Collaborative Inquiry

Teachers creating knowledge and improving learning for students

REPORTS
Teacher Librarians

2011-2012 Volume
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Introduction

The Greater Essex County District School Board is pleased to share the research conducted by teacher librarians and classroom teachers during the 2011-2012 school year.

Inquiry, according to Together For Learning (2010), “encourages a collaborative approach to learning” as it “expands personal horizons and knowledge base” (p. 23). Twelve teams, nineteen schools and 48 teacher librarians, classroom teachers, administrators and instructional coaches collaborated on inquiries that addressed student needs and school improvement plans with the focus on improving teaching practice, thus having an impact on student achievement.

Presented in this second volume of teacher librarian focused collaborative inquiry is a significant contribution to the knowledge base of teacher librarianship. Projects addressed current educational issues such as technology implementation, research process implementation, student reading achievement, engagement and attitudes, writing achievement and English Language Learners.

Thanks are extended to Dr. Jenni Donohoo, Teacher Consultant for Research and Program Evaluation for her expertise in facilitating the process of collaborative inquiry.

We hope that you enjoy reading the contributions from this year’s participants and we look forward to working with additional teams in the future.

Sharon Seslija,
Teacher Consultant
Learning Commons,
Health and Physical Education,
English, 9-12
Hugh Beaton Public School

Collaborative Inquiry Team: Chris Konrad, Teacher Librarian, Margi Savoni, Classroom Teacher, Elizabeth Jinks, Classroom Teacher, Derek Lappalainen, Classroom Teacher, & Dana DiVincenzo, Instructional Coach.

Inquiry Question: What impact will implementing differentiated technology opportunities have on our student’s achievement and engagement in writing?

Vision
Our impetus for this study is to improve our students’ engagement and achievement in writing and, as a result, their ability to articulate and organize ideas more clearly and completely. Our goal is for our students to have access to technology and use it seamlessly in their learning environment. We welcome the use of technology as an instrument of choice and differentiation, so much so that the use of technology will become embedded into their daily learning, not an isolated event. Students shall be able to access and choose web tools that complement their unique learning needs and strengths, allowing them to bump up their work and emphasize their efforts in a positive light. Our students as twenty-first century learners will learn how to conduct themselves appropriately and respectfully, exhibiting proper digital citizenship.

Theory of Action
If we provide opportunities for students to use a variety of devices and Web 2.0 tools when writing, then our students’ engagement and achievement in writing will improve.

Context
Hugh Beaton is a K-8 school located in South Walkerville. Our socio-economic make-up is predominantly middle class, and most students have access to technology at home. It was through the initiative of our Teacher Librarian that a team was selected. The classrooms which participated in the study spanned all three divisions, primary (20 Grade 1’s), Junior (30 Grade 4/5’s) and intermediate (21 Grade 8’s). The Teacher Librarian provided support and guidance throughout this collaborative inquiry project which included; applying for funding, facilitating PD sessions and meetings, training team members on Web 2.0 tools, initiating conversations about BYOD, and on-going technological support. We also had support from our Instructional Coach and Teacher Librarian Instructional Coach. At the beginning of our study, our school had 3 laptop carts and 4 SMART Boards available for student use. During the past two years, our administration has made technology a priority and has purchased a data projector/netbook combination for those classrooms that do not have a SMART Board. At the beginning of this study the laptops were utilized to access board-purchased software and to visit websites for research.

Justification
To formulate our research question we analyzed a variety of data sources (classroom profiles, CASI, DIBELS, DRA, EQAO, ONAP, and CAT scores) to determine our specific area of focus. We determined that there was a strong need to improve our non-fiction writing skills, which also aligns with both our School Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and the Greater Essex County District School Board’s Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement. Although
our 2010 / 2011 EQAO scores indicated an increase in writing proficiency, we still had 16% of Grade 3’s and 31% of Grade 6’s at Level 2 in writing. Our Grade 7 CAT results revealed 50% of students within the “low proficiency” category in writing conventions and 30% scoring within the “low proficiency” category in sentences/phrases/clauses.

**Methodology**

We applied for various board and public-sector grants to purchase technology; however we did not receive the funding necessary to achieve our original vision for this project. Using the school-based funding, we were able to purchase 4 iPod Touch devices, 2 Livescribe pens, and 1 iPad. For the first time at Hugh Beaton, students were able to “Bring Your Own Device” or BYOD. Professional learning was a vital aspect of this study, as the teachers involved needed time to congregate to learn and explore the technology before introducing it to the students. The GECDSB’s Classrooms on the Move PD Project was utilized by all teachers involved in this study to observe how technology has been utilized in other classrooms within the Board. During this study, we introduced the students to Edmodo (a virtual classroom platform), classroom blogs, Twitter, Wikis, and Audioboo (voice recording medium) based on student need and interest. Due to the variation in our divisions, each classroom’s use of technology is different.

**This section of our report is represented by Grade. Each teacher has included information about methodology, observation, and findings specific to their classroom.**

**Grade One**

In Grade One, the Livescribe pen was used by the students to record their voices along with their pen strokes during the writing block. This allowed students the opportunity to replay and revisit their thoughts while writing. Also, once the work was posted on the Wiki, it gave the students and the teacher the ability to reflect on their thinking and to ask questions in order to give descriptive feedback to the author. All students were provided with the opportunity to try a Livescribe pen at least once, and then it was offered as a choice during writing and Daily 5 time. The Livescribe pen was also used by the teacher while modeling writing tasks, and then the lesson was put on the Wiki for future parent and student reference.

Each student in Grade One created their own page on the Wiki where they could add photos, share experiences, and interests. The collaborative aspect of this medium allowed students the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback to their peers, eliciting discussions about “digital etiquette”, and descriptive feedback to improve the written work. Similar Wiki pages were also created by the teacher which asked students to respond and reflect on literacy tasks and math problem solving questions.

The students in Grade One also experimented with tools such as Twitter and Audioboo on an iPod Touch. Tweeting activities included using sight words in a sentence, making connections to science topics, recording math problem solving solutions and writing their “daily news”. Often, for the sake of time and to minimize student frustration with typing, tweets were a result of the “shared writing” model, in consultation with the students, with the teacher most often acting as typist. Twitter was used for students to summarize class activities in a brief and engaging manner, allowing parents to “follow” our learning, making it more visible.

The students also used Audioboo to “publish” their independent written work. Often the recordings included the child receiving descriptive feedback from a teacher or a peer and the student was then asked to reflect on how the descriptive feedback could be used in their work.
Twitter was also used as a medium for posting Audioboo recordings for parents and students to share.

Our most recent exploration in Web 2.0 tools was our use of Edmodo. Edmodo is a virtual classroom that was used to assign cross-curricular writing prompts which encouraged the students to write their thoughts and ideas (e.g., listing rhyming words, reviewing a web-based game, explaining how energy is used at home). Students independently logged on and completed assignments with minimal assistance. Through Edmodo, we assigned projects on Voki and Bitstrips, which the students continue to revisit and explore.

**Observations**
The Grade One students approached this project with enthusiasm. The students demonstrated great concentration and stamina whenever technology was presented as a writing choice. The students usually logged on independently and were able to navigate to different websites with greater ease compared to my previous years of teaching computers to Grade Ones.

Overall, the students enjoyed the social aspect of the Wiki, often adding writing pieces of personal interest on their own page and checking in on classmates’ pages. Students were initially taught about the “rules” of behaviour on the Wiki, and moreover, of their responsibility to leave meaningful comments that provoke thoughtful responses beyond just one word answers. After additional modeling, comments became lengthier and included a few more questions to elicit peer responses.

Some students who received Learning Support chose the Livescribe pen or Audioboo more often than the Wiki or Edmodo during free choice time. The quantity and quality of the work produced exceeded that of traditional paper and pencil written tasks for these students.

**Findings**
As a part of our study, students completed a pre-and post survey of their attitudes towards writing and preferences of technology. At the beginning of this study, we surveyed the students regarding their exposure to technology. We found that while most of the students had used the internet with a parent, most had little experience with alternate technologies apart from 15% having sent a text message. At the conclusion of this study, the students had learned to tweet, to comment on a blog, to record audio pieces and to independently navigate to a virtual classroom and complete short written assignments. The learning involved in achieving these tasks was great, not only for the students, but for the teacher as well. Our excitement about the successes we witnessed and our commitment to setting high standards allowed us to make great gains.

Before beginning our study, the Grade Ones had a classroom discussion regarding technology. When the students were asked for pros and cons regarding the use of technology to write, the students responded with remarks such as “our writing would be neater”, “we can correct mistakes quickly”, and “we can write more”. We had a chart paper full of wonderful responses, but to my surprise, no one had remarked that computers and technology could be fun. During our post-study Audioboo interviews, 89% (17 out of 19) indicated that they liked using technology to write at school and 40% (7 students out of 19) indicated that it was “fun.” To students in this age group, it is essential that all learning be “fun” and engaging in order to “hook” and motivate these beginning learners. In Grade One, fun is the greatest motivator, especially when practicing a difficult skill such as writing. We found that the students looked forward to writing with technology and started their assignments quickly.
Due to the developmental nature of writing in Grade One, we did not see an overwhelming increase in quantity of writing because of the added time needed for new typists to express themselves. However, with practice students became more comfortable with seeing themselves as writers, and did less worrying about making mistakes and being “correct” all the time. This type of confidence and risk taking is essential for all new learning to take place. The students commented that technology, “is kind of fun and it helps you learn,” and that “You don’t need an eraser. Don’t have to make finger spaces, you can just use the button.” So often, the “mechanics” of printing get in the way of a young child’s expression of ideas. As one student commented, “I like writing on the computer because it is not always messy. You don’t have to erase it if it is messy and you don’t have to take a long time to erase a letter. You just have to press the backspace.”

Technology allows students to make their ideas legible, thereby lowering frustration and anxiety levels. In particular, the ability to “replay” their think alouds while using the Livescribe pen allowed students who have difficulty remembering and rereading their inventive spellings to avoid this embarrassment during teacher and peer conferences. Also, the students found that the technology reaffirmed their ability to write and as one student commented, “My favourite is Voki because you get your own guy and can make him say whatever you want.” In this case, the technology is able to take the phonetic, approximated spellings and read them as if they were conventionally written, giving the students a confidence boost as writers.

Another positive aspect to using technology is the social component. One student remarked, “I like the Wiki because you can write on it and people see what you write to them”. The Wiki allows them to be not only writers, but readers; not only an author, but also an audience. With technology, the two skills are intertwined, as they are in the adult world. The excitement of publishing, being in the “spotlight” with their peers is extremely motivating. I found that the Grade One students worked more diligently on written assignments when there was an opportunity for them to “publish” through Audioboo and Twitter. The students were more likely to follow the success criteria, to seek descriptive feedback from peers and to implement the suggestions when they could see a favourable end result (immediate web publishing). The students preferred Audioboo, as they could use their strengths in oral language and the familiarity of using pen and paper to create rough drafts before publishing immediately by reading their work to the class.

While the students initially enjoyed using the Livescribe, it was one of the first technologies to be introduced. It was popular because it took the familiar mode of writing (with pen and paper) and added the dimension of voice recording. However, due to the short attention span of Grade One students, they seem to enjoy the “flavour of the month”, meaning they preferred the latest technology introduced (also evident in the following graph with regards to Bitstrips).

In addition, the Livescribe was more labour intensive as there was a time lag between completing the writing and plugging the Livescribe into the computer and uploading the pages to the Wiki. With Audioboo, a recording can be uploaded to Twitter by the iPod Touch within seconds without the use of additional technology. The following post-study graph demonstrates the student’s preferences for technology. The students enjoyed how engaging and user-friendly the iPod Touch was to use. Laptops were popular due to the number of different uses the technology was able to support. The Livescribe pens were chosen as a favourite more often by students currently receiving Learning Support.
This study also had an element of parent engagement. Many of the parents who had expressed interest or discussed the study with the teacher tended to have students who made more effective use of the technology. These students visited the Wiki more often and produced writing of greater length and quality.

**Grade Four/Five**
The Grade 4/5 students began the school year with basic understanding and use of the Wiki, which was limited mainly to creating and editing individual pages. The desire to experiment with new technological tools, in conjunction with our collaborative inquiry focus, brought us to our first new digital learning experience, our classroom blog.

Students were introduced to the blog in an attempt to create a classroom that extended far beyond the confines of the school yard. The blog, which was set up like a conventional website, provided an easy and effective tool for communication with students. It served as a portal to foster a community of active learners, with accessibility via classroom laptops or computers at home. Updated regularly, it was a very convenient way to further manage the classroom, informing students of class requirements, posting handouts, notices, and homework assignments. Our blog became a space that acted as a question and answer board and was quickly embraced as an opportunity for students to further develop their writing skills with the advantage of having an “instant” audience. Descriptive feedback was easily given to students from both teacher and peers. Much time was spent on discussing clear expectations regarding tone, respect, consequences and as importantly, elements of appropriate blog-style feedback that would be encouraging and constructive in nature to all students. Students were often given specific blog assignments (both literacy and math based) that provided them the opportunity to discuss topics further outside of the classroom. Modeling appropriate strategies by use of the blog also gave students a form of reference after a regular school day as well as provided students with a natural opportunity to “peer review,” by observing the alternative approaches/strategies of their classmates. Many opportunities for the students to collaborate were available by having them relay research findings, ideas, or suggestions to one another.

Twitter was also introduced as a teaching tool, with the introduction of a 4/5 classroom account. The idea was to both make learning visible and to provide parents (and our followers) with a brief recount of what we were currently learning about. It gave students an opportunity to further practice their writing and summarizing skills while publishing their daily posts. The overall goal of using Twitter as an educational tool was to enrich the learning experience by allowing students and teachers to connect and interact in new, exciting ways. We are currently exploring other ways in which to integrate this type of social media into our program.

The daily use of a data projector has also been new to the Grade 4/5 students. Whether we are exploring a particular concept/topic on Brain Pop or working together to solve a problem, our projector was used regularly for a variety of curriculum-specific applications. In Language Arts, we linked to an author's website to provide greater insight and impact to a reading assignment. In social studies, students created a PowerPoint presentation to demonstrate the ways in which life was different during medieval times while in science, we developed a presentation on how sound waves are created for increased audio and visual impact. During math class, our projector has been used for such activities as teaching students how to calculate various formulas, and how to utilize charts and graphs.
iPod Touch devices and iPads were used frequently in our classroom. Students were permitted to bring in their own devices for the first time. As well, 3 iPod touch devices were purchased for the classroom to share. Applications were downloaded for the students as a convenient way of integrating technology into our classroom. Depending on the area of study, we were able to search out and download a related application. We experimented with various applications that ranged anywhere from helping students to study word lists, reviewing their multiplication tables to learning about the human body. Students most commonly used our school's Wi-Fi connection to look up information on the iPod Touch devices without having to use a computer.

**Observations**

Students were eager to begin using our classroom blog. This was evident in both the amount of time spent on the blog as well as the quality of the work posted there. Students constantly asked for blog assignments and actively participated in giving descriptive feedback to their peers. Students used the blog as an avenue for completing assignments and managing their ‘school life’ activities. We used the blog to showcase our writing and when given the choice, almost all students opted to do an assignment on the blog rather than using pencil and paper. The most important aspect of the blog, was the way in which it served to present, organize, and protect student work as digital portfolios. Developing skills and progress were easily analyzed and conferencing advice is always available for future reference. The blog was easily monitored and controlled while students published posts and participated in discussions, all within a secure blogging classroom community.

The introduction of Twitter proved to be exciting for both the students and parents. There was a lot of interest in what we were going to be posting and how we would be using it in our program. Students enjoyed summarizing our daily activities and actually spoke openly about wanting their writing to be perceived as quality work by their peers and their parents. There was an increase of student’s dictionary use during these tasks as well.

Using the projector in class proved to be something that the students looked forward to. Students participated actively in the assignments given or taught on the projector. Our classroom dynamic is composed of mostly visual learners so the projector use introduced an added visual component while also providing diverse content to all students in the classroom at once.

The students thoroughly enjoyed bringing their iPods and iPads into our classroom. The fact that they were using something that they were so comfortable using outside of the classroom proved to add some excitement to whatever we were studying. From a teacher’s perspective, the iPods allow you to seamlessly integrate audio into the curriculum. Some student uses were to research topics, expand upon mathematical concepts and tweet.

**Findings**

Studies have shown that the effective use of technology to support teaching and learning across the curriculum has the potential to transform the learning environment. The data that was collected during this study period absolutely confirmed that students were more interested in completing writing tasks using technology and web tools. When asked what method they used to write with, 92.6% reported that they use a computer most often. When given the choice to write on paper or use a computer, 94% of students chose to use a computer all of the time. When interviewed using Audioboo, and asked ‘How do you feel about writing at school when you are able to use technology and web tools?’ 86% indicated that they preferred writing at school when given the opportunity to use technological devices and web tools. Students were quoted as saying
“It makes it a lot easier than writing it because I am a really fast at typing. It is fun to go on the blog.” Most student responses addressed the fact that it was fun and much faster using computers. It is important to note that the students who did not choose technology as a preferred method of writing indicated that they were not “very fast” at typing. The fact that students lacked any sort of formal computer/keyboarding training is an area that may be looked at more closely.

When assessing student writing, there was an improvement in quality of 79% of the Grade 4/5 writing. This was measured during a daily writing exercise where students were challenged to write 5 perfect sentences (structure, spelling, grammar considered). The improvement was seen equally in both structure and conventions. The grade 4/5 students exhibited much enthusiasm while completing writing tasks using technology. Their attitudes and written work suggest that technology is indeed a key component in improved writing, as well as motivating their interest in all other areas in which it was used.

**Grade 8**

The Grade 8 students have welcomed the new technology in our classroom. They enjoy using the iPad with the Splashtop Remote to help co-create learning goals and success criteria as a class. They have had great success in creating Public Service Announcements using the “Audioboo” application on the classroom iPad.

Students enjoyed having the accessibility throughout the day with the laptops to research information on the internet for projects and assignments. The students enjoy tweeting about what is going on throughout the day in our class. Parents now have the opportunity to follow us throughout the day. Students enjoy using Edmodo to complete diagnostic and formative quizzes and assignments. They enjoy the fact that they have the ability to ask questions not only to their teacher, but their project groups as well to help them along the way.

Students in our Grade 8 Class have created their own Edmodo account. Through this site, they are able to work on assignments and projects and submit them electronically to their teachers. This provides the opportunity for the teacher to provide appropriate feedback to the students that they are able to revisit in the future.

**Observations**

When the Grade 8 students discovered that our class was going to receive additional technology, they were very excited and eager to put it to use. I found that the technology helped create a classroom environment where the students were more engaged in the writing process. Not only were the students demonstrating higher engagement levels, but the outcome of their writing showed an increased level of quality.

I also found that parents have become more involved in their intermediate students’ work when provided with the opportunity for technology related resources such as Edmodo. The parents appreciate the ability to check the classroom calendar on Edmodo to see any upcoming events or assignments that will soon be due. The Edmodo program allowed for students and parents to receive descriptive feedback relating to their completed work in order to make the necessary adjustments and to prepare for their summative tasks. Parents now have the means to be aware of the assignments, tests and projects and can be better informed as to what is being taught in the classroom.
Findings
In order to track some of the changes that technology had on writing in our classroom, we conducted a pre and post technology survey. When having discussions with the Grade 8 class, it was evident that when given the opportunity, students have more motivation to write when technology is available.

When asked the question in the survey; “Do you like writing (stories, reports, journals, etc) at school?” there was a 15% increase in interest level when technology was readily available. Through my observations, not only did a higher percentage of the students become more interested in writing, but there was also an increase in the quality of their writing.

When asked the question “What methods do you use to write?”, “Word Processing Programs” had an increase in percentage from 69% to 83% when comparing their pre and post surveys. Now that students have more access to computer technologies, they are being used frequently and, most importantly, having a positive affect on their overall achievement levels.

When the option is given, 90% of students in our class prefer to use the computer over paper and pencil when completing an assignment, compared to 75% at the beginning of the year.

In one of our survey questions, there was a 13% increase in the use of computers when writing in class. Through observation, there is also an increase in motivation while writing when there are computers involved.

Our Grade 8 class conducted post-study interviews using the Audioboo application. After analyzing the student responses to the question “How do you feel about writing at school?”, 60% (12 out of 20) indicated that they prefer using technology when writing. This response was eye opening in the fact that the question did not lead students to a “technology” related response. This helps to prove that technology is an important component when determining interest levels in student writing. Some of the quotes from students relating to technology include;

- “It would be nice to use more technology.”
- “I like typing because it is faster.”
- “It (technology) is neater and quicker.”
- “I find it easier to use the laptops (rather than write) because you can research as you are going. Also, if you have to use books they might be outdated or something.”

Team Conclusions / Recommendations
Overall, the use of technology has had a positive impact on writing in our classrooms. We have noticed an increase in not only the quality of writing in our classes, but also the motivation and willingness to write when technology is readily available. As the document, Together For Learning suggests, it is our responsibility to ready our students for the digital age in which we live. We must challenge the effectiveness of our old, “tried and true” methods in order to create a learning environment that better suits our students as learners and as individuals. Our tech-savvy students desire and deserve to be taught in the way that interests them and challenges them.

Schools need to take advantage of the opportunity to teach the students about digital etiquette and digital citizenship at a young age before poor habits develop. Web 2.0 tools can be used to expand on ideas instead of abbreviating them, expressing ideas in a multi-media way that was never before possible. Web 2.0 tools has bridged the gap between home and school, allowing for up to the second communication with Twitter, Wiki and Edmodo use. The technology enables
the students to interact with others, giving them the confidence to see themselves as published writers, encouraging them to set their standards higher now as a global citizen. Students learn to be critical thinkers, giving others meaningful feedback, thus, also learning together!

We recommend that more in-service be held for staff to become comfortable with technology and see Web 2.0 tools in use in other classrooms (e.g. Classrooms on the Move). We would recommend every classroom have access to laptop carts on a regular basis or better yet, a centre in each classroom of 4 laptops that make using technology less of an event that happens once or twice a week, but a regular feature of how we operate at school, utilizing small group instruction. The use of data projectors/SMART Boards is essential, along with either iPads or iPod Touch devices. We found that the iPad was very user-friendly, allowing the students to write more easily due to its bigger screen. In an ideal world, our students would be well-equipped with laptops, iPads, iPod Touch devices and Livescribe pens.

The feedback from the students, as well as teacher observations, fully supported the idea that the engagement and achievement of our students increased, and student writing improved with the integration of various technologies. These conclusions have also helped the Hugh Beaton staff refine the culture of school thinking around technology, resulting in the development of new BYOD posters for full implementation in September.

References

Blackwell, G. & Chalifour, F. (March 2012). Tech Class - meet four teachers who are using computers, social media, webcams and other tools to help launch learning to a whole new level. Professionally Speaking.


F.W. Begley and King Edward Public Schools

Collaborative Inquiry Teams:
The Begley Team: Jody Craig, Grade 2 Teacher, Kathleen Fioret, VP/Teacher Librarian, Michelle Neblett, Instructional Coach & Johanna Lawler, Learning Commons Instructional Coach.
The King Edward Team: Jyllian White, Grade 1 / 2 Teacher, Nancy Duym, Teacher Librarian, Kim Pool, Vice-Principal & Jeff Piescic, Instructional Coach.

Inquiry Question: What results can one expect when grade 1 and 2 students use a variety of technologies to express and support opinions about book preferences in the Forest of Reading Program?

“While students are readily drawn to social media, they do not necessarily use them critically to gain deeper understanding. The Learning Commons can build on the entertainment value that students find in social media to further learning opportunities for critical and creative thought.” (pg. 12 Together for Learning)

Setting the Stage:

What knowledge and skills did our students need?
- Transferring strong student oral response to paper
- Communicating in a clear, concise manner

What knowledge and skills did our teachers need and deepen?
- Understand the technologies used
- Questioning Techniques
- Student engagement and motivation to write responses

“Virtual and physical learning partnerships extend collaboration to include all members of a school’s community. Technology-enabled learning partnerships foster the mutual exploration of ideas, and lead to innovation and creativity.” (pg. 11 Together for Learning)

Purpose for the Study and Justification for the Study

We determined that the overall unit learning goal would be:
‘We are learning to state our authentic opinion with supporting details from my own ideas and the text.’

Our goal was to have students state their opinions about the Forest of Reading program using Twitter. In order to achieve this goal, scaffolding had to be done.
- Step 1: What is an opinion? Students needed to be given an opportunity to feel comfortable to state their opinion knowing an opinion is neither right or wrong and it can be personal or based on facts.
- Step 2: Use supporting details to reinforce their opinion.
- Step 3: Make connections to the text to reinforce opinion.
- Step 4: Make opinions concise.
- Step 5: Understand the use of technology
“As the amount of information grows exponentially, critical reader and writers need to reflect, question, predict, and connect text to build understanding. A school library program helps students in their reading and writing to differentiate between fact and opinion, assess credibility, and to think critically about the information and ideas they encounter and communicate.” (pg. 22 Together for Learning)

Description of Procedures and Actions Taken:
NOTE: both schools began with the same procedures, attempting to duplicate lessons where possible. There was at one point where we decided to veer into different directions in regards to the use of technologies.

Begley
We began by focusing on our learning goal ‘We are learning to state an authentic opinion’. The success criteria:
1. I can state my opinion knowing it is not right or wrong.
2. I can listen to others opinions respectfully.
3. My opinion is based on prior knowledge (personal experience and fact).

- November 25 – What is an opinion? Discuss; presented students with food they weren’t familiar with, asked Do you like _____ why or why not?, students were videotaped, then responses were put to paper; teacher created Twitter account to tweet responses
- December 1st – Read Giraffe & Bird, as a read aloud; students were asked, In your opinion, which character did you like best? Why?; students were videotaped, then response were put to paper; teacher created Twitter account to tweet responses
- December 16th – Read Flock of Shoes, as a read aloud; compared Flock of Shoes with Giraffe and Bird; students were asked, Which story did you like best? Why?; students were videotaped, then responses were put to paper; teacher created Twitter account to tweet responses
- January 12th, 2012 meeting at King Edward PS
  In attendance: Jody Craig, Jyl White, Jeff Piesic, Kim Poole and Michelle Neblett
  Planned as a group what further actions would be taken in the inquiry, regarding design of lessons and possible cross curricular extensions.

- January 16th – January 19th – Stanley’s Little Sister
  ➢ Front Load: make up skit; How do you feel when someone takes over your area?; chart the feelings; word study; colours that represent feelings; Picasso; Read the story again; Why is the title called Stanley’s Little Sister, why do you think so? video and have them write the 140 characters
  ➢ Teacher Librarian: Read Kiss Me (I’m a Prince); read only until “and she did”
- January 23rd – 27th - Kiss Me (I’m a Prince)
Front Load: How do you convince or persuade your parents that you need or want something? What do you think happened and why?
Video and have them write the 140 characters.

Water colour, foreground, midground, background; purpose of illustrations;

Learning Goal: We are learning to use supporting details (connections and using evidence from the text) to reinforce our opinion;

- Success Criteria:
  - My connections match my opinion
  - My evidence from the book matches my opinion

Teacher Librarian: Read Making the Moose Out of Your Life

- January 30th – February 3rd – Making the Moose Out of Your Life
  Front Load: If you could change one thing about yourself what would it be and why?; bulletin board; Tuesday, reading the story; Wednesday If you could go and do one thing what would be and why?; Compare what things a moose is supposed to do, and what the moose really wanted to do; Friday, In your opinion, why is it important to accept others? video and have them write the 140 characters

Teacher Librarian: Read One Hockey Night

- February 6th – 9th – One Hockey Night
  Front Load: Have you moved or experienced something new? How did you feel? Why did you feel that way?; Tuesday: Canadian geography, read the story; Wednesday: survey students about something they have never tried (i.e. sport; food) analyze the data; Thursday: How do you think Holly and CJ felt at the end of the story and why? video and have them write the 140 characters

Teacher Librarian: Other activities associated with other books, TL will not introduce the next book because of related activities in the classroom

- February 13th – 17th – Roslyn Rutabaga and the Biggest Hole on Earth – TL’s not introducing this book
  Front Load: Read until “It gets pretty cold at the South Pole”, Tuesday; re-read then go on treasure hunt; Wednesday/Thursday read more and then discuss: Is it possible to dig the biggest hole on Earth? Did Roslyn dig the biggest hole on Earth? Student moderation how to answer a question, also have students fill the biggest hole with textured materials 11X17 sheet of paper; Friday, If you were digging a hole, where would you dig and what would you find? video and have them write the 140 characters

TL Lessons: Class shared research project on the South Pole using, Kids Info Bits or e-library
February 21 - March 2 – Small Saul
CT Lesson: FRONT LOAD: Do we all have to be the same? What are the characteristics of friend? What does it mean to be a leader and a follower (VENN DIAGRAM); Skits from older students about following the crowd; Community commitment to anti-bullying; Student Moderation; How do you think Saul felt at the beginning of the book and at the end of the book? Why? Twitter
TL Lessons: Compare two books with the similar message; “Stefanie’s Ponytail” by: Robert Munsch – TUMBLEBOOKS on the Smartboard

March 5 – March 23 – Noni Says No
CT LESSON: FRONT LOAD: How can you use your voice and actions to stand up against a bully? Character traits of Noni; Role Play scenarios about standing up to bullies, victim, bystanders; How did Noni change from the beginning to the end? Why? Twitter
TL LESSON: “Say Something” by: Peggy Moss VENN DIAGRAM

March 26 – April 5 – Little Hummingbird
CT LESSON: FRONT LOAD: The Power of One; show The Starfish Story” video; What are some things you can do to make a difference? First Nations art; Author study Michael Nicoll Yahgurlnanaas; If you had one starfish what would you do and why? If you had one drop to put into a bucket what would it be? MONTAGE VIDEO; TL LESSON: revisit e-library, Infobits; group research on South America and the “Flight of the Hummingbird” – youtube video

Adobe Connect Celebration– We’ll pick a day between April 11th and May 9th/17th for the celebration
General Discussion
➢ Possibly having a family day to share what our CI is about with families
➢ We will have a sample of 5-6 students and watch their growth, but will still use whole class for assessment and evaluation

February 9th, 2012 meeting at King Edward
In attendance: J. Lawler, K. Poole, J. Craig, N. Duym, K. Fioret, J. Whyte, J. Piesic & M. Neblett
Student Learning Needs:
• Moving from oral to written
• Using Twitter
• Getting points across in a clear concise manner

Jody, Kathleen and Michelle also discussed that students were having difficulty in remembering what they had said in the video to be able to write it down. We made an immediate change to having the Twitter sheets available when they were finished their oral response.
• Begley decided that we were going to move away from Twitter and focus on using video camera to increase written response

King Edward

We began by focusing on our overall learning goal in December which was ‘We are learning to state an authentic opinion’.  
The success criteria:  
1. I can state my opinion knowing it is not right or wrong.  
2. I can listen to others opinions respectfully.  
3. My opinion is based on prior knowledge (personal experience and fact).  

The first week began with students trying various foods such as pomegranate, apple crisp and cookies to state an authentic opinion. After trying the food they were video taped giving their opinion. We then did a class vote afterwards to see if students kept their same response and put the totals on Twitter. Students showed they were able to keep their votes consistent and were starting to explain their thinking behind the choices. 

The next step was to introduce text and use the Forest of Reading program. Nancy Duym, the Teacher Librarian would read the book 1-2 weeks in order to get the students thinking about the text. We would then spend about a week discussing the text in depth. By the end of the week we would ask students questions about the text. The first book was ‘Giraffe and Bird’. The question was, “which character do you like better, Giraffe or Bird?” “Why?” The next two weeks we worked on ‘A Flock of Shoes’. The question was, “In your opinion which book do you prefer, Giraffe and Bird or A Flock of Shoes?” “Why?” By the end of this section we were able to see that students were making authentic opinions. They would state their opinion in front of a camera, write their response and we would then do a class vote. Each time the numbers would remain the same. Students were successfully achieving the learning goal. We identified that the needs of the students was to explain why without being prompted and that led us to the next phase of the project. 

When we returned in January our learning goal focused on steps 2 & 3. The new learning goal was ‘We are learning to use supporting details to reinforce our opinion.’ The success criteria:  
1. My connections match my opinion  
2. My evidence from the book matches my opinion  

Since the original goal of this project was to eventually have the students state their opinion using Twitter we were trying to focus on getting their responses concise. At this point in the project we focused on video taping their responses and having them write their responses. Week 1 we focused on the book ‘Stanley’s Little Sister’. The end question was “Why is the title called Stanley’s Little Sister and why do you think so?” The second book was “Kiss Me I’m a Prince” and the question was “What do you think happened and why?” The third book was “Making the Moose out of Life” and the question was “Why is it important to include others or accept others?” The fourth book was “One Hockey Night” and the question was “How do you think Holly and CJ felt at the end of the story and why?” The fifth book was Roslyn Rutabaga and the Biggest Hole on Earth” and the question was “Where would you dig? When you do what would you find?” By the end of this section of work the student work was not consistent. We were able to identify that students could provide details to support their answer easier when speaking, however, they still needed prompting both orally and written. We also noticed that when details
were being given students felt more comfortable giving details from the text rather than making a connection. We decided to then focus primarily on making connections.

Our new learning goal was ‘We are learning to make connections to help us understand the story’.

The success criteria:
1. I am able to make 1 of the 3 types of connections.
2. My connection matches the story.

We worked with the book ‘Small Saul’ from the Forest of Reading program and then asked the question “How did Saul’s feelings change from the beginning to the end? Why? We thought we could start getting students to respond by making connections to the characters feelings. Students had a very difficult time making connections to the character. We then tried it the following week with ‘Noni Says No’ and the results were the same. What we realized is that we were using the wrong type of books for the students to begin making connections. I then began with a read aloud about camping and I put a post-it note every time I had a connection and I would share my connections with the class. They were then encouraged to get out their good fit books and to put post-it notes in areas that they had connections. We then shared responses. We then read the book ‘Sophie Gets Angry’ and as students had connections we typed them on our twitter account and then shared as a class. We looked at the responses and then students had to write their connections down as a response.

Findings

Together we found great learning, as referenced from Together for Learning, we saw everyone as a learner. We as teachers became learning coaches and facilitators of new learning, by drawing on the experience of everyone (pg. 11 Together for Learning).

King Edward
The responses had improved. We found during this time, however, that because students wanted to share the book was interrupted many times. We then decided to watch stories online. Before viewing, we told the student that their goal was to make a connection. We watched a story (‘Thank you Mr. Falker’ and ‘Enemy Pie’), then turned to a partner to share the connection, we then recorded connections on Twitter and then students wrote their connections. By doing this we found that students were able to focus better on the story when it was online because there weren’t any distractions. They were given the goal and they were able to focus on the goal during the time of the story. Their written responses also improved after having a chance to share their connection orally and to see the response on twitter. Students were able to still give an authentic connection rather than copy the connections they saw.

Begley
- oral responses improved, students were able to make connections, give their opinions and use text evidence
- students were stronger orally than written
- we noticed that students needed to write their responses immediately after their oral response in order to remember their strong oral responses
- the importance of going over the learning goal and success criteria consistently prior to practice
as teachers we realized that some of our questions were not necessarily effective
as teachers that there have been other books that could have been used for specific purposes (based on their interests; i.e. One Hockey Night)
realized the importance of students being comfortable in front of a camera

Conclusions and Suggested Future Directions:

King Edward
We are now focusing on students creating concise responses using the three part response. I have included responses to our unit on Asking Questions. Students are now independently thinking about their response and making sure that they give a reason why to the statement they make. We are continuing to let students discuss their response orally first and to see an example of a response on either the SMART Board or Twitter.

Begley

• Classroom teacher felt that she could have done more independently rather than wait for the coach (i.e. using Speakers Corner as part of the Daily 5)
• Continue with “hot writing”
• Continue with the use of technologies to establish oral responses
• Along with success criteria student self-assessment should be included daily to self-monitor
• Ensuring developmentally appropriate questioning for students
• Certain technologies are developmentally appropriate
• Transferring skills into different subject areas

Common Teacher-Librarian Findings
It was also apparent that the role of the library and the role of the Teacher-Librarian were paramount in the success of this Inquiry. The TLs were able to provide tremendous support for the classroom teachers in terms of suggested mentor texts along the process and providing strategic lessons targeting the research angle for a few of the Forest of Reading books. The TLs were able to continue with the CI process during the classes that they taught so the process continued not in isolation, but rather in conjunction with the homeroom teachers and what was being taught there with the students who were involved.

This process has solidified the need for the TL to collaborate and partner with all teachers on staff, especially with the classes that are in common in terms of scheduling with the TL’s. The library program is one that can have a major impact on student learning and achievement. Having a supportive administrative team that understands this valuable partnership is important. This partnership was also reflected in the common assessment that was evident for both teams. This collaboration was important for continued planning, teaching, and assessment for learning for our students. The CT’s focus on technology was also supported by the TL.
References

- 2012 Forest of Reading – Blue Spruce Reading Program
- Together for Learning – Ontario Library Association Document
- Reaching Every Student through Differentiated Instruction, Universal Design for Learning and the Tiered Approach – GECDSB Special Education Department
- Kid InfoBits Database
- PBS Kids website
- Twitter
Brock Elementary School and J.L. Forster Secondary School

Collaborative Inquiry Team: Barbara White, Secondary Teacher Librarian; Marianne Brown, Elementary Classroom Teacher; Margaret Stanley, Secondary Classroom Teacher

Inquiry Question: How does the pairing of mainstream students with English Language Learners (ELL) impact on social, oral, and academic skills?

Setting the Stage

Multiculturally diverse, Brock Elementary School and J.L. Forster S.S. share similar population demographics. Brock has a student population of 306 students (185 families) between Junior Kindergarten and Grade 8. Over 22 different countries are represented in the student population, with 14 different languages, not including English, being represented. J.L. Forster S.S. has a student population of approximately 450 students (~250 families) between Grade 9 and Grade 12. Over 60 countries are represented and more than 50 languages are spoken other than English. In looking for ways to increase literacy levels and at the same time create a greater feeling of inclusion within the main student body by our ELL students, we had witnessed little quality interaction between the two groups of students. We believed that a book club would address these two needs by offering a shared social experience as well as an opportunity to read for pleasure.

Brock is a feeder school for Forster Secondary School. Although the number of ELL students at Brock is significantly less than the number of ELL students at Forster the challenges faced for developing English proficiency for social, oral, and academic skills are the same. We saw this project as one which would provide a bridge between ELL learners and native English speakers.

It was the goal of this team to create a ‘literacy platform’ that would foster an environment for ELL students to read texts and share their opinions about the texts with mainstream students. The hope was that this would then build confidence in the ELL students to extend their socialization with their mainstream peers outside of the classroom as well as improve overall academic scores in literacy. ELL students often do not understand many of the cultural and colloquial references in literature. It was our assertion that by discussing books in a one on one situation these students would be more willing to ask questions to clarify their understanding. Through increased exposure they would be able to transfer this confidence to reading. We also believed that the English speakers would benefit by gaining an increased awareness of the challenging task the ELL students were faced with but more importantly develop a more integration between the groups. In addition to this the project would serve as a transition opportunity for elementary students.

Description of Procedures and Implementation

The Brock Project

One fiction novel and five non-fiction graphic text were chosen for 6 pre-selected Grade 7 and 8 students. Text reading levels were chosen to meet the reading levels of the ELL students. The students were asked to commit to discussing/reading the texts using a ‘literature circle’ and
‘elbow partner’ format with specific goals and targets set for the students. The group met daily for 40 minutes over a twelve week period. The ELL students were provided with the opportunity to use their fiction novel text as part of their independent reading program. Students used Audacity, Bitstrips, and pencil-to-paper tasks (e.g., CASI type questions such as summary/main idea, journals) to record their responses.

The J.L. Forster S.S. Project

Eight ELL students and 8 English speakers were chosen to participate in a book buddy program. The ELL students were chosen on language acquisition level (Level C) and interest in improving their reading comprehension. The English speaking students volunteered after a short overview of how the program would run. Many of this group were involved in the library book club so were avid readers.

The program was implemented by the teacher-librarian and one ELL teacher over the course of 10 weeks.

Graphic novels were chosen because of their proven engagement for emerging readers. Ten different titles were offered in order for the students to be given a variety of choices. We believed that many of our ELL readers are familiar with the graphic novel format and would find it less threatening. It also would be a quicker read for the English language students than a strictly text based novel. We expected that any additional reading could only help to improve reading proficiency and understanding.

A book talk for each book was given and students chose the book they were most interested in. Partners were established by book choice as we had at least two copies of each title. We hoped that students would have an opportunity to read at least 3 of the graphic novels thereby increasing the input about each one. The partners remained the same throughout the study.

Students completed an initial survey to ascertain their reading habits and interests. An exit survey is set to determine if students felt that the experience was a positive one focusing on their attitude toward reading in general and the interaction of the two groups. A whole group discussion will provide more anecdotal information on the projects viability.

Teacher Reflections

The Brock Project

Initially, the mainstream students appeared to have a higher level of confidence in their participation in the reading of the fiction novel. They willingly volunteered to read aloud text passages in addition to taking on the roles of questioner, summarizer, and word analyzer. The ELL students preferred to take on the role of Illustrator during the reading of the fiction text, drawing a visual scene based on what was read aloud. As the weeks progressed and with encouragement from their mainstream peers, the ELL students began to volunteer to read aloud passages from the fiction novel as well as take on the various roles of questioner, summarizer, and word analyzer.

The students learned from and motivated each other. The mainstream students were observed to provide verbal support to the ELL students during the reading of the fiction text. Assistance was
provided for the correct pronunciation of unfamiliar words along with provision of word meaning. All students were actively engaged in conversations about the novel as evidenced by their by the content of their discussions. As a result, the ELL began to demonstrate increased proficiency and confidence in the fluency of their oral communication skills. The ELL students began to volunteer to be the first to read aloud, summarize what was being read, or take on the role of questioner.

During the reading of the non-fiction graphic text, the same pattern was noted with respect to the mainstream students volunteering to read the text aloud or participate in group discussions. Again, as the ELL students began to become more comfortable with their English skills and with the mainstream students, their participation in the reading of the text passages and participation in discussions increased. While using Audacity and Bitstrips to record their responses to questions based on the text, all students were engaged in conversations about the text.

As in the case of all group work discussions, engagement in off task, social conversations were also observed. During the first two weeks, it was noted that the ELL students were somewhat reserved in socializing with the mainstream students. For example, while mainstream students were discussing what they had done on the weekend or after school, the ELL students were noticeably quiet. As the weeks progressed and the students became more familiar with each other, it was observed that the ELL students began to participate in off task social conversations. It was also observed that during Nutrition Breaks the ELL students began to socialize with their mainstream peers in both the cafeteria and outside during recess.

Analysis of the written portion of the tasks provided (e.g., journal response, CASI type questions, Bitstrips) revealed an overall improvement in reading comprehension scores and vocabulary building. For example, the reading comprehension scores of two of the ELL students improved by one grade level.

The J.L. Forster S.S. Project

Initially we encountered some unexpected difficulties:

We quickly realized that students - especially ELL students – did not always listen to or hear the morning announcements where our meeting times were broadcast, resulting in students not attending meetings. One time we had only the ELL students in attendance and another only the English language speakers. We rectified this problem by sending a reminder note to each student to their homeroom the morning of the meeting. Lunch time meetings were sometimes difficult for everyone to attend with any regularity because of other obligations. We initially met at lunch but soon found that it was easier for each pair to meet on their own with a group meeting every other week. This seemed to result in better attendance. While most students did not have long individual meetings they indicated that most lasted over 20 minutes.

The students developed a friendly rapport and conversation between groups often developed. As more novels were read these conversations increased perhaps because they had an even larger shared body of knowledge. We noticed that the students were more integrated in their sitting arrangement as the meetings continued with English and ELL students sitting together as one group rather than two separate ones.
The ELL students seemed to be more comfortable coming to the library at lunch and after school.

Student Reflections

Both groups had similar findings with the overall conclusion that it was a worthwhile and beneficial project.

The Brock Project

Surveys and anecdotal observations showed that the students appreciated the opportunity to work with each other and that the overall experience was a positive one. One student, who was very reluctant to speak English in front of her peers stated, “I’m really happy now. I have friends and I’m okay to talk to anybody in English.” The ELL students also self-reported having a higher confidence level when attempting to use their oral English language skills during both class discussions and social conversations with their peers.

J.L. Forster S.S. Project

When asked if they felt less separate in the school population, the ELL students all said they felt more comfortable talking about books and did not feel as self conscious when they were not sure of something. The mainstream students said they felt they made more of an effort to include ELL students and had become more aware of their situation. One student said she had never realized how isolating the language barrier could be. Most mainstream students share classes with ELL students who are entering the mainstream classroom. While their English may not be perfect, it is understandable she had never realized how difficult the process really was. It gave her a new found admiration for them.

Conclusions and Future Directions

The study was very broad in focus and the organizational difficulties made our data weak.

We believe there is merit in this idea but feel that another year is needed to fully explore hypothesis. We hope to initiate the book buddy program at the beginning of the year September 2012 and develop a collaborative project between the schools.

We would also like to collect some data on the academic performance of the ELL students by including their classroom teachers.
Appendix A

Pre-Survey (Brock Elementary School)

Question 1: Do you speak English at home?
   o Always
   o Frequently
   o Sometimes
   o Never

Question 2: Do you speak another language at home?
   o Always
   o Frequently
   o Sometimes
   o Never

Question 3: Do you read English at home?
   o Always
   o Frequently
   o Sometimes
   o Never

Question 4: Do you write English at home?
   o Always
   o Frequently
   o Sometimes
   o Never

Question 5: Do you read in another language at home?
   o Always
   o Frequently
   o Sometimes
   o Never

Question 6: Do you write in another language at home?
   o Always
   o Frequently
   o Sometimes
   o Never

Question 7: If English is your second language, do you feel confident reading English at school or at home?
   o Always
   o Frequently
   o Sometimes
   o Never

Question 8: If English is your second language, do you feel confident speaking English at school or at home?
Question 9: If English is your second language, do you socialize with peers who speak your first language?
  - Always
  - Frequently
  - Sometimes
  - Never

Question 10: If English is your second language, do you socialize with peers who speak English?
  - Always
  - Frequently
  - Sometimes
  - Never
Post-Survey (Brock Elementary School)

**Question 1:** Do you speak more English at home or school since participating in the Book Talk?
- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Never

**Question 2:** Do you read more English at home or school since participating in the Book Talk?
- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Never

**Question 3:** Have you increased your English Language writing skills at home or school since participating in the Book Talk?
- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Never

**Question 7:** If English is your second language, do you feel more confident reading English at school or at home since participating in the Book Talk?
- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Never

**Question 8:** If English is your second language, do you feel more confident socializing with peers in English since participating in the Book Talk?
- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Never

**Question 9:** Was your participation in the Book Talk a positive experience for you?
- Yes
- No

**Question 10:** Would you like to participate in future Book Talks?
- Yes
- No
Pre-Survey (J.L. Forster Secondary School)

English Language Learner

1. Please tell us your gender

male

female

2. How many books have you finished reading in the last 6 months?

1  2  3  4  5+

3. Where do you read the most often?
At school
At home
At the public library
On the bus
Other

4. Do you ever talk to your friends or family about what you are reading?

Never
Sometimes
Always

5. How many hours do you spend reading different mediums each day?

books / journals for pleasure
books / journals for school
online blogs and journals
social media sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

0
1-2
3-4
5+

6. What kind of books do you like to read for fun? Check all that apply.

Mystery
Adventure
Horror
True Stories
Fantasy
Science Fiction
Romance
Sports
Books about your hobbies or collecting
Biography/Autobiography
Factual books, like a book about dinosaurs or space
How-to books
Other
None

7. What is the last book you read? Write "not applicable" if you have not read a book in the last 6 months.

8. What makes a book appeal to you?
   - It is about real people
   - It takes me into another world
   - It can teach me a lesson
   - It has an interesting format (poetry, journal, graphics)
   - I do not read books

9. I read because...
   Rate the following in order of your preferences.(4 being the most like you and 1 being the least like you)

   1  2  3  4

   - Just for the fun of it
   - Because I have to for school
   - Because I get bored and have nothing else to do
   - I can learn new things on my own
   - I don't really read much
   - Because my parents encourage me to
   - I do not read.

10. Which of the following do you read? Check all that apply.
   - Books assigned for class
   - Books I read outside of class for pleasure
   - Newspapers
   - Fashion/Beauty magazines
   - Cereal boxes, instructional pamphlets and other product packaging
   - Music/Computers/Entertainment magazines
   - School papers or other newsletters
   - Sports magazines
   - Online websites or webzines
   - Puzzles/Games/Humor magazines
   - Comic books or graphic novels
   - News magazines
   - Magazines about video games
   - Computer manuals or other electronic equipment manuals
   - None of the above
1. Please tell us your gender

   English Language Learner   English First Language

   male
   female

2. How many of the book club books have you read this semester?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How many other books - other than book club books and NOT school related - have you read this semester?
   1 2 3 4 5+

4. Did your experience at the book club make you enjoy talking about books?
   Yes   No
   Comments

5. How many hours do you spend reading different mediums each day?

   books / journals for pleasure   books / journals for school   online blogs and journals   social media sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

   0
   1-2
   3-4
   5+

6. Would you be more likely to choose a graphic novel than before joining the book club?
   Very Likely   Somewhat Likely   Not at All

7. What was the most enjoyable part of the book club?

8. Would you join another book club?
   Yes   No   Maybe

9. I read ....
Rate the following in order of your preferences. (4 being the most like you and 1 being the least like you)

   I read ...                                           1  2  3  4

   Just for the fun of it
   Because I have to for school
   Because I get bored and have nothing else to do
   To learn new things on my own
   I don't really read much
   Because my parents encourage me to
   I do not read
Inquiry Question: How does using technology in the learning commons impact the development of phonological awareness skills in Early Years students?

Abstract
This study focused on the use of technology to provide direct instruction on phonological skills to Early Years French Immersion students. Two groups of students were given pre-assessments of their phonological awareness skills. One group of students received additional instruction on phonological awareness skills with the teacher-librarian in the Learning Commons, while the second group of students received instruction only with their classroom teacher. The teacher-librarian developed a Smart Notebook file of interactive phonological awareness skill activities and used the file to provide the students she saw each week with direct instruction. Post assessment data indicated that direct teaching of phonological awareness skills did increase the speed of sound identification in the inquiry group of students over the classroom-only students but increases in the accuracy of letter-sound identification was similar between both groups. The Smart Notebook file created would be useful to teacher-librarians and for classroom teachers to use as support for the development of phonological awareness skills in Early Year and Primary classrooms.

Introduction:
The purpose of this study was to develop technology support for teacher-librarians to use in the learning commons environment to support the development of phonologic awareness skills in Early Years students. Research suggests that the development of the various phonologic awareness skills - sound, word and syllable recognition; substituting, segmenting, blending, and deleting sounds in words; and rhyming words – are foundational to the development of literacy (Trehearne, 2011). While the students involved in this inquiry were enrolled in French Immersion programs, there is considerable research that suggests that strong phonologic awareness skills in one language support the development of a second language and further, that teaching phonologic awareness skills in English will transfer to a second language. Immersion students who are at-risk need to be identified early using English or French measures as both predict French reading ability in later grades (Cummins, 1998).

The teacher-librarian in this inquiry is interested in supporting the pre-reading activities and phonological awareness skills that teachers in the Immersion Early Years classrooms are incorporating as suggested in Together for Learning (2010). Further, Together for Learning (2010) and the teacher-librarian both recognize the benefits of incorporating technology in the Learning Commons activities as a tool for engaging students and increasing their technological skills. Smartboard technology was selected as a strategy to provide the explicit phonologic awareness skills that Yopp and Yopp(2000) argue is so imperative to Early Years learners. He suggests that phonologic awareness skills instruction should not only be explicit, but playful and engaging, interactive and social and should stimulate curiosity and experimentation with language (Yopp, 1992). Technology was seen as an excellent strategy within the Learning Commons to reach these criteria.

Context of the Study
This inquiry took place at a school that hosts 9 French Immersion Early Years classrooms. For many of the students participating in the inquiry, neither English nor French was their first language.
Two classrooms of students were regularly instructed two periods a week by the Learning Commons teacher using a Smartboard and a Smart Notebook file expressly created for the inquiry which was focused on phonologic awareness skill attainment (see attached Notebook). Two additional classrooms of students were selected who did not see the teacher-librarian to act as a control group. The use of a control group was necessary to determine if the additional explicit instruction was a factor in students’ phonological awareness skill growth over and above the maturation of students and their instruction outside the Learning Commons.

**Methodology and Data Collection**

Twelve students in total were selected for the inquiry. Six of the students from two different French Immersion classrooms met with the teacher-librarian two times a week. During part of these periods in the Learning Commons, students were given an opportunity to use the Smartboard and the Smart Notebook file on phonologic awareness skill attainment. The activities were interactive and students engaged in them as playful games. Six other students were randomly selected from classrooms that did not meet with the teacher-librarian in the Learning Commons. While the classroom teacher engaged in phonologic awareness skill development activities, students did not receive additional opportunities to practice and play with the interactive phonologic awareness games using the Smartboard in the Learning Commons with the teacher-librarian. All activities were conducted in English.

All students were administered the DIBELS assessment of Initial Sound Fluency both at the beginning of the inquiry and at the end of the inquiry by the Instructional Coach aligned to the school and a member of the inquiry team. This assessment was done in English. Both the time taken to complete the assessment and the number of correct responses were recorded. Students were asked to identify the initial sound they heard in words by pointing to a picture following specific prompts from the examiner. The examiner identified the pictures by saying for example.

‘This is tomato, cub, plate, doughnut (point to pictures).
1. Which picture begins with /d/?
2. Which picture begins with /t/?
3. Which picture begins with /k/?
4. What sound does “plate” begin with?”

**Findings**

The following chart outlines the results of the pre and post assessments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Initial Sound Fluency Time Learning Commons Instruction</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Initial Sound Fluency Time Classroom only Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRE</td>
<td>POST</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2:36</td>
<td>1:07</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2:05</td>
<td>1:20</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2:58</td>
<td>1:22</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4:26</td>
<td>1:35</td>
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<td>1:15</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2:35</td>
<td>1:17</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>1:47</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3:30</td>
<td>1:22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Initial Sound Fluency Correct Responses</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Initial Sound Fluency Correct Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning Commons Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom only Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRE</td>
<td>POST</td>
<td>PRE</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 data measures the time it took for each student to complete the assessment of 16 questions as listed in the example above. In the DIBELS assessment, time is used as a measure of the students’ phonologic awareness fluency. The faster a student identifies the sound, the more fluent they are. Results suggest that the fluency of students who received the additional phonologic awareness skill instruction in the Learning Commons through the Smartboard activities, improved on average 1.06 minutes between the pre-assessment and the post-assessment. Students who only received instruction in the classroom did not improve significantly, in fact, 2 of the 4 students were slower to complete the assessment in the post trial.

Figure 2 data measures the number of correct responses on the DIBELS assessment of Initial Sound Fluency. Students who received instruction only in their classroom showed greater improvement than those students who had the additional phonologic awareness skill instruction in the Learning Commons. This suggests that accuracy in the identification of phonologic skills was not improved through the inquiry strategies.

Recommendations

The results of the inquiry suggest that using the Smartboard to engage students in explicit phonologic awareness skill development activities increases their fluency for identification of sounds. However, it does not appear that the accuracy of their phonologic awareness skills was impacted by the use of this technology. This could have been the result of a number of factors. Many of the activities in the Smart Notebook created for the inquiry involved songs and rhymes. Different strategies must be used to help students focus on the sounds instead. This speaks to the care that teachers need to take in selecting activities that truly support phonologic awareness rather than sentence or word awareness. Secondly, the fact that for many of the students in the inquiry English was not their first language, may have impacted the accuracy of their responses. Future inquires should focus on more explicitly selecting activities that develop phonologic awareness using strategies such as waving hands when rhymes are heard, stomping feet along with alliterations, clapping the syllable in names and using blocks when segmenting words. Technology can still be integrated in these activities in the Learning Commons environment to support the accuracy in student’s acquisition of phonologic awareness skills. Students need multiple opportunities to focus on the parts of words, identify the parts and manipulate the parts of words in their oral language in order to develop the necessary phonologic awareness skills to support reading and writing.
Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the acquisition of phonologic awareness skills using technology in the Learning Commons. Twelve students were selected for the inquiry from French Immersion Early Years classrooms. Eight of the students received additional explicit instruction in the Learning Commons environment in order to augment classroom instruction. This instruction consistently used the technology of a Smartboard to engage and motivate students in the learning activities. Results suggest that while the additional instruction greatly increased students’ fluency in the identification of initial sounds, it did not significantly improve the accuracy of their responses. Further inquiries should focus on the selection of phonologic awareness activities in order to ensure that they are differentiated for the particular students’ needs. The teacher-librarian is uniquely positioned in the Learning Commons to augment classroom instruction, provide additional opportunities for practice and to integrate technology in instruction. Further Smart Notebook files could be created to support early literacy skills that are being taught in the classrooms. The teacher-librarian can support components of the Learning Commons by providing the physical and virtual spaced for the development of phonologic awareness skills, by creating learning partnerships with classroom teachers to develop Early Year students’ phonologic awareness skills, and by embedding technology in the learning of those skills to support the development of crucial early literacy skills.

References


Gosfield North and Belle River Public Schools

**Collaborative Inquiry Team:** Shirley Kunca and Susie Woodruff, Teacher Librarians

| **Inquiry Question:** How can using iPad/ereader technology improve summarization in selected reluctant readers at Belle River Public School and Gosfield North Public School? |

**Introduction**

“In an age when many teacher-librarians are not sure about the continued relevance of their promotion of reading and love of books, e-books and digital textbooks may represent a fresh way to continue advocacy for the importance of reading (Peters, 2009) as well as for the teacher-librarian’s crucial leadership role in technology integration” (Mardis and Everhart). We noticed with our reluctant readers in the intermediate and junior grades, that some students were having difficulty summarizing what they had read for school related assignments. We had concerns about how to engage and effectively teach summarization in the intermediate and junior grades. We acknowledge that students’ use of technology is ever increasing. It is no wonder there is a growing disconnect between students lives with technology outside school, and the far more restricted use of technology they experience inside of school.” (Kirkland et al., 2010) “…80% of students who used e-readers enjoyed using them more than traditional books. They stated that e-readers helped them to concentrate and raise their comprehension level. (Mardis and Everhard) Part of our responsibility as teacher-librarians is to find new and interesting ways to improve and increase our students’ literacy knowledge and engagement.

**Vision**

It is our vision to get our reluctant readers to summarize what they have read more precisely and effectively. We hope that by integrating technology (iPads/eReaders) into the library program, students will be more interested in reading and summarizing for enjoyment and academics.

**Theory of Action**

If we implement the use of iPads/eReaders as a reading tool, then reluctant readers will show an improved interest and ability in reading, particularly the summarization of what they have read. This increased interest will engage our students in reading tasks and improve their skills. One teacher’s observation of her students in Palm Beach County supports our theory of action. She stated, “Usually I have to remind the students that they should be reading their books not looking around the room but since they have been reading off the e-readers, I haven’t had to remind them - they were engaged in the reading” (Mardis and Everhart).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this inquiry project is to improve summarizing in selected reluctant readers using tablet technology (iPads/eReaders) at Belle River Public School and Gosfield North Public School.
Justification for the study

In our role of Teacher-Librarian, it is imperative to stay current with technology. For us to be a Teacher-Librarian in the 21st Century, Valenza (2007) says we must “think outside of the box about the concept of collection. Your collection and your students best resources might now include e-books, audiobooks, blogs, open-source software, streaming media, wiki-books, and much more.” Integrating the use of iPads/eReaders would allow reluctant readers access to all of these resources. Student enthusiasm and interest for using iPads/eReaders justified our project. With our ultimate goal of engaging reluctant readers and improving summarization skills, we believe that student achievement and their attitude towards reading will improve. “When students are encouraged to pursue their own interests and passions and are free to choose from a rich collection within an inviting environment, they are motivated to read and their reading and depth of understanding improve.” (OSLA, 2010) Students’ interests would be supported when iPads/eReaders are made available to them.

Method

Initially, a survey was developed to determine the reading interests of select students. The survey included how much time students spend reading, what literacy skills they find difficult (inference, summarizing, decoding), what technological devices students already have access to, whether they enjoy personal reading, and if reading on some sort of technology (phone, iPod, iPad, eReader) would make reading assignments more interesting and summarizing what they have read less difficult. This survey was given to four grade 6 students at Gosfield North and a grade 8 class at Belle River Public School. We noticed that there was a great interest in the use of technology. The majority of students indicated that they already had regular access at home to electronic devices like iPods, laptops, eReaders and DSI’s. When asked how students spend their free time, 60% of students spend most of their time doing activities online or with technology. They also indicated that they read online (websites, blogs and wikis) almost as much as they read fiction. Students expressed interest and enthusiasm for the integration of technology to assist with literacy skills like summarizing. One student said, “What adults don’t realize is society has developed so far, that technology has become a need. Instead of investing in textbooks and writing utensils, the board should put their money into things like laptops and iPads.” Other data used to select reluctant readers was CASI scores and EQAO scores, specifically the summarizing question data.

Next, we looked into purchasing four iPads for Belle River Public School and 4 Kindles for Gosfield North Public School. Here is where we discovered how difficult it would be to purchase iPads with no financial support from school budget. Fortunately, Belle River PS SAC (School Advisory Committee) and our administrator have voted and agreed to purchase 20 iPads, but unfortunately the paperwork through bingo and the town of Tecumseh is still processing the order. Hopefully, the iPads will be connected to the School Connect system before the end of the 2012 school year. Gosfield North did purchase three Kindles through fundraising events like bookfairs, and has implemented their use in the classroom.

Findings

This is a very forward thinking project that is almost happening before our school budget is ready to support it. Until policy is put into place to purchase, implement and support the use of iPads/eReaders in a timely manner, we are left in a holding pattern. Technology should be readily available as are pencils and paper. Although, we have support from individual school administration and parent council, the logistics of purchasing and setting up accounts and apps is still difficult. In the six months
of this project, technological advances have moved us from considering e-Readers, to iPads to other brands of tablets to some purchases and implementation. Careful consideration has to be given when such a significant purchase is made. However, at some point it is necessary to jump in and commit to a choice so as not to be left behind.

Even though we were unable to follow through with our plan of purchasing and using iPads with reluctant readers who need assistance summarizing, the following are observations from another teacher in our board who is using e-Readers with his grade 5 students. “I would say that overall, I am getting better results from my kids because of the e-Readers and for a number of reasons. First, several of my kids who were not avid readers have either purchased an e-Reader for themselves or actively use the Kindle reading app on their own digital device. Second, rather than choose to waste time at their desk, students will grab an e-Reader and read. Third, I find that comprehension and depth of understanding is better since students use the dictionary function since it is readily available rather than lazily skim over something that is not understood. I have also noticed an improvement in reading response (AEO) since students consistently use the search function to look up earlier passages to use as evidence/support for their answers.

Recommendations

Regardless of changing technology, a step towards a timely purchase of digital devices must be made in order to stay afloat in the ever changing Web 2.0 world. Despite challenges with advancing technology, in order to provide students access to the most current tools, we almost need to throw caution to the wind and just dive in.

References


John Campbell Public School

Collaborative Inquiry Team: Stephanie Douglas, Teacher Librarian; Liz Laporte, Instructional Coach; Debbie Finnerty, Grade Six Classroom Teacher; Tracy McDonald, Vice Principal.

Inquiry Question: What is the impact of teacher collaboration on grade 6 boys’ engagement and achievement in non-fiction reading and writing?

Vision
The team would like to deepen their learning about effectively using non-fiction texts to engage students in real world learning experiences across the curriculum, as well as, increase student engagement in and enjoyment of reading non-fiction.

Theory of Action
If the teacher-librarian, classroom teacher, vice principal and instructional coach collaborate to increase the use of non-fiction reading and writing, then grade six boys’ engagement and achievement in writing will increase.

Purpose for the Study
The purpose of this inquiry is to explore non-fiction literacy skills in collaboration with the teacher-librarian, teacher, vice principal and instructional coach as an opportunity to improve student achievement of grade six boys at John Campbell.

Justification for the Study
This team believes that it is important to weave non-fiction reading throughout all curriculum areas in order to effectively prepare students for real world experiences. Non-fiction reading has also been identified by John Campbell staff as an area of focus for their own learning during this school year.

“When observing boys in the classroom, it may be tempting to conclude that they do not like to read. It may be more accurate, however, to conclude that, in many cases, it is not that boys do not like to read, but that they do not like to read what they are presented with in the classroom. Offering a rich and varied mix of materials and being mindful of boys’ reading preferences can go a long way towards building an engaging and inviting reading environment for boys.” Me read? No Way? A Practical Guide to Improving Boy’s Literacy Skills 2005 P. 8

Description of Procedures and Actions Taken
The team utilized several different strategies to assess and engage grade 6 boys in non-fiction text.

Interviews
Interviews, including audio recordings, were conducted with the marker students in order to gain insight into the students’ understanding of the purpose(s) of non-fiction writing. Students were also asked about their preference for writing fiction and non-fiction. Many students shared that they
preferred to write fiction because it was easier to write ideas from their head and use their creativity. Students reported that they found researching topics time consuming.

**OWA & CASI**

OWA and CASI non-fiction assessments were used to identify boys achieving at a level two and three in order to provide intensive support for non-fiction writing.

**Survey Monkey**

Surveys were completed to gain perspective into the students’ attitudes towards reading and their reading habits at home and school. (Figures 1 – 3)

The following is the list of statements the students were asked to respond to:

1. I enjoy listening to someone read aloud.
2. I like to talk about ideas and information after I have read something.
3. I enjoy reading at home.
4. I think non-fiction is easier to read than fiction.
5. It takes me a long time to read most things.
6. I read for enjoyment.
7. I am a good reader.
8. Reading is just something I do for school.
9. When I enjoy a particular book, I try to find more books by the same author.
10. Reading is boring.
11. Reading is important for subjects like science, writing, social studies, art, or math.
12. I read to learn about things that interest me.
13. I write about things that interest me.
14. Writing is important for subjects like science, social studies, art, or math.
15. I enjoy going to the library.
16. I feel that I am an effective writer.
17. I enjoy writing at home.
18. I enjoy writing at school.
19. It’s important to be a good writer.
20. I enjoy sharing my writing with others.
I enjoy going to the library.

I think non-fiction is easier to read than fiction.

Writing is important for subjects like science, social studies, art, or math.
Graphic Organizers
Graphic organizers were used as a way to measure the students’ ability to pull information from non-fiction resources. (Figures 4 -7)

Why graphic organizers?
“Finding better ways that are of interest to students with a focus on thinking and how that connects to how effectively students work with one another. More specifically it is about how we think inductively and deductively, why we need to reflect and organize our thoughts…we employ graphic organizers to invoke and encourage the process of organizing our thinking…” Dr. Barrie Bennet in Graphic Intelligence. (p.1).
(Figures 4 -7)

Why a Mind Map?
Dr. Barrie Bennet in Graphic Intelligence (p.320) writes: The uses of graphic representations like Mind Maps are far reaching. Mind Maps make learning information easier as they cut down on text by 90%. (Buzan & Israel, p.9). The information overload of our modern world makes these features quite appealing. Mind Maps can be simple, complex, used for children or adults, done alone or in groups. They can be created for personal, professional, academic, or business purposes. Bennet & Rolheiser (2001) note how the colour and images of Mind Maps seem to be more effective for memory than do other Advance Organizers. Higher level thinking skills and social skills can be integrated into learning situations while different learning styles are honoured. (McEwan & Myers, 2002, p. 33). This facet of Mind Mapping is particularly important as our society becomes increasingly diverse. Originally intended by Buzn for the memorization of lecture notes, graphic organizers are increasingly seen as effective in facilitating analysis, elaboration, and integration of subject matter content as well as being illustrative of concept relations. The biggest benefit for the learner is the enhancement of structural knowledge (Driscoll, 2005, p. 105).

Examples of Student Work

Figure 4
Technology in the Library

A variety of technology was utilized to engage the grade six class in non-fiction text. Subscription databases, such as *Grolier Online*, were taught explicitly to the students to promote non-fiction reading and research skills to be used at school and at home. Web 2.0 tools were also used as part of the library program for engagement as well as to enhance computer skills and usage. Students used *Fakebook* to create a character profile. They then engaged in online conversations to have a better understanding of the characters’ traits and to show what they have learned about them. Students were taught how to create an avatar on *Bitstrips* to complete a space exploration comic strip. Students used their avatar to take their readers on a trip through space to demonstrate their knowledge on the subject. Students used texts located in the non-fiction section of the library as well as online databases to do their research. (Appendix 1 -6)

Library Circulation

Each week students logged on a chart if they selected fiction or non-fiction reading to checkout from the library. Non-fiction book circulation actually declined throughout the process as demonstrated in the graph. We believe this was due to the books being put in the classroom by the teacher so students could use them during their literacy block. (Figure 8)
Findings

We found the following as a result of our inquiry:
- The students can cite more non-fiction texts than they could initially.
- Students can recognize that non-fiction texts are relevant to everyday life.
- Attitudes towards non-fiction writing are more positive.
- Most students initially preferred fiction writing.
- Students built research skills through using library resources such as online databases.
- Students were able to gather facts and incorporate them into realistic fiction (i.e. comic strips, opinion pieces, graphic organizers, etc.) and other text forms.

Teacher Reflections

- Teaching in the library works best when doing it collaboratively. With the TL and classroom teachers the library program becomes more enriched. Teacher collaboration helps to link the library program to classroom curriculum, student needs, and school wide goals.
- The inquiry question had to be modified as it was difficult to “measure” student engagement.
- This inquiry would have benefited from exploring the students’ knowledge about the library. For example, what books (fiction or non-fiction) are available to them and what are the loaning practices. Many students opted to read classroom novels or texts purchased by the family.
- Bitstrips would be best taught with small group instruction geared towards student computer literacy skills.
- Survey monkey may have not been the best tool to use as the cookies prevented students from answering question independently as the previous students answers were embedded already.
- Graphic organizers apply in every context of the curriculum, regardless of the subject. Students utilized their new learning of graphic organizers to structure and organize their own thinking outside of the project. It was proven that students used these previously taught concepts in other course works, such as title pages, etc.
- We realized the importance of explicit teaching of the concepts and to provide the opportunities to practice in order to teach students how to pull information from a text.
- Since the tasks were not text heavy we had better success with the students, especially the reluctant students.

Student Reflections

Student Reflections Regarding Non-Fiction: December 2011

1. What can you tell me about non-fiction writing?

“Non-fiction is helpful, like an encyclopedia. They have true facts, subtitles, and pictures. Tells you everything you need to know.”
Jaydin C. - Marker Student

“I is to tell information about real things, like soccer.”
Antonio - Marker Student

“Non-fiction writing is good for learning and education. It gives you true facts and is realistic.”
Dakota - Marker Student

“I find that I can learn a lot of things. True facts. You learn something new, something you can brag about.”
Jacob G - Marker Student

“It’s not as much of a visual appearance in your head. It’s getting the facts straight. Fiction creates a picture.”
Kareem - Marker Student

“Non-fiction is real writing. It has facts. It’s not fake. It can be about something that is fake, like the Loch Ness monster because it hasn’t been proven.”
Gage - Marker Student

2. Do you prefer to write fiction or non-fiction? Why?

“I like both. Fiction you can make it anything you want, but there is also non-fiction too. I wrote a story about a car that came to life, but it also had a 1969 Shelby which is real. Most of the time I like writing non-fiction.”
Jaydin C. - Marker Student

“I prefer fiction because non-fiction you have to go on the internet, fiction you can write about anything you want. Non-fiction doesn’t use imagination and fiction does.”
Antonio - Marker Student

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“I prefer to write fiction because it’s easier cause you can come up with ideas in your own head. It’s original. It’s something you can think of without researching.”
Dakota - Marker Student

“I prefer fiction because usually when I look up information it’s already there written down and I don’t learn from it. Fiction I can have fun and use my imagination. No one can prove it wrong or call it bad because it’s just what I think.”
Jacob G. - Marker Student

“I prefer fiction because it’s easier. It is more creative. It is more fun.”
Kareem - Marker Student

“Fiction because it is more fun. You can make up any topic. Non-fiction can be fun with research, but fiction is more fun. Nobody can say you’re wrong. It’s your writing.”
Gage - Marker Student

“I would like to write fiction. I read a lot of fiction books. I’m not really sure I just find a way how to make it easier.”
Andre - Marker Student

Student Reflections Regarding Non-Fiction: April 2012

“First I thought non-fiction reading and writing was hard because we read the article/story and it was hard for me to go back into the article/story and find the information about the stuff assigned. Now I think non-fiction reading and writing is understandable. Why, because I’ve done more non-fiction reading and writing work so I understand how to phrase everything. But writing is a little harder for me to explain. I think I’m improving.”
Antonio – Marker Student

“First I thought non-fiction was boring and took a long time to read because I didn’t like reading then and now I think it’s cool because now I know non-fiction is educational, tells you events that happened in real life and even more and I like reading more than I did when I was younger. “
Dakota – Marker Student

“First I thought that non-fiction was that we would never need it in our lives. It was just a waste of time. Fiction is all that I care about. I don’t care about non-fiction. I ask myself “Why do we need non-fiction? We already have fiction.”
Emily

“First I thought non-fiction writing was not good because you cannot express your ideas. I also thought that you could not paint a picture in your head with them. Now I think that non-fiction writing is okay because that are some ways you can say your feelings, for example, an opinion piece. There are also visual ways to show facts like a graphic organizer.”
Kareem – Marker Student

“First I thought there was no point of non-fiction writing and you could just get information without reading and it was a waste of time. Now I think non-fiction writing can give you a lot of fascinating information and help you learn. Also, non-fiction writing can help with school work. I now think non-fiction writing is helpful.”
Rebecca

Recommendations

- Students need to be taught how to pull information from a text.
- Opportunities need to be created to allow teachers collaborate and plan in order to share expertise.
- It is very important for the teachers to have an open mind and understand that dissonance is part of the process.
- Create opportunities (next steps) to have students recognize reading and writing in their own lives as opposed to just at school.
- Encourage use of non-fiction reading and writing in all grade levels including primary.

References

Me read? No Way? A practical guide to improving boy’s literacy skills 2005 Ministry of Education

Appendix 1: “Space Trip” by Jaydin – Marker Student

1. Let’s take a trip to space.
2. This is Earth, where you and I live.
3. This is Saturn, did you know it has 7 rings and 46 moons.
4. This is Jupiter, there has been a hurricane that has been raging for 300 years.
5. This is Venus, and it has no moons.
6. This is Neptune, and it’s freezing cold, it has 13 moons.
7. This is Uranus, did you know that it lays on its side?
8. This is Mars, and it’s known with a myth called marshins.
Appendix 2: “Space Exploration” by Antonio – Marker Student

Today were going to explore the galaxy!!

Right now were at Mercury. The planet closest to the sun.

Guess where we are now. Were above Venus!! It’s soo hot!!

Finally we’ve made it to Mars, Earth’s closest planet.

Now were above Jupiter. My favourite planet next to Earth.

Saturn. What a beautiful planet isn’t it. So many rings around it. This planet has the most fastest winds!!

Now last but not least Neptune. This is a ice covered planet. It is soo cold. Minus 218 degrees celuis.

You might think Uranus has nothing interesting about it, but it does. Scientists think that it had been tip over by something. That’s why it’s on its side.

Hope you have learned something about my comic.
Appendix 3: “Untitled” by Dakota – Marker Student

After researching I learned a lot about the planets!

Earth is the planet we live on. Earth has 1 moon. Earth is the fifth biggest planet. Earth is part of the solar system and circles around the sun every twenty three hours.

The sun is our light source. The sun is not a planet its actually a star! A star is something we cant survive on because its made out fire. The sun is part of the solar system.

This is Neptune completely made of water. Neptune is known to be the stormiest planet because of its really strong winds. Neptune is a part of the solar system being the fourth largest planet there. Neptune is the 8th planet from the sun.

Mars is the name of this planet. Mars is one of the smallest planets. Mars is part of the solar system. Its the fourth planet from the sun and the seventh largest planet in the solar system. There is a possibility there is life on mars.

This planet is Venus and its part of the solar system being the second closest planet to the sun. Besides from the moon, Venus is the brightest thing at night in space. Venus gets its name from a roman goddess. Venus is known to be called the sister of Earth because of there size.

Saturn is this planet’s name. Saturn is part of the solar system and the second largest in it as well as being sixth planet in the solar system. Like Jupiter it has rings around it. The rings are made of rocks and icy materials. Saturn is only these on are the lot easier to see unlike Jupiter.

This planet is Jupiter part of the solar system as well as the largest planet in the solar system. Jupiter is the fifth planet in the solar system. Jupiter is the fourth brightest thing in space. Jupiter has faint rings around itself.

That my information for you and look at the moon.
Appendix 4: “SPACE SYSTEMS PART 1” by Kareem – Marker Student

Hi I am here to talk to you about space!

Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun.

Mercury is the smallest planet in our solar system.

Venus is the hottest planet we know about.

This is a satellite.

Jupiter is the biggest planet.

Jupiter has a storm that's been raging since the 17th century.

Uranus is known to spin on its side.

Uranus has 21 icy moons.

Neptune is known for its many storms.

Saturn is 95 times bigger than Earth.
This is the Sun, it's brightest thing in the Solar System. It is made of hot plasma.

My Space Tour is over. I taught you many things but I could not done it with the Astronauts who found all these facts. That is how space travel affected us. It increased our learning. So we know a lot more when we grow up. Now we could have more jobs about space because we know more.
Appendix 5: “To be continued...” by Andre – Marker Student

1. **Character A**: Did you know that the moon is the second brightest planet.
   **Character B**: No, I did not know.

2. **Character A**: Did you know that the sun is the first biggest planet in the earth.
   **Character B**: And that the sun is the first brightest planet.

3. **Character A**: The earth travels around the sun.
   **Character B**: Cool.

4. **Character A**: The moon travels around the earth.
   **Character B**: Really.
I need to get off this moon because there's no oxygen.

there might be life on mars.

trees help people breath on earth that's why we live.

that's called a half moon.
Appendix 6: “Space” by Gage – Marker Student

ever wonder what's up there

well know we're going to find out
Lakeshore Discovery School

Collaborative Inquiry Team: Michelle Lachine, Teacher-Librarian; Trevor Stanley, Grade 5 Teacher; Tracey Oliver, Instructional Coach

Abstract:
Digital readers (for example, the Kindle from Amazon) are a tool for literacy instruction in the classroom. Digital readers make books more accessible to all students and allow for better understanding of the text through the use of the text to speech feature and the built-in dictionary. Using digital readers in literature circles, during independent reading and for class novel studies will improve student engagement and achievement.

Inquiry Question: How will digital readers enrich the Grade 5 reading program to impact overall student learning about and development in reading?

Setting the Stage

Vision:
“Tomorrow’s citizens face greater reading demands than ever before.” (Tovani, 2000, p.10). By using one of this generation’s familiar tools -- the digital reader -- we hope to reach even the most reluctant readers. “All students are more likely to be engaged in the learning, rise to the challenge and have a sense of self confidence as they approach the task if they feel that they have a chance to succeed” (Gregory & Chapman, 2002, p.5). Due to the interactive and familiar nature of the device, we believe that student success and engagement will increase. As a result, we believe that more students will achieve higher levels of comprehension and demonstrate better decoding skills on a consistent basis.

Theory of Action:
If we use digital readers during literature circles and novel studies, students will be able to respond to text on a deeper level. Student responses include answering questions and choosing specific tasks to be completed during each cycle. We hypothesize that student responses will be more complete and insightful with direct evidence. As a result student comprehension of the text will increase.

Purpose for Study:
Students are inundated with a variety of texts in school and in life. “The written word is no longer restricted to paper form. Children of all ages are being bombarded with information from the Internet and other electronic forms of print. The “E” generation needs to comprehend more than ever before.” (Tovani, 2000, p.10). Understanding these texts quickly and completely is a necessary life skill. As teachers, it is important to recognize this reality and to help students develop this capability through as many means as possible including technology. Therefore, the purpose of this inquiry is to explore the impact of digital readers on achievement and engagement in reading for a class of grade 5 students.

Justification for the Study

With easy access to “bite size” pieces of information delivered instantly, today’s students’ stamina as readers has diminished. Students are increasingly turning from books in printed form for entertainment or information to electronic sources. This is a 21st century reality. The Ontario School Library Association recognizes that school environments and students abilities are changing. “Students appear
to have natural abilities to use emerging technology. But the reality is, while students easily grasp the entertainment and communication value of the devices they use, they need to be taught how these tools can be used in learning and critical thought.” (OSLA, 2010, p. 7).

This change in habits and abilities appears to have had a profound impact on reading in the classroom. Traditional literature requires more than a cursory glance. It is necessary for a student to be an active participant in the text in order to understand what they are reading and to show their learning in their assignments. Leveraging student familiarity with electronic devices and utilizing them as a way to encourage in-depth reading is a logical strategy. “Adjusting the nature of instruction to include strategies that make learning easier for children is appropriate for all learners. It is essential for those who are experiencing difficulty.” (Strickland, Ganske, & Monroe, 2002, p. 47). The use of technology increases student engagement in many ways. The digital reader will allow students to easily access information that will help them with decoding and understanding words as well as with their comprehension of the text.

For this inquiry, we believe that ease of use and student familiarity with technology is a key factor. The grade 5 students in this study were struggling to achieve in reading. As early as September, a key barrier to success was emerging: students had a highly passive approach to their learning in general and to their language learning most specifically. Although there were anchor charts and other supports in the classroom to help with both decoding and comprehension, students were reluctant to utilize them, preferring instead to ask the teacher for help or, in many cases, to simply sit at their desks unsure of how to proceed. Students appeared either unable or unwilling to implement strategies that would improve the quality of their reading responses. With this in mind, we wanted to see if leveraging students’ predisposition to electronic devices would help. Would the built in functions that a digital reader possessed -- such as the dictionary and the search tools -- be intriguing and convenient enough to overcome student apathy and lead to better quality work?

Existing research seems to support the idea that utilizing electronic devices might have the desired impact. “Most students already have some experience with personal computers and electronic games before they reach the junior grades...The school plays an important role in providing equitable access to the tools, information and new forms of learning on which students will increasingly rely as they...plan for their future beyond school.” (Literacy for Learning, p.24). Students at Lakeshore Discovery School are no exception. Most, if not all, students have their own iPod Touch, iPad or other similar device. The school is also fortunate to have many technology options available to students. In addition to digital readers there are approximately 100 laptops, iPads and SMART boards in most classrooms. Teachers utilize technology in their lessons in recognition of the role it plays in students’ lives and of the priority placed on the integration of technology in the classroom found in the research based strategies that are the foundation of our Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement.

By introducing students to great literature and by allowing students to use digital readers we hoped students would be more motivated to complete their reading and the literacy tasks assigned. “In an age when many teacher-librarians are not sure about the continued relevance of their promotion of reading and love of books, e-books and digital textbooks may represent a fresh way to continue advocacy for the importance of reading ... as well as for the teacher-librarian’s crucial leadership role in technology integration” (Mardis &Everhart, 2011, p.8).
Description of Procedures and Implementation:
Our team designed three separate reading projects for the students in grade 5:
1 – Literature Circle (grouped by reading interest/book choice)
2 – Literature Circle (grouped by ability and compatibility)
3 – Novel Study (Tuck Everlasting)
Approximately half the students used traditional printed texts. The other half of the students used digital readers. All completed the same type of work.

1 – Literature Circle 1 (see appendix for complete documents)

a) Students were presented many novels from which to choose. We grouped students based on their selections.

b) We designed learning goals and success criteria for each cycle that progressively built on reading skills (summarizing, inferring, point of view).

c) We created rubrics to match the learning goals and success criteria, and to guide student work.

d) We designed differentiated tasks for each of the learning goals and success criteria.

e) We introduced the tasks with examples/exemplars for each.

f) We also assigned students to ask a thinking question using the Q-chart and answer it using the AEO (Answer, Evidence, Own Ideas) strategy. Students have had a lot of practice answering questions using the AEO format.

g) Students were also introduced to conferencing. We modelled a conference before students were asked to participate in one. We also set up expectations for conferencing. At the end of each cycle, literature circle groups met with a teacher (facilitator) and discussed their novel using their Q-chart question as a conversation starter.

h) Student groups were assigned print copies or digital readers based on the text they had chosen as only some novels were available to the class in digital form. Students had no knowledge of which texts were in which form prior to making their selections.

2 – Literature Circle 2 (see appendix for complete documents)

a) Students were assigned groups based on ability and compatibility. Each group was then asked to choose a book from a list provided. We included the use of audio books for some of our groups. Again, students were not aware if a book was available on the Kindle.

b) All expectations were the same (Q-chart question and AEO response, one task from a list, participation in a conference). Students could not choose the same task as in the first literature circle.

c) Print based books and digital readers were assigned the same fashion as above.

3 – Novel Study (see appendix for complete documents)

a) We designed learning goals and success criteria for each of the 5 tasks for the 5 cycles.

b) Students were put in 2 groups (strong and struggling). The struggling students were assigned digital readers for the first half of the book and the stronger students were given traditional books. Our rationale for this was to ensure that practice with completing similar tasks would not impact our results. Half way through, these groups switched (digital readers traded for traditional books).

c) The teacher read each chapter and a class discussion followed focusing on key concepts and events after each chapter. Students were also asked to complete a short summary on a timeline, including a picture and words, to refer back to during the rest of the novel study.
d) Students were given 2 short assignments after each cycle ~ ask and answer higher-level thinking questions using the Q-Chart and a task assigned by the teacher. Each task required students to look back in the novel for evidence so this may have been quicker for those using digital readers.

Findings
After the 2011-2012 period of inquiry, analysis of the quantitative data shows that grades increased somewhat for students who used the digital readers as compared to students who read the printed literature. In particular, struggling students (level 1 & 2 students) were able to benefit most significantly, receiving a full grade level higher on multiple assignments.

Qualitative data is discussed in the section on student and teacher reflections.

**Literature Circle - Reading Response (AEO) Grades**

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These results were not as definitive as those seen during the previous school year. Similar action research was conducted during the 2010-2011 school year with a grade 5 class (Mr. Stanley as teacher). However, the composition of this class was significantly different. While students began the year at a higher level academically, there were overall issues with behaviour that often interfered with learning. The digital reader appeared to focus these students with behaviour issues (many of whom were boys). Perceptual data indicated that the built-in tools appealed greatly to these students, helping them to focus, to complete their work and understand what they were reading much faster. Student performance showed a full grade level improvement overall more for the digital reader group as opposed to the traditional paper based book readers.

Teacher Reflections:
When planning and developing our literature circle projects, a number of factors influenced change. First, a number of students were unable to keep up with their reading during the first round and so the grades do not accurately reflect their understanding and interpretation of the books they read. Second, the motivation of a number of students to complete work on time and to submit their best work was a factor. In response to this, our research team decided to introduce audio books so that a fairly large group of students (13 out of 24 total in the class) could complete their reading and have time to complete assigned tasks. Because of this, not all students were able to use a Kindle for one round and a paper book for another.

We have chosen to look at the results of some marker students who used both a Kindle and a traditional book. We chose to look at the results of 6 students in particular during the literature circle portion of our study. The students chosen used a Kindle once and read a traditional book once. Each student has shown a number of areas of need throughout the year as well. For each student, grades were higher when using a Kindle. For 5 of the 6 students, grades went up at least one grade level for at least 2 assignments.
For example, for the first literature circle with a book one student achieved levels R, R, 2 and 2 on AEO responses yet with the Kindle, this same student achieved levels 2, 2, 3 and 3 for her AEO responses. Another example of improvement happened with the AEO responses during the novel study. Several students improved the quality of their responses with the use of the Kindles. Specifically, one struggling student went up a full level on both AEO responses with the assistance of a Kindle.

During independent work time when students need to refer back in a book for evidence or other required details, students are much more efficient and positive when using a Kindle. They are able to use the search function to quickly find what they are looking for and more, and so are able to complete their work in a shorter amount of time and include more valid details. The students who were using a traditional book often complained about how long it was taking to find what they were looking for. They also frequently asked to use a Kindle to make the work easier.

Student Reflections:
Based on the information we collected from students through the use of a post-survey, students had mostly positive things to say about their experience using the Kindles. Only 17% of the students had their own eReaders at the beginning of our project but by the end 65% had either an eReader or an eReader app on another device.

Students seemed most impressed with the functions available on the Kindle. We noted that they liked the search function and the dictionary function. They also liked using the buttons and keyboard. They did, however, struggle with finding their spot at times. Students also wished for colour and touch screens, both of which are available in a newer (and more expensive) version of the Kindle or other eReaders.

Interestingly, 56.5% of students would prefer to use a traditional book for future novel studies or literature circles. After reading all of the positive things students had to say about using the Kindles, it is hard to interpret why more preferred to use a traditional book over an eReader in the future.

Conclusions and Future Directions:
While using digital readers in the classroom has many compelling benefits, it is not a panacea. As with all technology in the classroom, there are pros and cons: though many students are savvy users of technology at home, they may not take advantage of the features available for academic benefit without the intrinsic motivation to succeed. This was often the case in our study. A handful of students in the class were already strong readers and were very comfortable with the traditional paper book. A larger segment of the class was made up of struggling readers. Only a handful of this group was motivated to use the digital reader truly as an assistive device and saw an increase in their grades. The remainder of this struggling reader group seemed to continue on status quo, not too concerned with improving their performance, but rather more concerned with completing their assignments as quickly as possible.

Our research team sees a number of additional uses for the digital readers and digital reader technology at Lakeshore Discovery.

- assistive technology for students with IEPs
- small group guided reading
- student use in library at recess
- after-school reading clubs
- iPad app (same books available for download as on Kindle)
- PC app (same books available for download, books can be projected on projector)
References


Blackline Masters

Task #1

Due Date: Monday, January 30

Post Card
- Choose a character from the novel
- Your character will send a postcard to another character from the book.
- Be sure to include a picture that represents the setting on one side.
- Be sure to include something about a main event in your message.
- Be sure to address the postcard.

Book Cover
- Create a new, full colour cover for your novel.
- Include the title, author’s name, and illustrator’s name (you).
- Be sure the illustration shows an important event from the story.
- Write a summary of the book (without giving away the ending) for the back of the cover.

Timeline
- Create a timeline of important events from your novel.
- The events should be listed in the order they happen in the book.
- Be sure to include a brief description for each event (1-2 sentences).
- Choose an interesting way to present your timeline (for example, storyboard, fold-over, river).
- Try to relate it to your novel.

Email a friend
- Write an email dialogue between you and a friend about the book you are reading.
- You will write an email to tell your friend about the book.
- Then, write a response from your friend asking a few questions.
- Finally, you will write an email back answering your friend’s questions.
- Be sure to use proper English (no slang).

Newspaper Article
- Write a newspaper article that includes an interview with the author.
- Be creative and choose a topic to conduct your pretend interview about.
- Remember: a newspaper article gives the important information at the beginning and details later.

Learning Goal:
We will demonstrate our understanding of texts we read by completing a piece of writing.

Task #2

Due Date: Tuesday, February 7th

Tent Pole
- Design a tent pole for one of the main characters in your story.
- Choose 9 or objects that are important to this character.
- Draw your tent pole with the objects stacked on one another and write the description beside each object.
- Use the worksheet for planning.

Diary
- You will write 3 journal entries from the perspective of a character you choose in your book.
- Each entry should be half of a page (2-3 writing lines).
- Be sure to express your feelings, record events and memories, share your secrets, and reflect on lessons you have learned as the character.

Time Capsule
- Think of objects that a character in your book would want to put in a time capsule.
- List the objects along with a description of why you chose them.
- Collect the objects (or draw them) and put them in a time capsule that you create.
- Use the worksheet for planning.

3 Wishes
- Think about what 3 wishes a character of your choice would ask for.
- Write them down on the worksheet.
- Choose the most important wish and complete the task on the worksheet.

Character Sketch
- Complete a character sketch like the ones we did in class.
- Include physical characteristics and character traits.
- Support your information and observations with evidence from the text (page/location number or a part).

Learning Goal:
We will infer to complete a piece of writing about a character.
Task #3

Due Date: Tuesday, February 21st

Comic Strip
- Create an 8-panel comic strip that changes an important scene in the book you are reading.
- Make your comic from the point of view of the author.
- Include expression and body language to help convey feelings.
- Be neat, add colour, and include a lot of detail.
- There should be at least 1 word bubble per frame.

Book Review
- You need to review your book and decide whether you would recommend it to other readers or not.
- Use the worksheet to guide you in your review.

Journal Entries
- Write 3 or more journal entries from the perspective of one of the main characters in your story.
- Use these guiding questions to help you. What are some major conflicts, dilemmas, or problems this character faced? What might have to be done to resolve these? What is the character feeling? Be creative by putting yourself in the character's shoes.
- Each entry should be at least half a page, skipping lines.

Decisions
- Identify a big decision a character has to make and create a pro and con list using a T-chart.
- Include at least 5 points on each side of your chart.

Explain what decision you think the character should make and explain why.

Tuck Everlasting – Cycles

Cycle 1: Prologue & Chapters 1-6
Due Date: 
At the end of this cycle, you will need to have completed the following.
- One activity assigned by the teacher
- Questions (using QR Chart) and answers
- A timeline entry for each chapter in this cycle.
All activities must be in your folder in your book box to be marked.

Cycle 2: Chapters 6-10
Due Date: 
At the end of this cycle, you will need to have completed the following.
- One activity assigned by the teacher
- Questions (using QR Chart) and answers
- A timeline entry for each chapter in this cycle.
All activities must be in your yellow folder in your book box to be marked.

Cycle 3: Chapters 11-15
Due Date: 
At the end of this cycle, you will need to have completed the following.
- One activity assigned by the teacher
- Questions (using QR Chart) and answers
- A timeline entry for each chapter in this cycle.
All activities must be in your yellow folder in your book box to be marked.

Cycle 4: Chapters 16-20
Due Date: 
At the end of this cycle, you will need to have completed the following.
- One activity assigned by the teacher
- Questions (using QR Chart) and answers
- A timeline entry for each chapter in this cycle.
All activities must be in your yellow folder in your book box to be marked.

Cycle 5: Chapters 21-25 & Epilogue
Due Date: 
At the end of this cycle, you will need to have completed the following.
- One activity assigned by the teacher
- Questions (using QR Chart) and answers
- A timeline entry for each chapter in this cycle.
All activities must be in your yellow folder in your book box to be marked.

Literature Circle Rubric – Cycle 3 Task

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<td>Synthesis</td>
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Extended Story
- Choose one important event in your story.
- Decide whose perspective this event is being told from (the author, one of the characters...).
- Retell this event from another character's perspective.
- Should be at least a page, skipping lines.

Learning Goal: We will identify the point of view to complete a piece of writing from the perspective of a character or the author.

Literature Circle Discussion Checklist

Date: ______

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Novel Study Learning Goals/Success Criteria

Cycle 1 Task

Describe a scene using a quote from the story using relevant sensory details or embed a quote. Write your quote and an explanation of the quote in your own words.

Learning Goal:
- Based on descriptive language/extraordinary words/vocabulary

Success Criteria:
- Explain the quote—Analyze the story and explain how the description of the quote contributes to the story.
- Include a quote of a descriptive scene.
- Your plot should show action and match your quote.

Cycle 2 Task

Write a quote using words from the story, write a definition for each, and use the thesaurus to find an appropriate synonym.

Learning Goal:
- Based on sensory words, matching a text

Success Criteria:
- Find at least 10 extraordinary or relevant words.
- Define the words using a dictionary, write the definition in your own words.
- Write a synonym for each word using the thesaurus.
- The chosen words should relate to or enhance meaning of the story.

Cycle 3 Task

Identify a character decision a character needs to make. Create a pro and con list for this decision with at least 5 Pros and 5 Cons.

Learning Goal:
- Related to perspective, analyzing the text

Success Criteria:
- Identify an important decision related to the plot.
- Include detailed pros and cons that relate to your decision.
- Include at least 5 pros and 5 cons.
- Should be neat and organized.

Q-Chart

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</table>

Learning Goal (1.2) – Cycle 1

We will demonstrate our understanding of textual analysis by completing a piece of writing.

Success Criteria:
- I select important events from the story.
- I include supporting evidence.
- I organize my ideas using specific formats.
- I use conventions from the editing chart.

Literature Circle Roles (Questions, Answers, AEO, Discussion)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Level 0 (Basic)</th>
<th>Level 1 (Comprehension)</th>
<th>Level 2 (Critical)</th>
<th>Level 3 (Advanced)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writer</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listener</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Answerer</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LaSalle, Kingsville, Amherstburg and Northwood Public Schools

Inquiry Team: Martha Martin, Teacher Librarian; Liz Golden, Teacher Librarian; Adrienne Reaume, Teacher Librarian; Bernadette Morencie, Grade 8 homeroom; Tammy Bachmeier, Grade 7 homeroom; Erin Holt, Intermediate SERR; Laura Braithwaite, Learning Support Teacher.

Abstract

Teacher-librarians and intermediate teachers from four schools, LaSalle Public, Amherstburg Public, Northwood Public and Kingsville Public felt their students were disengaged in their literature studies, and were not creating high level responses. The team hypothesized that using wikis and web 2.0 applications, explicit teaching, and high quality, appealing texts in the model of literature circles would improve both the quality of the students’ answers, and their reading engagement. The five test classes were very different in terms of clientele, interests, and experience with both wikis and literature circles. Each group used the same wiki and literature circle formats, but depending on student ability and interest, book choices and quantity of work differed. Results showed clearly that using the wiki helped many students complete their work more successfully. The web applications increased the enthusiasm for the project in all groups. Explicit teaching of higher level responses resulted in varying degrees of improvement depending on test groups. Overwhelmingly, being able to choose their text from a collection of high interest, high quality newer fiction was the key component in raising reading engagement.

Inquiry Question: Do the use of wikis, web 2.0 applications, high interest texts, and explicit teaching increase student engagement and develop higher level responses within the literature circle model?

Setting the Stage

The purpose of this study was threefold. First, the team wanted to see whether or not the inclusion of certain technology tools (web 2.0 applications and a collaborative workspace in the form of a wiki) would increase the overall enthusiasm for the project in our students, their reading engagement, and the general quality of their work. Second, the team hoped that by providing a choice of current, high interest, high quality texts that were reflective of the students’ interests, reading engagement would visibly improve. Lastly, the team wanted to see whether explicit teaching of high level reading response elements would result in better student literature reflections.

As experienced teachers and teacher-librarians, our team members are always looking for better methods to engage students in their learning. With the launch of the Together for Learning document (OSLA, 2010) the TLs in our group felt encouraged to seek more ways to integrate technology while collaborating with colleagues. Some of us had already begun using the collaborative workspaces known as wikis to actively integrate the technology outside students’ school lives with their work in the classroom. We found wikis to be quite successful, not surprising given what we know about today’s learner:

“For those younger than 25 a technologically rich environment is a natural part of everyday life. The interactive and social nature of digital technologies is woven seamlessly into their lives” (OSLA, 2010, p.4)
When this project was announced, we felt it was an opportunity to quantitatively study the benefits of using wikis for literature circles in a collaborative teaching environment. The nature of the project being spread out over four schools and five classrooms allowed us to achieve collaboration even when our particular situations didn’t always provide for a “teacher-and-teacher-librarian pairing” within a building. Research shows “the transformative power that a teacher-librarian has when collaborating with content teachers to build exciting learning experiences is a major key to success in affecting achievement” (Loertscher 2006). We felt that success in our project would show the value of a teacher-librarian working collaboratively with a classroom teacher, even when physical partnership was not possible.

We also decided to add social media applications to see if they would further enrich the literature circle experience. It only made sense, given what research has shown:

“Educators of today understand that when students are provided with rich learning experiences and opportunity to explore areas of interest they learn better. While students are readily drawn to social media, they do not necessarily use them critically to gain deeper understanding. The Learning Commons can build on the entertainment value that students find in social media to further learning opportunities for critical and creative thought. Using the tools available in the communication world outside of school is one way to bridge the current learning gap experienced by students today.” (OSLA, 2010)

Our focus on the need for explicitly teaching the components of a good reflection came out of a realization that the quality of work our students were completing was still not adequate for today’s expectations. Many of us have recently participated in workshops on Visible Learning and the need for explicit teaching. We believed that by adding the explicit teaching component to the literature circle process, we should see an improvement in reading reflections regardless of socio-economic background, technological familiarity, reading ability, etc.

**Descriptions of Procedures and Implementation**

The study began with the team discussing the success criteria for a high level reflection response. A common rubric was then created that would be used throughout the project. The team also decided on a common reading interest survey that would be given in order to inform book selection options. An online survey was created that would gauge students’ feelings about literature circles, technology, and reading engagement prior to beginning.

In order to assess the students’ baseline understanding, each class listened to a read-aloud on a social justice theme. These varied according to the school library’s collection and were chosen by the teacher-librarians (see Appendix). Students were asked to “complete a reflection” as an assessment for learning. Four of the five classes also completed the “Pre Lit Circle Survey” and the reading interest surveys. (The SERR class had already started the project before the survey was created.) Taking their various results, the teachers then explicitly taught the AEOC or APE strategy, using modelling, anchor charts, and “Bump It Up Walls.”

The wikis were created in a uniform fashion using PBWorks (www.pbworks.com), most with the identical content and all with the same expectations for behavior. One group used a modified version to accommodate their students’ special learning needs. The teacher-librarians were responsible for leading
the wiki creation, but classroom teachers worked with them. The teaching of the technology components was usually done by the TLs with teachers continuing after the initial lessons. Regardless of class or school, students were expected to create a reflection using the AEOC or APE format, respond to other students’ reflections on the wiki, and respond to the teacher(s)’ comments. Depending on the students’ abilities, the length of the reflections and the amount and choice of web 2.0 application varied.

When the literature circles were finished, students revisited the survey from the beginning of the project and completed it again, from a “Post Lit Circle” point of view. Exit cards were used to determine individual feelings of students towards the experience, and some students also discussed their experiences with their peers on their wiki. Anecdotal comments and observations by both teachers and teacher-librarians were gathered, as well as examples from student work on the wiki (particularly reflections over a period of time.) These reflections over the course of the literature circle were compared with the initial “baseline” reflection. Teachers were able to quantitatively evaluate the level of improvement in their students’ work in this way.

**Overall Findings**

Using the wiki as a tool for literature circles was overwhelming successful. Students in all test groups found it made the work more enjoyable for them to complete than writing everything by hand, and easier to organize. They liked how they could interact with their own and other group members through the “comment” feature. They also enjoyed being able to have their work at their fingertips at home and at school, thanks to working in the “cloud.” The team appreciated the way the wiki made all the work visible to each of the shareholders (including teacher comments, suggestions for next steps, and examples of strong and weak reflections.) This provided great opportunities for descriptive feedback and further teaching, without making anyone feel particularly centred out.

The introduction of the web 2.0 applications was also a huge success. Students enjoyed working together to figure out the ways they could use some of the web apps, and loved that they had choice in what they could select to use. One school requested they be allowed to do two application projects for each cycle of the project, rather than the reflections!

The students in all five test groups identified that having some say in their choice of book was the number one thing that made novel studies enjoyable for them. The second most important thing to them, regardless of class, was that the books were exciting and interesting. This was a further vote for literature circles as a best practice for teaching novel studies. It also reinforced the necessity for teachers and teacher-librarians to work together to provide better and more exciting text choices geared to the individual interests of students. That collaboration is vital if we want to keep our students improving in critical literacy and reading comprehension (not to mention just reading, period!)

The explicit teaching element of this collaborative inquiry project was the only aspect that was not a consistent success. While we did see improvement overall, we didn’t find a lot of growth in our level 1 and level 4 students. Many of our students in levels 2 and 3 wrote more as the circles progressed, and many of them wrote much better reflections – but not all of them. Some also improved by the middle of the project, but “faded” as the project continued, and couldn’t sustain the high quality by the last cycle or two.

An unexpected finding was that colleagues in each of our schools began to ask for information about the project from the team. The word was out that students were enjoying what they were doing, and
that it was showing good results. The Teacher-Librarians were all approached by other colleagues to help them create their own versions of the project.

**Recommendations:**

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that using collaborative workspaces (i.e. wiki) for literature circle work will increase student interest, productivity and enjoyment. The opportunities for descriptive feedback are plentiful, and the technology piece is not overwhelming for students and teachers to learn. We recommend that collaborative workspaces are promoted for this use, perhaps through the new Sharepoint Portal, and that Teacher-Librarians be made aware of the project’s model.

The use of web 2.0 applications increased student engagement, collaboration between students, and offered many creative ways to demonstrate critical literacy. Students enjoyed figuring out the web apps on their own, and teachers didn’t need to be experts to use these applications because of this. We recommend that the collection of student-friendly web apps be shared with colleagues, especially Teacher-Librarians, either through our board’s Teacher-Librarian Conference or on a special page in the new Sharepoint Portal. Presently these web apps are being collected through the CIESC conference on a wiki page, and in various other locations. A brief description of each of these web apps and how they can be used would be very valuable to all teaching staff in the board, but would be especially appropriate for TLs looking to expand the technology knowledge of their colleagues through a Learning Commons approach.

The overwhelming popularity and enthusiasm for the texts chosen for this project’s literature circles speaks to the need for updating novel selections in our schools. Whether as literature circle materials, or whole class novels, our students deserve the best books. This project shows clearly that choice is of huge importance to students, so literature circles should be promoted more than they are. Many teachers, and quite a few teacher-librarians, do not know about the GECDSB’s Just Read Project. There are many teachers that continue to use older titles simply because they exist in the school collection, or because the teacher has used it for the last twenty-five years. Often these books are not appropriate for the grade with which they are being used. We respectfully recommend that some older titles currently being used in some classes be actively discouraged, and that level-appropriate literature be encouraged. We would like to see the Just Read Project actively promoted, updated to reflect Learning Goals, Success Criteria and Descriptive Feedback, and supplied with more new titles that have been kid-tested and teacher-approved.

Explicit teaching should always yield a positive result, based on current research. Although we did not get consistent results in all of our class groups, we did see overall improvement across the board. We recommend continuing to encourage teachers to use explicit teaching (modelling, anchor charts, Bump It Up Walls) to refine student work. Hopefully our models will make this easier for our colleagues doing literature circles.

**Conclusion:**

Today’s student learners

“are very social and depend heavily on technology to keep in constant touch with one another. They use social media routinely…They embrace new technologies readily and transfer their skill with one technology to each new technology. They are comfortable learning informally with their peers as the technology brings them together socially…” (OSLA, 2010)
This project sought to address what today’s learners need in order to be engaged and challenged. It demonstrated that the dynamic team of TL and teacher, working together, can accomplish incredibly successful learning experiences for our students, regardless of socio-economic background, location, and previous knowledge. It combined all the elements of the vision described for a Learning Commons in Together for Learning (OSLA, 2010). Most importantly, it was fun…and it worked!

References


APPENDIX A

Background and Teacher Reflections on Various Test Groups:

Northwood Gr. 8:
- 26 grade 8 students intended for the initial wiki literature circle
- during the course of the novel study, 4 students either moved or were on vacation
- the school has a significant ELL population and within the class, English was not the first language of 19 of the students
- all students had access to a computer at home, and had myriad opportunities in class to complete their work as well
- this is a model grade 8 classroom that is the first to embrace new initiatives and technology
- students were provided a reading survey and, based on the results and a class vote, had the choice of two versions of Macbeth
- the class was divided into 4 groups
- groups 1-3 had the No Fear version of the graphic novel, Macbeth. The fourth group had the Manga version
- students had numerous literacy classes with laptops so they could work on their reflections
- during literature reading times, there were three teachers present to facilitate discussion
- students appreciated the graphic novel, especially with a text as challenging as Macbeth as they could use the pictures as clues for comprehension
- overall, the No Fear version was preferred due to its ease of use, character glossary and simpler language
- during each class, students and the teachers discussed the characteristics that led to Macbeth's downfall
- students completed reflections for each Act on their wiki page
- they had the opportunity to discuss the text with classmates and think critically
- every student enjoyed using the computer to complete their work
- almost two thirds enjoyed working with other students
- the final assignment involved creating an obituary for Macbeth or any deceased character from the text
- since the completion of this literature study, other intermediate teachers and students have asked the teacher librarian if they can be a part of the wiki too, and study Macbeth.

Amherstburg Public Intermediate SERR
- students in Grades 6 - 8
- students range from DD to LD
- many reluctant readers
- excited that they were reading what everyone else was
- liked the wiki as it made it so they didn't lose things
- liked to personalize it and liked the fast feedback
- used APE and structured the rubric around it
- expected to write one good paragraph
- many oral connections and discussions
- did a variety of other activites - fakebook, wordle, newspaper article, voki and explored songs and why they went with the book
- student ORAL responses improved - written responses didn't improve much
LaSalle Public School Grade 8

- This is a class of 26 students (14 boys and 12 girls) who completed their Literature Circle work on the wiki. About half of the students had experience using a wiki before.
- The class has many reluctant readers. Many students insist they do not like to read yet when they do read they can make great connections and inferences about what they have read. It is difficult to get these students to choose books to read during independent reading time.
- This group of students takes a long time to finish a book unless given a timeline. The project gave them a deadline to finish their reading in a timely manner.
- The students really wanted to have choice in what they were reading. This was very important to them. At the end of Literature Circles, many students read the books of others because they had heard great things from their friends and they really wanted to read them.
- Many of the book choices had other books in the series. A lot of students went on to read the other books from their series.
- During class discussions, the groups were excited to talk about their books.
- The wiki did not have an impact on the results of all the students. The level 3 and 4 students continued to do well. Some of the level 2 students were able to use the feedback and improve their answers over time. The level 1 students did not show a lot of growth in their reflections despite getting feedback and seeing the reflections of others.
- When students worked on the wiki they displayed on task behaviour that showed they were enjoying the assignments. They worked for extended periods of time. They also like showing others what they were doing and helping others learn how to use the new programs and apps they had just learned. They liked the Web 2.0 apps they were given as options for assignment completion.
- The students liked completing the work on the wiki because they could type it. They also used the process to ask questions and respond to group members. This was beneficial especially for the students who were perhaps struggling to understand their book. Seeing someone else's comments or reflection helped their understanding.

LaSalle Public School Grade 7

- This class was our control – a class of generally well-behaved students, many of whom say they like reading, and a few non-readers. About half of them had used a wiki before, though not for lit circles. About a third of them had done some form of lit circle before.
- The students were very often fully engaged in the process of working on the wikis. Students who didn't often enjoy written work, or stay focused on that written work for extended periods of time, were able to work in class on the wiki for 100 min. lit block periods. Plus a 50 min. computer period that same week. They were also keeping up with what wasn't done at home!
- Students were willing to share their work in a moderation process, commenting on and helping others achieve the standard response for the AEOC format, and helping each other with quotes and understanding the book.
- They were so excited with their book choices. At the end of the 5th cycle, they immediately went and got the next book in the series OR swapped books with another group, so they could read that “awesome book.”
- They were so engaged that we began a second set of lit circles on the wiki in pairs.
- Students’ marks improved. Students who, when required to write out their work, were usually level 2s jumped up to 3s and sometimes 4’s. One of my students was a shining star in this
respect. He was enthusiastic because he got the book he wanted, and he was eager to complete the work. His confidence improved greatly. He really enjoyed the project.

- Generally the students’ organization improved. Students who were very frequently late with work had it done on time or at least earlier than they usually do. Nothing was lost. It was all on the computer.
- Having the peer and teacher feedback written on their work, and with 5 cycles total to keep on trying for better, students were able to use this explicit teaching and feedback to bump up their marks each week (or at least try to!)  
- All of my students had the technology at home to complete work if not done in class.
- We noted full interest of the students and engagement in their work/activities when discussing their "great/awesome" book.
- My group consisted of 22 students with 5 LST students in this group. One of the LST kids did really well for 4 cycles before she fizzled on the last one. Another one enjoyed working with a group of students, loved his book and kept up for the most part.
- We had to scribe for a couple of the students as they got behind because of typing issues.
- There were some kids who loved their book but voted no on the wiki and lit circles because of the work they had to do. They verbalized they just wanted to read a book of their choice with their friends.

**Kingsville Public School Grade 7/8**

- This is a challenging group due both to the wide range of abilities and behaviours.
- Some of the students had prior knowledge of traditional literature circles.
- The students were not familiar with wikis. They received a detailed outline how to log on and how to upload the Web 2.0 activities onto the wiki.
- The classroom teacher and teacher librarian were one in the same.
- A SMART Notebook was used to introduce the students to the various book covers and synopsis. The selections included some graphic novels.
- The Instructional Coach for KPS, Pam Badiuk, read several of the selections and then participated on the wiki to help further engage the students.
- In traditional pencil and paper activities, few students in this class bother to take the time to edit their work. Their daily language work and creative writing projects reflect this reluctance to follow through the entire writing and editing process. However, more students did edit their reflections because they found it was easier and quicker to do this on the computer.
- Since all students had computers at home, they did not have to complete work on the school laptops. Many students read and discussed their books at school and wrote their cycle reflections at home. Many students came to the library during the first nutritional break to read and talk about their books and to work on the wiki.
- Most students found the writing of the first cycle reflection the hardest. They were able to express their ideas but often did not include proof from the text to support their thoughts. At the beginning of each cycle, I used explicit teaching to show them how to write a proper reflection that reflected AEO and C.
- Students were not familiar with any of the Web 2.0 activities. Some students were reluctant to experiment and always wanted extra step-by-step help and/or more detailed instructions. However, this allowed my computer literate students the opportunity to shine. Most of the Web 2.0 activities were done during class time.
- There was a lot of buzz among the students about our classroom wiki. This gave me a PLC opportunity as the TL to introduce wikis to the other intermediate teachers. Both of the other intermediate classrooms are now doing their literature circles on a wiki.

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• Permission was given to purchase more intermediate school novels for Literature Circles.
• Junior teachers were also given a PLC opportunity to learn about wikis and Web 2.0 activities. The junior classroom wikis have a personal page for each student. The students are learning and uploading various Web 2.0 activities.
APPENDIX B

Quotes from Students

- "What I like about Lit. Circles was that you got a choice in your book and the number of activities to choose from in each cycle. There were so many activities to choose from you could always find something you liked" (gr. 8 girl)
- "I liked doing it on the computer because it is easier to type than to write." (gr. 8 boy)
- "I liked the lit. circles this year because I got to pick my book. Also, I really liked the programs we used." (gr. 8 girl)
- "I also found it fun doing some of the activities like Voki and Wordle. I suggest to do lit. circles like this all the time. (gr. 8 boy)
- "I really enjoyed doing the Wiki and side activities" (gr. 8 girl)
- “I really like how we get the choice of the book and how on the computer it is very organized (grade 7 student, Lasalle)
- “I like working on the computer because it keeps me neat”
- “I found it very helpful because it keeps me organized”
- “I liked how you could do the work online without having to bring piles of paper home”
- “I liked lit circles because we could do some it of it at home”
- “I could do it at home on the computer which would give me more time if I forgot my work at school” (Kingsville)
- “I liked doing it on a computer instead of having to write it all I normally lose all my papers and now I don't lose any and I feel very organized. (Lasalle)
- “It beats doing it in handwriting” (Lasalle)
- “I think lit circles went well because having the AEO and C right there on the computer helped and it was one click away” (Kingsville)
- “I like lit circles because we got to read good books, not old books that have been around” (Kingsville)
- “The question was online and we had time to think about it before we responded to it and since it was on the internet we had a lot of different resources to help us (Northwood Grade 8)
- “I like how you gave us a book that we all had choice with and how we could talk to our friends about the book and help each other” (Northwood)
APPENDIX C

Literature Circle Text List:

*The Alchemyst* by Michael Scott
*Alexandria of Africa* by Eric Walters
*Amulet Book 1: The Stonekeeper* by Kazu Kibuishi (graphic novel)
*The Angel Experiment (Maximum Ride #1)* by James Patterson
*Bystander* by James Preller
*City of Bones* by Cassandra Clare
*Code Talker* by Joseph Buchac
*Counterfeit Son* by Elaine Marie Alphin
*Divergent* by Veronica Roth
*Eight Grade Bites (Chronicles of Vladimir Tod #1)* by Heather Brewer
*Eye of the Crow (The Boy Sherlock Holmes Book 1)* by Shane Peacock
*Fly Boy* by Eric Walters
*The Forest of Hands and Teeth* by Carrie Ryan
*Ghost Ride* by Marina Cohen
*The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (in audio book as well)
*I Am Number Four* by Pitticus Lore
*January (Conspiracy 365)* by Gabrielle Lord
*Last Dog on Earth* by Daniel Ehrenhaft
*The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan (graphic novel)
*Macbeth (No Fear Shakespeare Graphic Novel)* by Sparknotes Editors
*Shakespeare’s Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, Adam Sexton and Eve Grandt
*Maze Runner* by James Dashner
*Me and the Blondes* by Teresa Toten
*Shiver* by Maggie Stiefvater
*The Summoning (Darkest Powers #1)* by Kelley Armstrong
*The Unsinkable Walker Bean* by Aaron Renier (graphic novel)
*Wither* by Lauren DeStefano

Social Justice Texts (for diagnostic reflection)
*Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust* by Eve Bunting
*A Taste of Colored Water* by Matt Faulkner
*Not My Fault* by Leif Kristiansson
*Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco
## APPENDIX D

### Reflection Rubric

**LITERATURE CIRCLE REFLECTION RUBRIC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Criteria:</th>
<th>LEVEL ONE</th>
<th>LEVEL TWO</th>
<th>LEVEL THREE</th>
<th>LEVEL FOUR</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there THREE separate paragraphs?</td>
<td>There are no paragraphs. Incomplete thoughts and jot notes.</td>
<td>An attempt at paragraphs is made (1 or 2 paragraphs are included.)</td>
<td>Three separate paragraphs are completed.</td>
<td>Three separate paragraphs are completed, each with a different topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does each paragraph follow &quot;AEO and C&quot; or &quot;APE&quot; (e.g. connections, differences, your opinion?)</td>
<td>There is an attempt at an opening statement (sentence starter), and one of the four elements of AEO and C are included in some fashion.</td>
<td>There is an opening statement (sentence starter), and two of the four elements of AEO and C are included.</td>
<td>There is an opening statement (sentence starter), and three of the four elements of AEO and C are included and accurate.</td>
<td>There is an opening statement (sentence starter), and all four of the elements of AEO and C are included accurately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does each paragraph contain its own idea with its own evidence (e.g., a quote with a page number or a detailed reference with a page number as proof)</td>
<td>No evidence from the text is used to explain the student's thoughts or opinions (e.g., a quote with a page number or a detailed reference with a page number as proof.)</td>
<td>Some evidence from the text is used to partially explain the student's thoughts. More explanation and detail are needed (e.g., a quote with a page number or a detailed reference with a page number as proof.)</td>
<td>Evidence from the text is used to explain each of the student's thoughts (e.g., a quote with a page number or a detailed reference with a page number as proof.)</td>
<td>Evidence from the text is used to clearly explain each of the student's thoughts with depth and insight (e.g., quotes with a page number or detailed references with page numbers as proof.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are capitals and punctuation used correctly?</td>
<td>Student is missing capitals and proper punctuation in many necessary spots.</td>
<td>Student is missing capitals and proper punctuation in some necessary spots.</td>
<td>Student usually uses capitals and punctuation properly.</td>
<td>Student uses capitals and punctuation with precision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is proper sentence structure used?</td>
<td>Sentences are run-ons or fragments in many cases.</td>
<td>Sentences are run-ons or fragments in some cases.</td>
<td>Sentences are rarely run-ons or fragments. Sentences are generally simple but clear.</td>
<td>A wide variety of sentence structures are used, and sentences flow well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are proper nouns and pronouns used correctly? (i.e. characters named when necessary, rather than incorrectly referred to by pronouns like “he” and “she” all of the time)?</td>
<td>The actual names of the characters are rarely used in the reflection. Pronouns are often overused or used incorrectly.</td>
<td>The actual names of the characters are occasionally used in the reflection. Pronouns are sometimes used incorrectly.</td>
<td>The actual names of the characters are generally used in the reflection. Pronouns are used correctly most of the time.</td>
<td>The student has a clear understanding of when to use pronouns and when to use characters' names.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

Reflection Sentence Starters

REFLECTION PARAGRAPH-STARTERS
(1 REFLECTION EACH CYCLE, WITH THREE PARAGRAPHS EACH!)

Here are some paragraph-starters to get you started on your Reflections. Try to use three different ones each cycle. Add details and evidence so your paragraphs are really good. Think “A-E-O-C” with answer, evidence, and your own ideas, connections, opinion, and a concluding sentence etc.

The part I liked best was….because…
If I was the author, I would have…because…
The part that really surprised me was when…because…
If I was the character of ______, I would…because…
I predict that…because…
The character of ____________ reminds me of…because…
The part I really hated was when…because…
The way I imagine the setting is…
When ______ happened, it reminded me of __________ because…
I think _______ should have _________ instead of__________ because…
If this story was written in the time period of ______, it would be different because…
If I was coming from another country and read this, I would wonder…
I wonder…
I wish…
I suspect…
I thought it was really cool when…because
When _______ read the part about ____________, I thought…
Our group's discussion surprised me when…because...
When one of my group members said...I felt...because....
I believe the author wrote the scene....like this because....
I don't understand why....happened in the book. I would have expected....instead.
APPENDIX F

Wiki Contents for Literature Circles:

LEARNING GOAL: Students will show their understanding of the text by making inferences using details from the text, and by making connections between the work and their own knowledge, experiences, other texts they've read, their peers' ideas, etc.

(Reading 1.5 - make inferences about texts using stated and implied ideas from the texts as evidence)

(Reading 1.6 - extend understanding of texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge, experience, and insights, to other familiar texts, and to the world around them)

Sample Page for Wiki

TITLE OF BOOK

Student 1
Student 2
Student 3

Cycle 1: Page _____ to Page ____ Discussion Date: _______ Reflection and Questions due: _______
Cycle 2: Page _____ to Page ____ Discussion Date: _______ Reflection and Questions due: _______
Cycle 3: Page _____ to Page ____ Discussion Date: _______ Reflection and Questions due: _______
Cycle 4: Page _____ to Page ____ Discussion Date: _______ Reflection and Questions due: _______

Web 2.0 Application Options:

Choose one of the following assignments to complete per cycle:

Draw a Bitstrip summary of the cycle
Choose a song and explain where it fits in your cycle and why
Make a Fakebook on a character
Create a Podcast using the program Audacity - Interview someone as a character in the book
Create a commercial for the novel using Audacity or a video clip which you then upload
Design a Wordle for a character or section of your novel
Create an Animoto trailer on a section, theme or character in your novel
Write a free verse poem about the cycle
Tweet as a character and create a 140 character summary
Make a Voki of your character and have him or her speak in role as the character
Make a Flipbook that in some way represents your book cycle.
Design a Tagxedo for your book’s cycle
Using Museum in a Box, create a display for your book or cycle

(For more application ideas, check out this link:
http://notyourgrandmaslitcircles.pbworks.com/w/page/49062961/What%20about%20Web%20Apps)
APPENDIX G

Graphs of Pertinent Data:

Kingsville Question 1

Levels

Can't stand them. Not very excited about them. Think that they are okay. Think that they are good. Think that they are awesome.

Pre Percentage
Post Percentage

Percentage of Students
That the books are exciting and interesting
That you get to use a computer to do work, rather than in handwriting
That you get to use web applications ("apps") to extend your understanding and appreciation of the book
That you have some choice in the activities
Can't stand them. Not very excited about them. Think that they are okay. Think that they are good. Think that they are awesome.
That the books are exciting and interesting
That you get to use a computer to do work, rather than in handwriting
That you get to use web applications ("apps") to extend your understanding and appreciation of the book
That you have some choice in the activities
Northwood Question 1

Can't stand them. Not very excited about them. Think that they are okay. Think that they are good. Think that they are awesome.

Pre
Post
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important For Personal Enjoyment</th>
<th>Lasalle (8)</th>
<th>Lasalle (7)</th>
<th>Kingsville</th>
<th>Northwood</th>
<th>Lasalle (8)</th>
<th>Lasalle (7)</th>
<th>Kingsville</th>
<th>Northwood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That you get to have some choice in the book</td>
<td>96.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>77.80%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That the books are exciting and interesting</td>
<td>76.00%</td>
<td>85.70%</td>
<td>61.10%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>90.50%</td>
<td>76.20%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you get to use a computer to do work, rather than in handwriting</td>
<td>64.00%</td>
<td>66.70%</td>
<td>83.30%</td>
<td>77.30%</td>
<td>64.00%</td>
<td>85.70%</td>
<td>85.70%</td>
<td>82.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you get to use web applications (&quot;apps&quot;) to extend your understanding and appreciation of the book</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>38.10%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>27.30%</td>
<td>36.00%</td>
<td>66.70%</td>
<td>81.00%</td>
<td>41.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you have some choice in the activities</td>
<td>72.00%</td>
<td>76.20%</td>
<td>72.20%</td>
<td>68.20%</td>
<td>76.00%</td>
<td>76.20%</td>
<td>61.90%</td>
<td>82.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you get to work in a small group with classmates</td>
<td>56.00%</td>
<td>66.70%</td>
<td>55.60%</td>
<td>59.10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you get to discuss the book with others</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td>61.90%</td>
<td>33.30%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That the reading work is ties in with other things you like (e.g. art, music, technology, etc.)</td>
<td>28.00%</td>
<td>61.90%</td>
<td>38.90%</td>
<td>31.80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you get to read the book out loud with peers</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>42.90%</td>
<td>27.80%</td>
<td>27.30%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you get to read the book silently and independently</td>
<td>76.00%</td>
<td>61.90%</td>
<td>61.10%</td>
<td>68.20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That the work is different than what you've done in whole class novel studies</td>
<td>48.00%</td>
<td>57.10%</td>
<td>61.10%</td>
<td>36.40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Can't stand them.                                                                                   | 16.00%      | 14.30%      | 5.60%      | 0.00%     | 0.00%       | 0.00%       | 4.30%      | 5.90%     |
| Not very excited about them.                                                                        | 36.00%      | 14.30%      | 0.00%      | 28.00%    | 28.00%      | 4.80%       | 0.00%      | 11.80%    |
| Think that they are okay.                                                                          | 32.00%      | 38.10%      | 33.30%     | 32.00%    | 36.00%      | 23.80%      | 47.80%     | 29.40%    |
| Think that they are good.                                                                          | 16.00%      | 28.60%      | 44.40%     | 28.00%    | 32.00%      | 38.10%      | 26.10%     | 35.30%    |
| Think that they are awesome.                                                                         | 0.00%       | 4.80%       | 16.70%     | 12.00%    | 4.00%       | 33.30%      | 21.70%     | 17.60%    |
David Maxwell Public School

**Collaborative Inquiry Team:** Cathy Boyer, Teacher Librarian; Stephanie Molenda, Grade 3 Classroom Teacher; Lori Jones, Instructional Coach.

**Inquiry Question:** How does differentiated instruction improve reading fluency, comprehension and confidence in Grade 3 students at David Maxwell School?

The classroom teacher, in collaboration with the teacher-librarian and instructional coach, took a focused look at the reading components of the Literacy Block. A plan was put in place to provide each of the target students with an individualized word study programme, comprehension activities directed at their specific reading levels which increased in difficulty as reading levels improved, additional student-teacher conferencing time with the teachers to discuss reading strategies and celebrate successes.

Project can be found at:

Queen Victoria Public School and Forest Glade Public School

Collaborative Inquiry Team: Claire Kenno and Jillian Authier, Teacher Librarians

Research Question: Can the Forest of Reading program and the use of technology help improve student engagement in reading?

Vision
That using the Forest of Reading program in conjunction with Twitter will increase student engagement with high quality Canadian Literature. To accommodate the learning styles of today’s students and include the technology that permeates their everyday lives, the library needs to take a step forward. It needs to make the necessary changes towards becoming a Learning Commons to meet the needs of today’s learners.

A Learning Commons is a flexible and responsive approach to helping schools focus on learning collaboratively. Within a Learning Commons, new relationships are formed between learners, new technologies are realized and utilized and both students and educators prepare for the future as they learn new ways to learn (OLA, 2010).

Today’s libraries are no longer just a quiet place to read. They are the hub of information literacy learning, offering opportunities for student directed learning resulting in creating and accessing resources for knowledge and understanding. Teacher librarians have an important role today, as they are a central figure in the school community, collaborating with teachers on resource-based learning opportunities.

Participatory learning includes the many ways that learners (of any age) use new technologies to participate in virtual communities where they share ideas, comment on one another’s projects, and plan, design, implement, advance, or simply discuss their practices, goals, and ideas together. Participatory learning is not simply about interaction, but of interaction that, because of issues of access, means that one is co-creating with myriad people who are strangers and who can remain anonymous. People can respond candidly. From such a process, one learns and continues to learn from others met (if at all) only virtually, whose institutional status and credentials may be unknown (Davidson & Goldberg, 2009).

Theory of Action
• If we use the Forest of Reading program then students will become more engaged in high quality Canadian authors.
• If we integrate technology into the reading program then students will learn new skills and develop an interest in technology
• If we learn how to use Twitter to communicate with other schools then the students will see how social media can be used to communicate about academic subjects.

Purpose for the Study
The purpose of this study was to investigate if using the Forest of Reading program, specifically the Blue Spruce books, in conjunction with technology such as Twitter, will increase student
engagement in reading. Learning often happens as a result of collaborative opportunities offered through social media sites, such as Twitter. Queen Victoria Public School and Forest Glade Primary Learning Center students were able to Tweet to students that they will probably never meet, but who could expand their thinking with unique ideas, views or responses.

The challenge for our education system is to leverage the learning sciences and modern technology to create engaging, relevant and personalized learning experiences for all learners that mirror students’ daily lives and the reality of their futures. Effective school library programs have a positive impact on student achievement, in the processing and use of information, in knowledge content areas, on reading motivation and achievement (Haycock, 2003).

It is with this in mind that we chose to look at how the Blue Spruce Reading program impacts children’s enjoyment of reading. We celebrated Canadian authors and quality literature and used technology to communicate collaboratively. Introducing the students to Canadian children’s literature gives our young readers a unique chance to see their lives as Canadians reflected back at them through the artistic perspectives of our writers and artists. Ultimately in trying to define what it is, it defines who we are. Canadian author’s aim in their fiction is to capture the essence of what it is to be Canadian as they also explore the lives of children and teens (Canton, 2001).

Justification for the Study

Educators of today understand that when students are provided with rich learning experiences and opportunities to explore areas of interest, they learn better. Young students today are very social, and depend heavily on technology to keep in constant touch with one another. They are comfortable learning informally with their peers as the technology brings them together socially (OSLA, 2010).

Every year, all Ontario students in grades 3 and 6 fill in surveys before they complete the province’s Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing. The surveys include a wide range of questions, including whether students “like to read most of the time.” Although the literacy scores have improved during that time, there has been a decline in the percentage of students who report that they “like to read most of the time.” Since 1998/1999, the percentage of students in grade 3 who report they like to read has declined by almost a third, from 76% in 1998/1999 to only 50% in 2010/2011. There has been a similar decline for grade 6 students, from 65% in 1998/1999 to 50% in 2010/2011 (People for Education, 2011).

This subject was important to investigate as both of the researchers have observed that many students in the primary grades were not frequently engaging with high quality literature, let alone high quality Canadian Literature. Participating in the Blue Spruce reading program and including the use of Twitter was an important way to try and increase student engagement in reading through technology, as many students are very interested in technology but are unaware of how reading and technology can be linked. Using Twitter to share the student’s thoughts with the other participating school allowed the students to see in action the way that social media can be used in an academic setting.

Context of the Study

The two schools involved in this research project have similar populations of primary children who may not have had a large exposure to quality Canadian literature. Both participating schools have portions of their school population who are highly transient. The subjects of this study from Queen Victoria Public School were grade one to three students who are scheduled to visit the library once a week and participated in the program each week. The subjects of this study from Forest Glade Public School were grade one and two students, as this school location only goes up until
grade two. These subjects are scheduled to visit the library every other week and participated in the program bi-weekly.

Methodology

**Data Collection:**

- **Data source 1:** A ten question online survey of reading engagement done with all participating students prior to starting the Forest of Reading program.
- **Data source 2:** A ten question online survey of perception of student reading enjoyment sent to all homeroom teachers of the participating students prior to the start of the Forest of Reading program.
- **Data source 3:** Anecdotal observations of students during the reading program based on their enjoyment of the Blue Spruce books and use of technology.
- **Data source 4:** A ten question online survey of reading engagement done with all participating students at the end of the Forest of Reading program.
- **Data source 5:** A ten question online survey of perception of student reading enjoyment sent to all homeroom teachers of the participating students at the end of the Forest of Reading program.

The online surveys were created using the website [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and can be found at the following links:

- [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2LGVKTH](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2LGVKTH) (Reading Enjoyment Survey)
- [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2JHVRX3](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2JHVRX3) (Teacher Perception of Reading Enjoyment)
- [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YBRVPWR](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YBRVPWR) (Follow Up to Reading Enjoyment Survey)
- [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YZK8SQC](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YZK8SQC) (Follow Up to Teacher Perception of Reading Enjoyment)

Prior to beginning the Blue Spruce Reading program, students completed an online survey on reading enjoyment prepared on Survey Monkey. Primary teachers were also asked to complete an online survey of their perception of student reading enjoyment on Survey Monkey. Students participated in the Blue Spruce reading program after the surveys were completed. They had the opportunity to listen to each story, participate in discussions, complete related activities and read, write and respond to Twitters from students from the other school using the Smartboard and laptop computers. Upon completing the Blue Spruce reading program, students and teachers were again asked to complete their respective online surveys.

Findings

**Results from Forest Glade**

**Student Survey**

It should be noted that there were nine more participants in the post-survey than in the pre-survey due to students who arrived during the course of the Forest of Reading program or who were away on extended absences during the pre-survey.

Overall, the follow up survey demonstrated very little change in most areas. When asked, “Do you enjoy reading?” the percentage of participants who responded 'Yes' remained at 68.8%. Those who read at home increased from 57.5% to 65.2%, an eight percent increase. Interestingly,
the number of student participants who said they read at home for school work decreased from 62% to 56.2%. When asked “Do you like to talk about what you have read?” there was only a 1% increase over the course of the program, for a total of 43.8%.

The two most significant changes that were noted between the pre and post surveys related to the types of books students like to read and visits to the public library. In both surveys, students reported that their favourite type of book to read was chapter books. However, this number increased from 25% in the pre-survey to 38.2% in the post-survey. It is possible that this increase can be attributed to the increased number of students who have improved their reading skills over the four months of the study and now feel more confident in their ability to read chapter books. Finally, the most noted result of this study was the percentage of students who indicated that they visit the public library. In the pre-survey 42.5% indicated that they visit the public library, in the post-survey 60.7% indicated that they visit the public library, an 18.2% increase over the course of the study. Perhaps this can be attributed to an increased interest in reading or enjoying Canadian literature that they have been exposed to in the school learning commons area.

Teacher Survey

Overall, the results of the teacher perception of reading enjoyment surveys stayed the same with two exceptions. The first change was in regards to the question, “Do your students use Twitter to communicate with others?” In the pre-survey, 100% of teachers responded 'Never', while in the post-survey 100% of teachers responded 'Sometimes'. The second change was related to question number 8 which asked, “Do your students use the public library?” In the pre-survey, 100% of the teacher respondents indicated that they did not know if their students used the public library. However, in the post-survey, 100% of the teacher respondents indicated that ‘Some’ of their students use the public library. Perhaps this change in knowledge has some relation to participating in the first survey and after realizing they did not know if any of their students visit the public library that they had a conversation with their students about the library, its resources and where it may be located in the school community.

Results from Queen Victoria

Student Survey

Queen Victoria had a decrease in the number of primary students completing the post-survey, as students moved out of the area. New students arrived at the school towards the end of the Blue Spruce program, but did not complete the post-survey as they were not present for the pre-survey or for the majority of the Blue Spruce program.

Overall, an increase from 63% to 69.1% was observed in the number of students reporting ‘Yes’ when asked, “Do you enjoy reading?” The number responding, ‘Sometimes’ increased from 27% to 28.9%, while those responding ‘No’ decreased significantly from 10% to 2.1%. While there was a small increase in the number of students, from 66% to 69.1%, who replied, ‘Yes’ when asked if they read at home, there was also an increase in the number who responded ‘No’, increasing from 4% to 9.3%. This increase was interesting, as only 6.2% reported that they don’t read at home for school work. There was a slight increase from 77% to 78.4% in responses when asked, “Do you read at home for school work?” The most significant decrease demonstrated was when the students were asked, “Do you like to talk about what you have read?” The percentage of students answering, ‘Yes’ in the Pre-Survey was 34, compared to 19.6% in the post-survey. Those answering “Sometimes” increased significantly from 25% to 42.3%. When asked, “How often do you read at home?” 64.9% answered ‘Once a day,’ in the post-survey, compared to 58% in the pre-survey, an
increase of 6.9%. There was also a decrease in the number of students who reported that they don’t have time to read at home, from 11% to 4.1%.

Queen Victoria’s survey response was similar to Forest Glade’s when students were asked ‘What topic do you most like to read about?’ In the pre-survey, 23% of the students chose picture books. That decreased to 21.6% in the post-survey, with chapter books increasing to 27.8% from 20% in the pre-survey. Again, we would attribute that to the increase in reading ability over the four months of the time of the study. Students were asked, ‘Do you like coming to the school library?’ In the pre-survey, 95% of the students responded, ‘Yes.’ Their answers included their love of reading, being able to pick out a good book, having a good selection of books to choose from, having fun reading books and enjoyment of listening to a book being read to them. The post-survey recorded a ‘Yes’ response of 99% of the students’ answers with similar reasons. Finally, there was also an increase in the number of students who responded that they visit the public library. In the pre-survey, 59% responded that they do visit the public library and in the post-survey this number increased to 63.9%, close to a five percent increase. Many students were curious about the public library when asked this question, perhaps asking parents to take them later.

Teacher Survey
At Queen Victoria, there was little change in the post-survey answers as compared to the pre-survey answers overall. The question, “Does your class enjoy reading?” demonstrated a significant increase of 33.4% in the number of teachers reporting, ‘All of the class.’ Only one other question showed a change. When asked, “Will students choose a book to read over choosing an activity?” there was an increase of 16.7% in the number of teachers who responded, ’Never.’ This was also expressed as an equivalent decrease in the answer, ‘Sometimes.’ Informally, teachers were asked if their students showed excitement or interest in using Twitter with another school. Of the teachers that responded, they all reported that the students never mentioned it during class.

Recommendations
The Blue Spruce program proved to be a valuable resource to introduce to the two school library programs. Students expressed excitement weekly to see what the new Blue Spruce book would be about and were anxious to take the new books home from the library. The majority of students were excited to talk about the books, making many connections from text to self, text and to the world. Students were exposed to quality Canadian literature, allowing them to create a sense of Canadian identity within themselves and providing reading pleasure.

The role of the teacher librarian is integral to developing resources, introducing technology and providing a stimulating environment in which to learn. The students enjoyed using technology as it provided a hands-on experience. During the course of the Blue Spruce program, the students were excited to read what their ‘friends’ at Forest Glade or Queen Victoria had written. An exception to that statement is one of the Grade 3 classes at Queen Victoria. Midway through the Blue Spruce program, they complained about reading and writing responses on the Smartboard and wanted the opportunity to write themselves. We decided that they would be able to write their own Tweets using laptops. After reading and discussing the story, they were permitted to add their own thoughts to our Twitter account with Forest Glade, after it had been previewed by the teacher. Writing their own Tweets renewed their interest in the activity. It was observed that older students who walked into the library during classes were excited and envious to hear that the primary students were using Twitter.
Many students expressed an interest to use Twitter at home and some have recently said that they do Tweet with their friends.

One difficulty we encountered during the course of the study was that the students at Forest Glade Public School only visited the library every other week. The two schools were usually reading different books which made it difficult to respond to what the other school had written. Queen Victoria Public School visited the library weekly, which could have contributed to the increase in the number of students who reported that they enjoyed reading.

Overall, we feel that having a teacher-librarian as part of the library program increases students’ enjoyment of reading. Teachers collaborating with Teacher-Librarians can create an environment where reading is valued, promoted and encouraged. We can increase reading development by encouraging independent reading using our wide range of current materials. A print-rich environment leads to more reading, and independent reading is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling and grammatical ability, and writing style (Lonsdale, 2006).

Conclusion

The real mandate of the Learning Commons is to design, facilitate and support dynamic learning experiences that utilize the best available resources, technologies, strategies and learning environments (OSLA, 2010). As we begin our transition towards a Learning Commons in our school libraries, we can see what an impact it has on our students. Through collaborative teaching between teacher-librarians, we can share learning experiences with children in other parts of the city or even other parts of the world. Through the use of technology we could communicate our learning in real time. Twitter allowed us to share book talks, reviews and comments of the Blue Spruce nominees.

The Learning Commons provides essential building blocks for the personal, social and cultural growth of students. Within the Commons, the school library offers a rich, broad-ranging, diverse, and inclusive resource collection, as well as a stimulating learning environment. It can foster a keen culture of inquiry. Through learning partnerships, the school library can provide students with opportunities to explore their interests. Qualities such as imagination and creativity, confidence and self-esteem, leadership and social contribution are integral values that need to be seamlessly woven into our educational fabric. The Learning Commons creates the atmosphere for this to happen (OSLA, 2010).

When students are encouraged to pursue their own interests and are free to choose from a rich collection within an inviting environment, they are motivated to read and their reading and depth of understanding improve. The Learning Commons can nurture good reading habits among students (Koechlin et al. 2010).

References


Permission granted by Dani Hayes from Victoria Public School in Tecumseh, Ontario for use of her Reading Survey on Survey Monkey.
Tecumseh Vista Academy

Collaborative Inquiry Team: Christine Muscedere, Secondary Teacher Librarian, Lynne Comartin, English Teacher; Craig Guthrie, Grade 8 Teacher; Colette Seguin, Grade 8 Teacher; Graciella Stokes, Elementary Teacher Librarian.

Inquiry Question: What is the impact of introducing the four-stage research process to students to answer inquiry-based question?

Abstract

A collaborative grade 8 / grade 9 team at Tecumseh Vista Academy tackled the four-stage research process with both English and French-Immersion grade 8 students. Giving their students the tools to conduct a higher-level inquiry-based research question over seven months resulted in presentations that indicated students had learned research skills that they could carry forward into secondary school.

Introduction

The unique circumstance of having the Grade 9's share the elementary wing of the newly-constructed Tecumseh Vista Academy (from September to December 2011), gave impetus to the creation of this library action research project. The collaboration of the elementary and secondary Teacher-Librarians (Stokes and Muscedere) along with the two grade 8 teachers (Guthrie and Seguin) and a grade 9 teacher (Comartin) provided an opportunity to introduce the Ontario Library Association's four-stage research process to the grade 8 students (both English and French-Immersion tracks).

“A Learning Commons is a vibrant, whole-school approach, presenting exciting opportunities for collaboration among teachers, teacher-librarians and students. Within a Learning Commons, new relationships are formed between learners, new technologies are realized and utilized, and both students and educators prepare for the future as they learn new ways to learn.” (Together for Learning, 3)

Vision--Preferred Future

Our collaborative team realized that effective research skills were not only “beneficial” but crucial for grade 8 students to carry forward into secondary school. We wanted to provide students with the tools they would need to complete research-based projects that reflect true inquiry-based learning.

“When they’re given tools to solve problems and encouraged to think creatively, they’re ultimately better equipped to make useful connections with the real world.” (Together for Learning, 4)

Some of the tools the collaborative team wanted to include the ability to:

- sift through websites and identify credible sources;
- conduct a Boolean search;
- use a resource database;
- use Google Docs;
- use a slide presentation tool such as PowerPoint;
- create a proper bibliography
- create a “deeper” question to guide their research. These guiding, critical questions would narrow the focus of their research and allow them to make connections and solve possible problems around their topics.

**Theory of Action**

**Why teach the research process?**

“Students will need to become critical consumers of information, effective problem solvers, capable decision makers and innovative communicators as well. They will require the skills and ability to flow with change. And most of all, students will need to understand that these transferable skills give them the capacity to make a difference in this world... personally”. (Together for Learning, 5)

Furthermore, all subjects in the Ontario curriculum have a research component.

**Justification for the study**

It is important to note that the students of Tecumseh Vista Academy came from different schools. Their responses reflect the learned procedures and practices to which they have been accustomed. The collaborative team designed a research project using the grade 8 Geography curriculum to teach the four-stage research process. As a first step, the elementary Teacher-Librarian, along with the Library Instructional Coach, Shannon Hazel, asked the grade 8 students the following question:

"If your teacher assigned a research project, list from beginning to the final product, all the steps you would follow to complete the assignment".

Based on the oral and written material presented by each group of students, their procedures followed a similar pattern.

**Step 1** Search on Google, Wikipedia or various popular search engines (students were working on the assumption that they would be provided with a topic or question for their research)

**Step 2** They would take the top “hits” without any verification of the information.

**Step 3** Copy and paste the gathered information

**Step 4** Create a presentation on Bristol board paying a great deal of attention to the aesthetics of their presentation.

**Step 5** Present the project to the class.

When students were asked if they would visit a library, local or school, the majority responded that they did not even consider this option.

**Context of the Study**

**What are the four steps in the process of research?**

**Stage One: Wonder and Explore** is the step of the research process that is the most crucial in terms of providing a direction for the research. It involves creating the focus of the research or in other words, what question is being answered.
Because this was an inquiry-based research assignment, the student needed to design a higher-level question. We wanted to go beyond the simple or surface question to the digging or deeper question. (Koechlin, 8) Our collaborative team came up with ten possible geography questions as examples (see Appendix A). The grade 8 teachers presented a slideshow to the grade 8 students on how to build an effective question.

To assist the students with brainstorming possible questions for their research, the grade 8 teachers used the idea of a "New Highway" (DRIC is a major construction project involving expanded highways and the twinning of the bridge between Windsor, Ontario and Detroit, Michigan). It started with asking what the new highway is all about. The students generated great questions like What will it look like?, How will the habitat in the area be affected?, How will this help the economy?, Why is there opposition to this highway?, etc. Using this brainstorming activity as an example, the students came up with their own possible questions for their geography project.

“Learning within the curriculum becomes personalized, individualized, motivating and enlightening.” (Together for Learning, 9).

At this time, the secondary librarian went over a handout Model A: The Process of Inquiry and Research which diagrammed the four stages of research (Research Success @ Your Library, 4) as well as Rate Yourself as a Researcher (pg 7) Each student was given an OSLA research portfolio (which identifies the research process on its cover) to collect and organize their materials.

The students were given time to choose a country to study by browsing the database “Culture Grams”, a ProQuest product. Once a country had been chosen, the students would further refine their research question.

Using the resource Imagine the Learning! @ Your Library, students were given the following Stage 1 handouts to assist them to develop their research focus:

Preparing for Research Student Checklist (pg 18)
Understanding the Assignment (pg 20)
My Work Log/Tracking Sheet (pg 21)
Start Your thinking (pg. 24)
KWLook (pg 25)

To help students formulate a deeper question, the following Stage 1 handouts were used:

Think Deep: Different Types of Questions (pg 34)
Thinking with Question Prompts (pg 35)
Thinking Deeper: Developing Research and Inquiry Questions (pg 36)

To help them with a self-reflection, the following Stage 1 handouts were used:

Student Scoring Chart (pg 38)
Preparing for Research Rubric (pg 39)
Stage 2: Search and Select is the step where resources are selected to carry out the research. At this point, the secondary librarian came in to teach the students about Boolean searching in order to locate the most specific or appropriate information. The purpose of using AND, OR, NOT was seen to be crucial for “fine tuning” the number of results that may be received.

The difference between databases, search engines, and directories was taught by the secondary librarian using KWL charts and a slide show. Students explored a topic of their choice using search engines other than Google and using Meta search engines. The “research page” on the GECDSB Student Portal was the access point for these search engines and directories. The “hits” that were received were reviewed and compared.

Stage 3: Think and Connect is the step where the information is organized, edited and reviewed. Various strategies for collecting data were observed. Some students were printing material, making notes from the sites, or copying and pasting resources into their word documents. Students made use of the Stage 3 Scoring Chart to ensure that they were including all the required criteria (Imagine, 94). Students were then given time to practise their presentations and verify spelling, content and accuracy with classmates who would make recommendations accordingly.

Stage 4: Create and Share brings all the learning to a point where a presentation to their classmates is possible. The collaboration team decided that another learning goal was to be able to use a slide show effectively. This included the use of the notes section, the ability to imbed a photo or video, the inclusion of links to a website, and the use of pictures, graphs, charts, etc. Also, the use of appropriate fonts, background colour, font size, and effective transitions that are not distracting was deemed important.

So, did this process make a difference? Did it result in “higher learning”? Did the quality of the presentation reflect a better process?

Findings
Vista students came to this research opportunity with varied experience. Some were confident in their ability to research using a few sources and others came to Vista with only limited experience.

However, no students had any real experience with databases, Boolean searches, or producing a proper bibliography. They felt confident with the idea of completing a research project, yet were challenged when they were expected to complete the more in-depth research components. Typically, students are required to complete knowledge-based projects that require them to only answer lower-level questions, whereas these projects were based on higher levels of questioning. Students had some difficulty developing a focus for their research with a higher-level question. In order to answer their initial question, they had to ask other questions that would support their original question. It was at this point that students really struggled.

“Good questions are the driving force of critical and creative thinking and therefore one of the best indicators of significant learning...And so the best questions send students on rich and meaningful lifelong quests, question after question after question.” (Together for Learning, 24)

Teachers taught mini-lessons to show students how to expand their ideas, using mind-maps, in order to find the information that would support their topic.
After some struggle students were able to conceptualize how to take all this information and turn it into a slide presentation. Students had a limited knowledge of how to complete such a presentation and were hesitant to take on a new format.

“Students appear to have natural abilities to use emerging technology. But the reality is...they need to be taught how these tools can be used in learning and critical thought.” (Together for Learning, 9)

With several lessons and exposure to the new program, they became more comfortable with the process. A large amount of time had to be allotted to allow the students to complete the projects using class time. This became an onerous task to ensure availability to technology so students did not become frustrated and lose interest in the project.

Differences noted: It was noted that the majority of academically inclined students were more open to the challenge of a more structured approach to research. Overall the higher-level students were more detail-oriented (how many slides, how many words) and more focused on the end product and not the new process. This is what caused much of their stress. The open-ended, inquiry-based learning with a focus on the process, heightened their anxiety. This was addressed with the use of a rubric that reinforced the concept that the project is open to any length as long as the information was accurate and met the needs of the research component (See Appendix B).

At the end of the research cycle, the grade 8 teachers noted a marked improvement in the quality of the presentations. There was an increased awareness of sources that were available (books, databases and web sites). The development of a higher-level research question, which was difficult to formulate, led to a more purposeful search. The presentations, which required speaker's notes rather than reading from the screen, captivated the audience. The correct format of a bibliography was also learned.

**Recommendations**

In order to enhance the research skills of our students, it is crucial that collaboration between the elementary Teacher-Librarian and intermediate teachers exists. Timetabling needs to be considered to ensure time for true collaboration and to allow for the dove-tailing of information literacy skills and the curriculum.

Technology played a key piece in this project. Availability to computers needed to be ensured in order to allow for the continuity of the project. Ensuring student engagement is of the utmost importance so that students stay interested and focused on the project.

Overall this project was extremely time-consuming because of the time required to be on computers. It seemed to dictate the planning of the daily classroom schedule and became a driving force in our planning. The depth of research required for this project was also somewhat over-ambitious and left many participants feeling overwhelmed. In the future this project and its various components could be “chunked” and taught in different curriculum areas. This can now occur as a result of the classroom teachers being more aware of the research process and the steps it entails.

Class time would be better utilized if the preparation of the slide show could be completed at home.
Due to the demographics of this school, most students have access to computers with a slide presentation program at home. Then class time would be available for more supervised research time as well as word processing.

**Bibliography**


Appendix A
Possible Research Questions

• How might the life of a teenager in the country of your choice be similar/different from your life in Canada? Compare and contrast the topic including: population, economy, culture and lifestyle (food, clothing, music), education, health, or other factors.

• Where in your country of choice might you establish an extreme-sport tourist activity?

• What is the impact of a natural disaster and/or man-made disaster on the people, animal life, and the environment in your country of choice?

• How has Nepal benefited from Mount Everest?

• What is the importance of a World Heritage Sight to your country?

• How can weather affect the design/architecture of buildings in your country?

• What is the relationship between the literacy rate and per capita income for your country?

• How has membership in the European Union affected your country?

• How does the physical environment of your chosen country define the activities of local people. For example, in Canada, how does the winter weather change what you can do and how you can do it?

• How have land use conflicts (e.g. agriculture vs. housing) affected population patterns in your country?
### Appendix B: Geography Critical Inquiry Project

**Name: ________________________________**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Expectation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Level 1</strong></th>
<th><strong>Level 2</strong></th>
<th><strong>Level 3</strong></th>
<th><strong>Level 4</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge/ Understanding</strong></td>
<td>- demonstrates little editing (eg. grammar and spelling mistakes are numerous)</td>
<td>- demonstrates some editing (eg. several grammar and spelling mistakes are evident)</td>
<td>- demonstrates effective editing (eg. grammar and spelling mistakes are minimal)</td>
<td>- demonstrates highly effective editing (eg. no grammar and spelling mistakes are evident)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Editing work</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documenting sources</strong></td>
<td>- no bibliography is present</td>
<td>- a bibliography is present but not correctly formatted (ALA format)</td>
<td>- a bibliography is present and correctly formatted (ALA format)</td>
<td>- a bibliography is present and correctly formatted in alphabetical order (ALA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thinking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming a global connection</td>
<td>- can provide few connections to global citizenship</td>
<td>- can provide some connections to global citizenship</td>
<td>- can provide several connections to global citizenship</td>
<td>- can provide numerous connections to global citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of research question</strong></td>
<td>- research question allowed for limited research on the issue of your choice</td>
<td>- research question allowed for moderate research on the issue of your choice</td>
<td>- research question allowed for considerable research on the issue of your choice</td>
<td>- research question allowed for in-depth research on the issue of your choice</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>- communicates (eg. eye contact, clarity) with little effectiveness while relying heavily on the slide/notes</td>
<td>- communicates (eg. eye contact, clarity) with some effectiveness but reads from the slide/notes</td>
<td>- communicates (eg. eye contact, clarity) with considerable effectiveness without relying on the slide/notes</td>
<td>- communicates (eg. eye contact, clarity) with a high degree of effectiveness without relying on the slide/notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>- slides and visuals are minimal and have little relevance</td>
<td>- slides and visuals are present but have limited impact</td>
<td>- slides and visuals support the topic</td>
<td>- slides and visuals enhance the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research skills</strong></td>
<td>- evidence of minimal books, web sites, and online databases in the bibliography</td>
<td>- evidence of limited books, web sites, and online databases in the bibliography</td>
<td>- evidence of considerable books, web sites, and online databases in the bibliography</td>
<td>- evidence of multiple books, web sites, and online databases in the bibliography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Final Level: __________________________
Talbot Trail Public School

Collaborative Inquiry Team: Carly Burkhart, Teacher Librarian; Amy Allison, Classroom Teacher; Johanna Lawler, Learning Commons Instructional Coach

Abstract
The purpose of this inquiry was to determine if the strategic teaching of the research process using a variety of technologies to engage our grade 3 students would impact the writing process and the understanding of non-fiction texts. We discovered that after exposure to variety of non-fiction texts, students felt more confident to use non-fiction texts to find information. We can conclude that the strategic teaching of the research process did impact the writing process and the understanding of non-fiction texts. After spending a significant amount of time researching, evaluating and recording their facts, the students were able to easily transfer their information from their jot notes to write a first draft. As a result of this research, we recommend the strategic teaching of the research process to students of all grade levels.

Inquiry Question: How can the strategic teaching of the research process using a variety of technologies to engage our grade 3 students impact the writing process and the understanding of non-fiction texts?

Setting the Stage

It is not uncommon for students to be assigned a “research project” where they are encouraged to find information, write a report and then present their findings to the class. Today, students will automatically turn to the internet to research, but the reality is that although many “appear to have natural abilities to use emerging technology; they need to be taught how these tools can be used in learning and critical thought” (OSLA 7). Many students do not know how or where to start the research process and often classroom teachers are unsure of how to guide them. By partnering with the Teacher Librarian, the Classroom Teacher will become familiar with databases in order to help students find information and dissect the validity of the information.

Purpose for the Study

The purpose of this inquiry is to determine if the strategic teaching of the research process using a variety of technologies to engage our grade 3 students would impact the writing process and the understanding of non-fiction texts.

The Classroom Teacher will collaborate with the Teacher Librarian to learn more about the different resources available in the Learning Commons and the databases that are available to the students online. The vision is for both students and homeroom teachers to become familiar with the research tools. By giving students more opportunities to “practise” looking for information, they will be able to independently locate resources within or beyond the Learning Commons walls. The inquiry team’s goal was to “expand the learning experience, taking students and educators into virtual spaces beyond the walls of a school” (OSLA 3).
Equitable access to information was also important because the target group for this study was a grade 3 class whose homeroom was in a portable. The inquiry team wanted to show that “the emergence of virtual resources and new powers of search can help make access more equitable” (OSLA 7). Allowing the students opportunities to stay connected to the school is also important. Although their classroom was physically located outside of the main school building, students could research by bringing laptops into their portable. They could also research within the school in the learning commons, and finally at home by using links provided on the class wiki.

“Faced with the abundance of reading materials and information texts available, students need to be critical users of information” (OSLA 21). The inquiry team also wanted to expose students to a variety of non-fiction texts and show them how to evaluate and navigate their way around different sites with different text formats. It is critical that students learn how to assess the reliability and relevance of resources.

It is the hope of the research team that this action research project will yield the following outcomes:

1. The homeroom teacher will be familiar with a variety of research tools within or beyond the learning commons walls.
2. The students will be familiar with a variety of research tools.
3. The students will independently locate resources within or beyond library walls.
4. The students will understand how the research process connects to the writing process.
5. The students will be familiar with non-fiction text features and use these features to help them understand written and online texts.
6. The students will be able to express their process and their thinking.

Description of Procedures and Actions Taken

Part A: Baseline Survey and Interview
Before any new teaching occurred, the homeroom teacher had the students complete a brief survey (Appendix A). This survey asked students to gauge their familiarity of non-fiction texts and text features. This survey also provided the inquiry team with a brief overview of the students’ attitudes towards reading non-fiction texts. Students were also interviewed individually by the Teacher Librarian to determine their knowledge and attitudes toward non-fiction text (Appendix C). Near the end of the project, students completed the same survey (Appendix B) and participated in a second interview to measure any changes in knowledge and attitudes.

Part B: EQAO Reading Tests
Students completed a series of 3 non-fiction EQAO reading tests. The inquiry team wanted to measure student achievement before, during and after explicit teaching of non-fiction text features.

Part C: Research Process
To introduce the research process, students read a variety of non-fiction texts during read alouds in the classroom and on the SMARTboard in the Learning Commons. They also read independently on netbooks and laptops. The Teacher Librarian and homeroom teacher collaborated to present a series of lessons to explicitly teach students how to use non-fiction text features to help them make sense of
what they were reading. The teachers used a variety of web-based programs such as Destination Reading, Tumblebooks and SMART Notebook.

Students were then introduced to eLibrary Elementary – one of the only subscription databases available that is appropriate for this age group and a variety of web-based databases (Awesomelibrary, Kidsclick, Factmonster and IvyJoy). During library and literacy periods, the Teacher Librarian and Classroom Teacher partnered to help the students navigate the databases. Students were also taught mini lessons on how to: use the non-fiction text features, find the main idea in a text and check the validity of their research. Once students were comfortable navigating the databases, they could start researching a topic of choice to write a speech that they would present to their peers. Students used sticky notes and outline pages (Appendix E) to help organize their information. Throughout the research process, students conferenced with classmates and teachers to identify gaps in their research. Students then continued researching to fill in the gaps. The links to the databases were attached to the class wiki which allowed students easier access from home and school.

**Findings**

A. EQAO reading tests (Appendix D)
The first test was administered at the beginning of the project before any explicit instruction about non-fiction texts. The second test was administered once the students had been exposed to a variety of non-fiction texts and research. The third test was administered after the students finished their research and were nearing the end of the writing process.

The results in Appendix D show that the majority of the students achieved in the level 2 and 3 range on all three tests. Any increase in overall scores was marginal, but students did show higher achievement in the multiple choice sections. In the open response sections, students had difficulty finding evidence from the text to support their answers. Student achievement on the open response sections of the EQAO reading tests mirrors the challenges that they encountered throughout the research process. Finding relevant evidence for their projects was difficult for the grade 3 students who had done little or no research in the past. One student commented on the survey that, “you have to look really hard to find non-fiction information.” After finding information on the databases, students had to go through the process of recording the information and sifting through it to find relevant and important data for their project. Students focused on finding evidence in the text by using subheadings, captions, diagrams and other non-fiction text features to help them understand the text and organize the information they read.

B. Non-fiction Text Survey: Before and After (Appendix A and B)
Data collected from the before and after surveys showed a shift in student attitude towards non-fiction texts. After exposure to a variety of non-fiction texts, students now feel more confident to use non-fiction texts to find information. Now that students have some knowledge of the text features, many noted that they would be more willing to use subheadings, captions, bolded words, photographs and diagrams to help them understand the texts. It should also be noted that students’ enjoyment of reading nonfiction texts also increased.
C. Student Reflections: Oral Interviews by the Teacher Librarian (Appendix C)
The results of the oral interview taken by the grade 3 students, illustrate that more students were able to identify more features of a non-fiction text after the specific teaching of the research process through using a variety of technologies. Students were interviewed prior to the specific teaching of the research process and the features of a non-fiction text and were also asked the same six questions after. Not only were they able to identify more features of a non-fiction text, but they were able to explain why more of these features are used. They gave more in-depth and specific explanations regarding these features and why they are used within non-fiction texts. The students have a better understanding on how to use these features in the research process in both written texts and Web 2.0 tools (databases, online research sites, online books etc.).

Many students also changed their thinking in terms of what they would use a non-fiction text for. Many individuals had not thought of reading a non-fiction text for their own personal enjoyment. They specifically felt as though these resources were for educational purposes only, meaning that they would use it for assignments at school. Many now realize that they can read non-fiction texts for enjoyment and their own specific interests.

Overall, the results of the interview questions demonstrate that the students are more knowledgeable about non-fiction texts and their features. The majority of the students now feel that they understand how to use these features within the research process to help them develop a more concrete understanding of the non-fiction topic being explored.

Conclusions and Future Directions

We can conclude that the strategic teaching of the research process did impact the writing process and the understanding of non-fiction texts. First, students were extremely engaged by the variety of technologies used throughout the project. They enjoyed working on the SMARTboard and were on task when researching on the laptops and netbooks. “The relationship of these new communication tools with our students is what schools and libraries need to absorb and embrace. We are just beginning to realize the power of technology on our communication, research and critical thinking” (OSLA 43). If we can start integrating technology in the primary grades daily, we will raise student confidence and familiarity, therefore increasing efficacy.

In addition, we recommend the strategic teaching of the research process to students of all grade levels. Allowing the students adequate time to research and evaluate the information also impacted the writing process. The first draft can be difficult for students because many are unsure of what write. After spending a significant amount of time researching, evaluating and recording their facts, the students were able to easily transfer their information from their jot notes to write a first draft. Students also felt confident about their topic because during conferences with the classroom teacher and their peers, they had to explain the information that they had gathered. Many students were enthusiastic about presenting their findings to the class because they had such a good grasp of their topic. Students also said that they look forward to other research projects because they “know where to find information.”

Finally, in order to give students future opportunities to engage in the inquiry process, collaboration between the Teacher Librarian and the Classroom Teacher is essential. “Effective application of an inquiry model can transform novice learners into independent learners, confident of their information
and power” (OSLA 25). Having two teachers involved in the learning process allows time for scaffolding to build confidence that will eventually lead to independent thinking. Our belief is that a collaborative approach to teaching can encourage a collaborative approach to learning that will benefit both teachers and students.

References

Appendix A

Nonfiction Text Survey (Before)

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I would rather read nonfiction than fiction.</td>
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3. When reading nonfiction texts, I use the subheadings to help me understand the text.

<table>
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<th>Response Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>11</td>
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</table>

answered question: 19
skipped question: 0

4. When reading nonfiction texts, I use the bolded words help me understand the text.

<table>
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<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>sometimes</td>
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<tr>
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answered question: 19
skipped question: 0

5. When reading nonfiction texts, I use the diagrams to help me understand the text.

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skipped question: 0
6. When reading nonfiction texts, I use the photographs to help me understand the text.

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answered question 19
skipped question 0

7. When reading nonfiction texts, I use the captions to help me understand the text.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
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answered question 19
skipped question 0
Nonfiction texts can be very helpful for a project. Nonfiction is a real book. I think nonfiction is helping me about information text. like about animals, plants and more things. I like nonfiction texts because they make me smarter. That it has facts that can be useful.
Appendix B

Nonfiction Text Student Survey (After)

1. I understand the difference between fiction and nonfiction texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
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<td>5.3%</td>
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answered question 19
skipped question 0

2. I would rather read nonfiction than fiction.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
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</table>

answered question 19
skipped question 0
3. When reading nonfiction texts, I use the subheadings to help me understand the text.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 19
skipped question: 0

4. When reading nonfiction texts, I use the bolded words help me understand the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 19
skipped question: 0
5. When reading nonfiction texts, I use the diagrams to help me understand the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 19
skipped question 0

7. When reading nonfiction texts, I use the captions to help me understand the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 19
skipped question 0
I love to read nonfiction texts.
You can find information with nonfiction texts.
I like non-fiction text because you get to learn cool information.
think non fiction is awesome but sometimes reading it it's hard to pronounce some word or even what they mean.
I would love to read nonfiction texts.
I like non-fiction and fiction because it helps me learn and it helps me do speeches which is great for your health and its great for my health.
That I like it.
I really like non-fiction text because it helps me get information when needed.
I like that nonfiction texts is fun to find the texts.
I like nonfiction texts because they help you with a lot of stuff like researching products and other stuff for school.
Non fiction texts tell you lots of information.
When I read nonfiction text, I learn lots of facts and information.
Appendix C

Interview Questions

- What are some features of a non-fiction text?
- Why are these features used in non-fiction texts?
- Why do you often see bright or bold coloured words in non-fiction texts?
- What is the purpose of using labelled diagrams in non-fiction texts?
- What are subtitles and why are they used?
- What would you use a non-fiction text for?
Appendix D

EQAO Reading Test #1: Canada’s Dollar Coins

Overall

- Level 4 - 20%
- Level 3 - 35%
- Level 2 - 30%
- Level 1 - 15%
Appendix E

My Non-Fiction Report

Name: _________________  Date: _______________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Engine or Data Base</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the main topic of this website: _______________________________________________

Write 3 new facts that you learned about this topic from this website:

• _______________________________________________________
  _______________________________________________________
  _______________________________________________________

• _______________________________________________________
  _______________________________________________________
  _______________________________________________________

• _______________________________________________________
  _______________________________________________________
  _______________________________________________________

List any new vocabulary (words) you learned from this website.
Use clues from the text, your own schema or a dictionary to find the meanings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Write a question you still have about this topic.

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________
Victoria Public School

Collaborative Inquiry Team: Dani Hayes and Debbie Demers-Hewitt, Teacher Librarians

Inquiry Question: How can the Blue Spruce Reading Program and its related activities be used to promote reading enjoyment in our grade two students?

Introduction

We wanted to explore effective teaching techniques and strategies within the library to promote the love of reading and books. We chose to implement the Blue Spruce Reading Program. The Blue Spruce Reading Program is intended for Grades K-2. Students read ten nominated picture books during the school year and vote for their favourite book. The winning author and illustrator receive the Blue Spruce Award. The OSLA goals of the Blue Spruce Program are:

• to promote reading for enjoyment and information  
• to make children aware of quality Canadian books  
• to develop the student’s skill in evaluating a book  
• to provide opportunities for students to discuss books

It is our belief that the teacher-librarian plays a critical role in promoting the love of reading in children. Studies have shown schools with teacher-librarians have reading enjoyment scores that are higher than average (People for Education, 2011).

Vision

It was our goal to use the Blue Spruce Reading Program to promote an enthusiasm for reading for pleasure and for new information. To increase student motivation to read, reading should not just be an extension of school work (People for Education, 2011). We wanted to create experiences and activities that would allow the students to be fully engaged in the reading process in the library. It is our hope that these experiences will transfer to the classroom and home in which students read for pleasure and to learn new information and not just for school work. It is our belief that a love for reading for pleasure will help enhance students’ learning in all areas of the curriculum. Studies have shown that students with a more positive attitude toward reading tend to be more successful in all subject areas (People for Education, 2011).

Theory of Action

If we implement the Blue Spruce Reading Program students will be exposed to high-quality Canadian literature and reading enjoyment will increase and school performance will improve.
**Justification for the Study**

This topic is important because the 2010/11 EQAO surveys have confirmed a disturbing trend: Since 1998/99 the percentage of students in grade 3 who report they like to read has declined by almost a third, from 76% in 98/99 to only 50% in 2010/11 (People for Education, 2011). While visiting the library we noticed our primary students were not interested in reading for pleasure or to learn new information. We also noticed a lot of movement in the library - students were switching books often and not becoming fully engaged in a book. They appeared to be more interested in socializing then reading. We had concerns about how to promote the love of reading and books. As teacher-librarians we felt it was our responsibility to promote high-quality literature and the love of reading for pleasure and new information.

**Data Collection**

Two reading enjoyment surveys were developed to determine the reading interests of the students. The surveys were administered to a grade two class at Victoria Public School.

The first survey questions were as follows:
1) Do you enjoy reading?
2) Do you read at home?
3) Do you read at home for school work?
4) Do you read with someone at home?
5) Do you like to talk about what you have read?
6) How often do you read at home?
7) What topic do you most like to read about?
8) Do you think you are a good reader?
9) Do you like coming to the library?
10) Do you visit the public library?

The second survey questions were as follows:
1) Why do you enjoy coming to the library?
2) What would make you library visit more enjoyable?
3) Is it easy or hard for you to find a “Just Right” book in the library?
4) What could the library do to make you enjoy reading more?

**Findings for First Survey**

We were surprised to see that 76% of the students enjoyed reading but only 50% were reading daily for pleasure. Only 40% said they read with someone at home. It is our desire to increase these percentages. We asked the question: What topic do you most like to read about? to make sure our library collection matched the interests of the students. New books were then purchased after the survey to ensure the collection matched the reading interests of the students. We observed that purchasing the new books and placing them in a new books section significantly increased the level of interest in reading for pleasure.
Findings for Second Survey

The responses indicated the students wanted more time on the computers and more time to read independently for pleasure. Only 5% of the students stated the Blue Spruce Program and activities would make their library visit more enjoyable. We were committed to meeting the students interests but did not want to deviate too much from our research question. We decided it was still best to continue the Blue Spruce Reading Program, however, our activities revolved around more computer time. For example, after reading the Blue Spruce book “Giraffe and Bird” the students used the computers to research giraffes. They loved the book and the activity! Students began asking if they could do more research after reading other Blue Spruce Books. We came to the conclusion that when the students were using the computers to do the research they were also engaged and reading for pleasure.

Other Findings

• Students are always asking if we are going to read another Blue Spruce Book.
• Students and parents are purchasing Blue Spruce Books and other books from the Blue Spruce authors.
• Blue Spruce books from this year and previous years are always checked out.
• Teachers commented on how much their students enjoyed researching animals from the Blue Spruce Books.
• Students are recommending Blue Spruce books to their teachers.
• When students are in line you can hear them discussing their favourite Blue Spruce Book.
• Students are asking for other books written by the Blue Spruce authors.
• There is less movement and socializing - students are reading independently and quietly in the library.

Finally, Grade 2 students were asked to rate the Blue Spruce Reading Program on a scale of 1 to 3; 1 meaning they did not enjoy it, 2 it was okay and 3 they loved it. We were very pleased with the results, 72% of the students said they loved the Blue Spruce Reading Program and only 23% thought it was okay.

Recommendations

In conclusion, we found the Blue Spruce Reading Program and related activities to be effective in promoting the love of reading for pleasure and new information. We noticed that the combination of Blue Spruce Books and activities revolving around technology was the most effective way to improve reading enjoyment in the grade two students at Victoria Public School. We recommend beginning the program as soon as the nominations are announced. We started the program in January and felt we didn’t have enough time to spend on each book and the activities that followed. A more comprehensive approach to each book and activity would have been extremely successful.
References

People for Education. (2011) Reading for Joy. Toronto

Ontario’s Blue Spruce Reading Program Grades kindergarten - Grade 2 retrieved from http://library.queensu.ca/webedu/pj/bluespruce.pdf