



Social Studies Explorations

– A Professional Journey



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Archived copies of Explorations can be found at

http://www.nrlc.net/social_studies/NRLC_SS_Newsletter_Feb_2007.pdf

Issue One:

Critical Thinking

Issue Two:

Assessment

Issue Three:

Historical Thinking

Issue Four:

Inquiry-Based Learning

Guiding Question:

What is inquiry and inquiry-based learning and how can Social Studies teachers be successful in implementing inquiry-based learning activities?

Abstract:

Inquiry is when students experience the wonder of exploration and the quest for understanding. Inquiry-based learning involves questioning, seeking answers, and constructing new understandings. Inquiry-based learning replaces lessons that rely solely on “knowledge telling.” Looking at Social Studies learner outcomes through the lens of inquiry involves new pedagogical practices for teachers. Following a model for inquiry will assist teachers and students as they implement inquiry-based learning activities in their classrooms. See the full article on pages 2 & 3

Northwest Regional Learning Consortium - Zone 1

Alberta Education Renews Funding for Social Studies Implementation

Alberta Education recently announced that funding in support of social studies implementation has been extended for an additional three years. NRLC's advisory committee has had a preliminary meeting to discuss strategies to enhance support for Zone One social studies teachers. Revisions of the implementation project need to hear from YOU!

NRLC Survey of Social Studies Teachers

What works for you? What are the best ways to meet your needs? What would you like to see in your School? District? Zone? We are asking these questions in our **annual project evaluation surveys** which can be found on our website at www.nrlc.net under the Social Studies link. Please go there today and complete the short five minute survey that applies to you. Tell us what you have found useful and what you would like us to do differently. We value your feedback and will use it to guide much of our planning for next year. Be heard! Complete the short survey.

Upcoming PD Opportunities

See the last page of this newsletter for

exciting upcoming PD opportunities. There will be summer institutes in Edmonton and Grande Prairie. The ATA Social Studies Conference will be held in Jasper in October, and Anne Davies is coming to Zone One next year – all the details are on the NRLC website.

Updates on the Web

The Online Guide to Implementation now includes materials at the grades K-5, 7, 8 and 10 levels. You can access the Online Guide through the LearnAlberta website at www.LearnAlberta.ca.

Additional Resources:

Vantage is an online service from 2Learn.ca, will keep you up to date on resources available as you meet the needs of learners today. Issue includes new links to valuable web-based Social Studies resources. It is quick, easy to use and absolutely free – you can subscribe to Vantage at <http://www.2Learn.ca/main/registration/default.html>.

Reach2Teach is a monthly newsletter from Alberta's VC Regional Leads Network. Included in each issue are opportunities for participation in exciting video-conferenced learning experi-

ences around the province, and around the world. Check It out! Subscribe to **Reach2Teach** at <http://www.2Learn.ca/main/registration/default.html>.

NRLC Email updates

Did you know that you can sign up on our website for automatic email updates from NRLC? *An easy and convenient way to stay informed about PD opportunities!* www.nrlc.net

Bookings for Next year

We are already booking 2007-2008 PD events, school PD days and meeting a variety of other special requests. Please contact us - we can provide PD to help you improve student learning!

Questions or program suggestions can be directed to:

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NRLC Zone One

Social Studies Project Coordinator



NRLC
Northwest REGIONAL LEARNING Consortium
www.nrlc.net

Inquiry-Based Learning

Submitted by Lorine Sweeney

Introduction

Recently a neighbour shared with me a provincial examination taken by 8th Graders in 1895. The caption read, "Look, Could You Pass this Exam?"

Questions on the exam included:

1. Give nine rules for capital letters.
2. Give the principal parts of lie, lay, and run.
3. Name the events connected with the following dates: 1607, 1492, 1849.
4. Give an account of the discovery of America by Columbus.

The neighbor remarked, "And they said kids weren't learning back then!" I was struggling for words to explain my position that, no, students really weren't learning back then and, unfortunately many similar situations still exist today. Upon further reflection, I realized that I needed to explain to my neighbour that students exposed to the type of questioning illustrated on the exam are not given opportunity to develop deep under-

standing. They are not encouraged to connect and evaluate; they lack opportunities to participate in meaningful learning experiences – experiences best accomplished through inquiry-based learning.

The new Social Studies Program of Studies is moving beyond fact-finding and teacher-formed questions. It is based on developing critical thinking skills, processes, values and attitudes. It reflects an inquiry-based approach to learning.

What is Inquiry?

Inquiry is an approach to learning that steers away from the kind of "knowledge telling" illustrated in the example of the grade eight exam. Inquiry is "the dynamic process of being open to wonder and puzzlements and coming to know and understand the world" (Galileo Education Network, 2004).

What is Inquiry-based learning?

Effective inquiry-based learning is when students are exposed to learn-

ing experiences that are not about memorizing and regurgitating facts. Facts change, and information is abundant. Also, effective inquiry is not designed to lead students to the "right answer." There often is more than one "right" answer.

Effective inquiry-based learning as defined by Alberta Learning (2004) is "a process where students are involved in their learning, formulate questions, investigate widely and then build new understandings, meanings and knowledge. That knowledge is new to the students and may be used to answer a question, to develop a solution or to support a position or point of view. The knowledge is usually presented to others and may result in some sort of action" (Alberta Learning, 2004, p.1).

Research for Deliberate Inquiry

The new Social Studies Program of Studies includes specific outcomes for skills and processes designed to encourage students to apply their

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Phases of Inquiry, Teaching Tips and Key Learnings

Phases of Inquiry from Focus on Inquiry	Sample examples of Focus on Inquiry Teaching Tip	Examples of Key Learnings from Social Studies Teachers
Planning Stage	Help students prepare for retrieval in the planning stage. Model brainstorming for potential sources and help define search terms.	Students should formulate their own questions. Students seek understanding through questioning.
Retrieving Stage	Teach students to evaluate websites – currency, coverage, objectivity, accuracy, and authority	Assess every stage as you go along. Also, allow students time to reflect at each stage.
Processing Stage	Teach critical thinking skills Teach critical reading skills	Knowledge is constructed, not reproduced, and students construct understanding through inquiry-based learning.
Creating Stage	Give opportunities to complete a draft creation and revise after input from others	Don't give time for too much "glitzy" technology. Use technology for what you can't do otherwise.
Sharing Stage	Provide opportunity to think about the audience, complete presentation notes and practice.	Provide students a chance to write about why they chose a particular sharing method.
Evaluating Stage	Establish pre-determined evaluation criteria and evaluate the final product as part of the whole	Students can assess their inquiry in the form of a personal flow chart

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learning. One of the specific skills outcomes, Research for Deliberate Inquiry, is intended to develop learners who are self-motivated problem solvers and co-creators of knowledge. These students apply selected skills, evaluate appropriate resources, and use suitable technology.

Focus on Inquiry Model

In 1994 Alberta Learning published *Focus on Inquiry*, a resource designed to support teachers as they incorporate inquiry-based learning in their classrooms.

The inquiry model outlined in *Focus on Inquiry* includes six phases of inquiry:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| (a) planning | (b) retrieving |
| (c) processing | (d) creating |
| (e) sharing | (f) evaluating |

with ongoing reflection included at each phase.

Within the document, each phase is presented through six lenses, one being teaching or “teaching tips.” During the past two years, Social Studies teachers throughout the province have been attending inservices related to inquiry and the inquiry model. As teachers completed my inservices, I asked them to write down their key learnings. The table on page one includes one summarized example of a Focus on Inquiry teaching tip for each phase and one key learning as expressed by Alberta teachers as they learned about the inquiry model.

As social studies teachers become accustomed to using an inquiry

approach in their classrooms, they will realize how powerful this approach is in developing proficient, investigative, and self-motivated citizens.

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- sharing
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with ongoing reflection included at each phase.

Annotated Resources, Web Sites, Books, etc.

Annotated Resources, Web Sites, Books etc.:

Focus on Inquiry:

Written by University of Alberta professors Dr. Dianne Oberg and Dr. Jennifer Branch, this resource is designed as a cross-curricular teachers' guide to implementing inquiry-based learning. Curricular connections to inquiry, including the new Social Studies Program of Studies are addressed. The document incorporates suggestions for teachers as they design inquiry activities and as they work through the six stages of inquiry. The document also focuses on research, metacognition, and professional growth. Available at http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/bySubject/focusoninquiry.pdf

Galileo Educational Network Association creates and promotes leading edge educational practices through research, collaboration, and professional learnings. The inquiry & ICT area of their site includes articles on the nature of inquiry, exhibits of ICT infused inquiry projects, and on-line resources. Available at www.galileo.org/tips.html

The Inquiry Page:

This is a virtual community of educators who create, discuss, and share inquiry experiences. Innovative learning experiences are shared in a collaborative environment. You will need to join to become a member, but once there, you are able to share, collaborate and grow as an inquirer. Available at <http://www.inquiry.uiuc.edu/index.php3>

Concept to Classroom houses a series of free self-paced workshops about today's educational issues. The Inquiry-

based Learning page houses a workshop that is informative and readable. The workshop takes the reader through topics such as the nature of inquiry-based learning, a comparison of inquiry to the traditional approach, benefits, classroom connections, and critical perspectives. The page leads to video clips of demonstrations of inquiry classrooms and facilitation tips. Available at www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class

Mavericks Teacher Resources:

Using Inquiry Learning: This website represents history by using the voices and opinions of people important to the development of Alberta. The page begins with an outline of how to use inquiry-based learning and then utilizes images and audio and visual files to allow students to become thinkers about the “real” history of Alberta. The site leads the teacher in using ICT skills, has curriculum connections to the social studies program of studies, and incorporates ideas for assessment. Available at <http://www.glenbow.org/mavericks/teacher/english/index.html>

Biography:

Dr. Lorine Sweeney is the AISI/Curriculum coordinator with Buffalo Trail Public Schools. She also teaches on-line courses to Masters' students for the University of Alberta Teacher-Librarian by Distant Learning Program. These courses are directly related to inquiry-based learning. Previously, Lorine spent several years leading inquiry projects in classroom settings. Both Lorine's Masters and Doctorate degrees relate to research about constructivist teaching and resource-based inquiry learning.



“ZONE ONE SUMMER INSTITUTE”

2nd Annual in Grande Prairie

August 20 (1 day only)

Program Overview (*if you haven't participated in a program overview session yet please register for this day*)

Facilitator: Wally Diefenthaler

August 21-22 (2 day sessions)

**Grade 5 Social Studies—
Something Old or Something New?**

Facilitator: Sherry Bennett

**Extreme Makeover: Using Technology
as a Mind Tool within Alberta's**

Grade 8 Social Studies

Facilitator: Brenda Dyck

Get Going With Globalization (Grade 10)

Facilitator: Wally Diefenthaler

Examples will be taken from the above grade levels—teachers from other grades welcome!

“MAKING CONNECTIONS”

4th Summer Institute—Edmonton

August 14 - 17, 2007

Lister Center, University of Alberta

Connect with teachers from across Alberta!

Who Should Attend? Grade 6, 9, and 11
Social Studies Teachers, Curr. Coordinators.

Sessions will be presented in English and French throughout the four days.

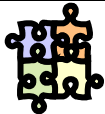
What Will We Be Doing?

- Exploring the new social studies program with a focus on Grades 6, 9, and 11.
- Sessions to examine assessment in the new program, the teaching of democracy, conversations around citizenship and identity, nation & nationalism
- Information about new resources and the use of technology in effective and innovative ways!

*Contact your district curriculum supervisor or
Leslie Snyder for further information.*

There is no registration fee!

**2007 ATA Social Studies Council
Annual Conference—Jasper, AB**



October 19-21, 2007
**“Curriculum Crossword—
Decipher the Puzzle”**

There will be excellent opportunities for Social Studies teachers across the province to be involved in on-going dialogue and excellent PD opportunities. In addition to sessions presented by our Social Studies colleagues and other interested educators, **Avi Lewis and The Arrogant Worms** will be featured keynotes. Registration forms, presenter forms and additional information can be found on the specialist council website at www.ssc.teachers.ab.ca or by contacting Les Champ (Conference Director) at lechamp@shaw.ca. *Hope to see you there!*

Anne Davies In Zone One	2007-2008
Leading the Way to Assessment for Learning—Part 1	Thursday, Sept 27, 2007
Assessment for Learning: Practical, Powerful and Time Saving	Friday, Sept 28, 2007
Building an Assessment Plan for Social Studies (Grades 5 - 10)	Thursday, Feb 21, 2008
Building an Assessment Plan for One Subject Area (Div 3 & 4)	Friday, Feb 22, 2008
Leading the Way to Assessment for Learning—Part 2	Thursday, Apr 24, 2008
Collecting Evidence of Learning & Reporting Using Symbols & %'s	Friday, Apr 25, 2008

For further information check our website: www.nrlc.net



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