settling to Learn*, highlighting the importance of developing and maintaining a strong student-teacher relationship.

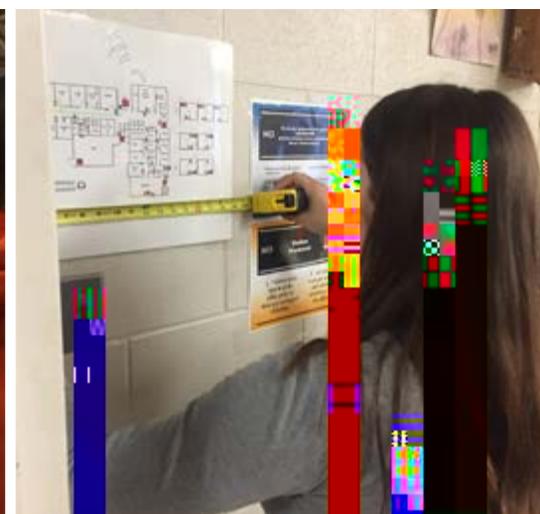
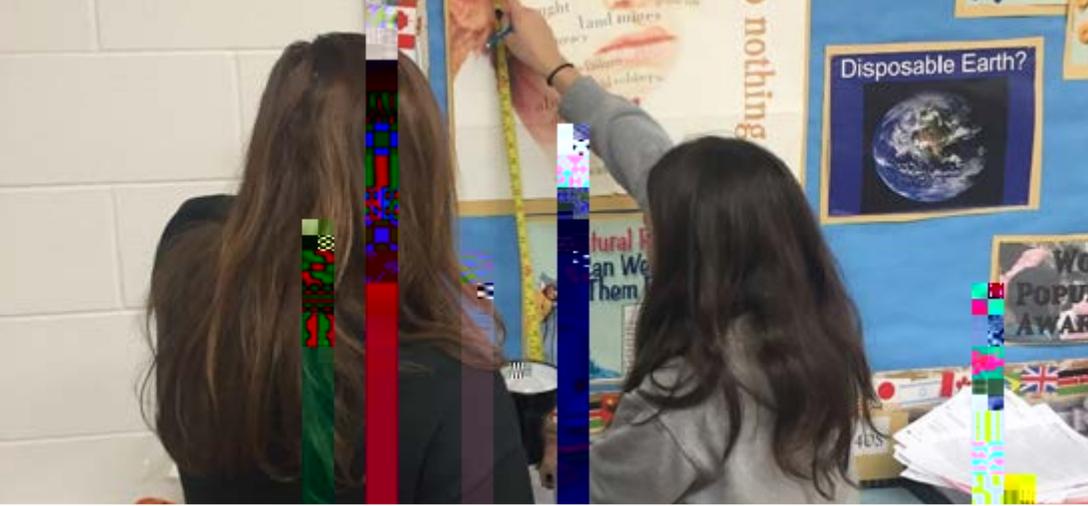
Page 11

G. 1 contributes a great article describing a social justice project that nurtures student citizenship and requires students to apply their ideas to help with significant real world needs.

Page 12

CM F. H. M. profiles some fascinating language learning books that will be valuable for foreign language teaching.





IN OUR SCHOOLS

at NCI

“Congratulations! You have been hired to be part of the workplace safety and health team!” were the first words written in a letter that greeted an Essentials Math class early Tuesday morning. As the students continued to read their notice of employment, they discovered that they had been tasked with the responsibility to determine whether the teachers of a select few classrooms were adhering to the guidelines set forth by Hanover in regards to the amount of paper on the walls – no more than 20% of paper in total on classroom walls.

Before jumping into one of the teacher’s rooms, each group (consisting of two or three students) developed an organized proposal that outlined their equipment needs, work that could be

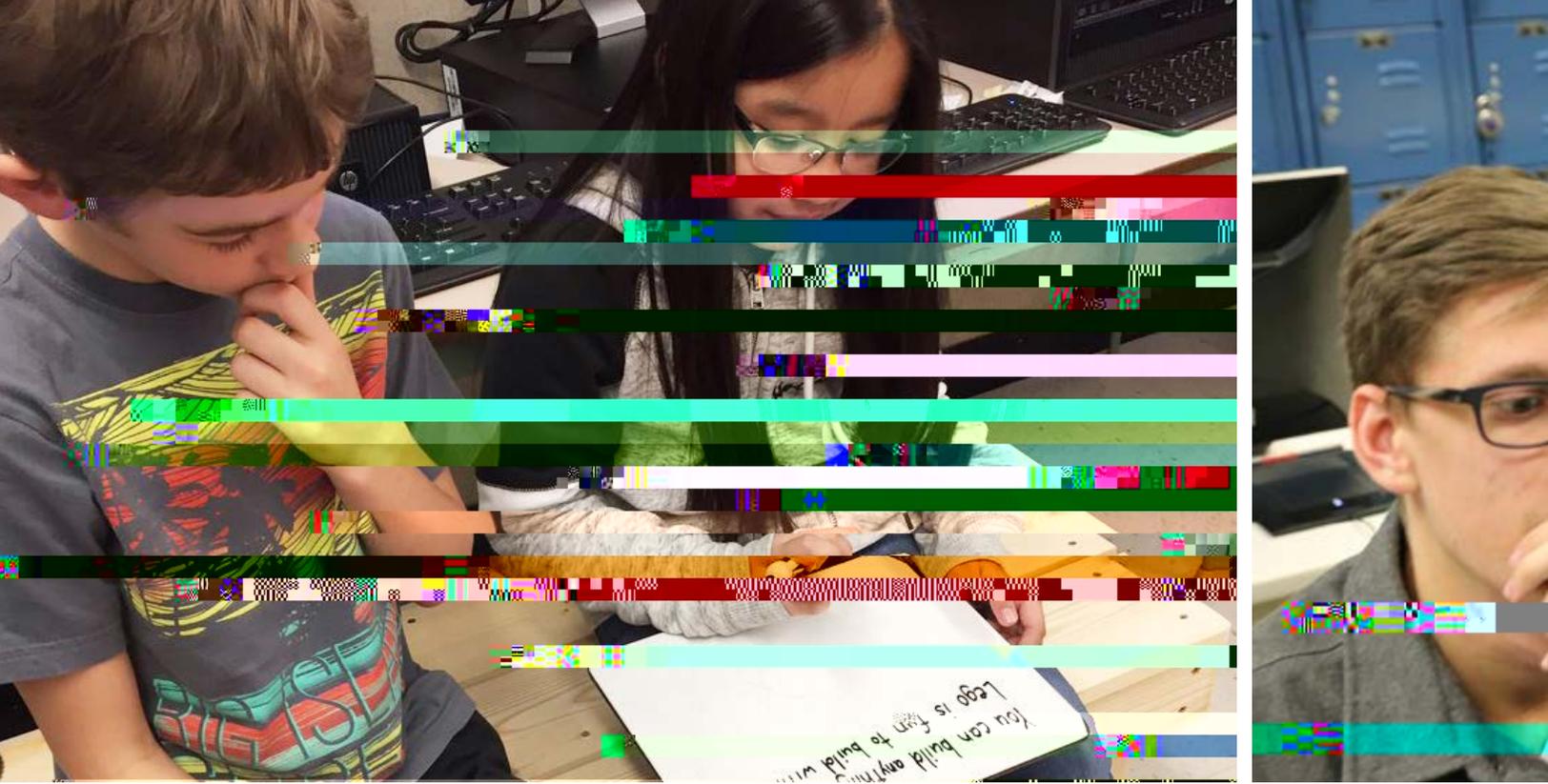
completed prior to entering the classroom as well as how to accomplish their task once they arrived on the ‘job-site.’ As the Grade 11 students collaborated, questions arose, “Does the light switch count? What about the flags in Mrs. Happychuk’s class? If part of a papier-mâché fish is touching a wall, do you calculate the whole fish, part of the fish, or none of the fish? Should we use centimeters or inches?”

After all the measurements and calculations were completed, each of the groups that had the same classroom got together to compare their final percentages. At first, one excited group calculated the total amount of paper on one of the teacher’s walls to be 27%. This very high percentage immediately raised some concern

but was soon quelled when they compared their numbers to the other group assigned to the same classroom.

Looking back on the activity, I was incredibly happy to see that all the students were engaged at some level – whether through working together, communicating their thoughts, ideas and questions, their unified desire to discover that one of the teachers was over the 20% or even the sharing and comparing of their solutions. And teachers from Niverville Collegiate – rest easy, you’re working safe!

- Nathan Dyck, High School Teacher
Niverville Collegiate Institute



FEATURE ARTICLE

In all of the different inventories of 21st Century learning competencies, one of the most consistently stated learning goals is critical thinking. It is also front and center in our HSD Our Kid logo. This makes a lot of sense, as critical thinking and learning are so closely linked. In general, critical thinking consists of evaluating new information that we encounter, connecting that information to prior knowledge, and then constructing and applying that new knowledge in a meaningful way. When we get down to the details, these processes can become quite complex, as there are many age and subject specific strategies for critical thinking that must be employed for learning to be effective.

Is there anything more central to the concept of learning than critical thinking? If learning can be described as a long-lasting change in belief, attitude or behavior gained through experience, can this happen at all without critical thinking? The New Pedagogies for Deeper Learning (NPDL) organization defines critical thinking as critically evaluating information and arguments, seeing patterns and connections, constructing meaningful knowledge, and applying it in the real world. At all grade levels and in all subject areas, these processes are key to the learning of all our students.

NPDL's first step of critical thinking states that learners must be able to evaluate information and arguments. In this era of "fake news" and universal digital connectivity, it has become clear how important these skills really are. Students must learn to determine whether information

is trustworthy, relevant or useful. They must also learn to distinguish between logical arguments and unfounded assumptions, logical leaps, and unjustified conclusions. When we are all surrounded by ubiquitous sources of contradictory information, it is essential that students develop the analytical skill to differentiate between sources of content. The big question is, what does this look like in grades one and two? Or five and six?

"When we get down to the details, these processes can become quite complex, as there are many age and thinking that must be employed for learning to be effective."

A second characteristic of critical thinking is the ability to make connections, identify patterns and see relationships. This is essential to learning as it allows the learner to link what they already know

at the SRSS

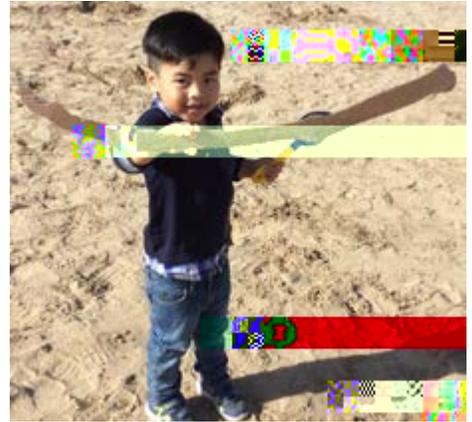
engaging for the preschoolers. I wondered what it would be like to develop a way for children to pretend they were paleontologists! I set to work exploring different options to bring my idea to life. Through some experimentation and a bit of trial and error, I decided to plan a Dino Dig for them.

I began the process by designing a giant template for the preschoolers to “puzzle” the bone pieces together. Then, I began constructing dinosaur bones for two different

Through the Human Ecology program at the SRSS, students in Family Studies classes have many opportunities to connect with the preschool-age children in the SRSS Preschool. We are able to put into practice the skills and knowledge we have learned in the classroom in a hands-on way.

As one of our projects, we were challenged to create a Prop Box for preschool-age children that would encourage their physical, intellectual, and social-emotional development (a prop box is a group of dramatic play materials organized by theme). I wanted my project to be creative, unique and





One example of this is the phenomenom of

at Woodlawn School

It was the end of September and I was just beginning to catch my breath from the energy of starting a new school year with my Grade 1 students. During a morning meeting, one of my students mentioned Winter and Hope, two dolphins that had been rescued by the Clearwater Marine Aquarium in Florida. At an immeasurable speed, the kids fired off their knowledge of these dolphins and asked question after question. I remembered from past students that this aquarium had a live video feed and immediately put it on. I wrote down as many comments, questions and wonderings that I could while the kids watched in amazement. I left that day knowing this intense class-wide interest was the key to some really great learning.

We were able to answer some questions right away with just the knowledge we had in our room, and a few more were answered by watching the live feed. One student brought in the chapter book he had at home about Winter & Hope, so we started reading it as a class and answered more questions. With a few questions unanswered, we invited some of my former students who had researched these dolphins to help us.

Just when I thought the excitement was starting to fizzle out, we watched a short video on the live feed about how the Clearwater Marine Aquarium was affected by Hurricane Irma. At that same intense speed, came question after question about hurricanes. We used bulletin boards in our school and books from the library to answer our burning questions about hurricanes. I watched with fascination as these Grade 1 students, at the very early stages of reading and writing, were independently using these books to try and

satisfy their curiosity. With books and kids spread out on the floor, they worked together, gained information from pictures, sounded out words, examined diagrams and figured out how to use a table of contents. They were instinctively using all the skills and strategies that I would normally introduce to them slowly throughout the year. When a question came up, I left watching the video, they collected, and the kids (wrote down facts, labelled diagrams) and question, some collections and explained their thinking. They all found signs in our class (read instinctively, created storyboards) and how



Student Observations

We became very interested in these two dolphins that were rescued in Florida. We started watching their live feed from the aquarium. Our first question while we watched was: How do we know which one is Winter and which one is Hope? We watched and watched and finally saw Winter without her tail! This led to many more questions!

Research

We learned that when you are trying to find something out, it is called research. To be able to research something, you have to start with a question.

What makes a good question?

Settling Troubled Pupils to Learn: Why Relationships Matter in School by Louise Michelle Bomber and Daniel A. Hughes, 2013

My daughter is currently doing a teaching practicum in a Grade 1 classroom at a core area school in Winnipeg. When she comes home to visit, we will talk about how things are going in school, what she is learning, and how the kids in her class are doing. Her classroom is filled with a number of students that have experienced relational traumas and losses, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or witnessed domestic violence. She will always include an update on how Sarah (not her real name) is doing. Sarah comes from a difficult home situation and has grown quite attached to our daughter. Without even knowing it, my daughter has become the 'key adult' or 'surrogate attachment figure' in Sarah's life. This type of situation can be found in just about every classroom around

the world, a teacher, who may or may not know that they have become the key adult in the life of a child.

What advice should I be giving my daughter? What words of wisdom would be helpful? The first thing that comes to mind is 'relationships matter most' in the life of a child. Why relationships? Camila Batmanghelidjh (2013) writes, "Only when a child feels understood and sustained by another's love (caring) do they go on to see the value of m is kuBst abou72writ34ft3it3 valu cy. (gt thing that elle)-10 ()Uder2uf wiu





Hanover School Division
5 Chrysler Gate, Steinbach, Manitoba R5G 0E2
204-326-6471

E **E** :

Randy Dueck, Superintendent CEO

A **E** :

Chris Gudziunas, Assistant Superintendent

A **E** :

Rick Ardies, Assistant Superintendent

M **E** :

Bob Wiebe, Communications Manager

A **E** :
bobwiebe@hsd.ca

