

**The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat
Webcast Professional Learning Series**

Viewer's Guide

Learning is the Work

Multi-media resource for professional learning



reach every student



On this DVD you will find a Print and Video Resources folder which contains WMV files for PowerPoint presentations, this Viewer's Guide (PDF) and the LNS monograph Collaborative Teacher Inquiry (PDF).

To order the multi-media package

Learning is the Work

Contact Service Ontario

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The webcast segments and related resources are also accessible online at www.curriculum.org/secretariat/work/

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Overview

This resource is about innovation in classroom teaching and learning. It tells the story, through video, of a group of Grade 8 students and their teachers who create a “Thinking Matrix” to improve comprehension and writing skills and in the process transform their classroom practice. They become immersed in acquiring critical new knowledge, trying it out in different media and reflecting on where they need to go next. Teachers and students are learning together and from each other. Learning *is* the work, as teachers learn about teaching and students learn about themselves as learners as well as content.

The teachers in the video demonstrate their belief that every student can learn, while the students convey growing confidence in themselves as learners. They are as engaged in understanding how language works as they are in analyzing – and practising – thinking and reasoning skills. They work seamlessly with old and new technologies.

They practise teamwork and collaboration. Students and teachers together set their learning goals and work collaboratively to achieve them.

According to Moss and Brookhart (2009), three essential questions help to set up students for success:

- **Where do I want to go?**
- **Where am I now?**
- **How will I get there?**

In this video, you will see these questions at work, guiding the ongoing inquiry and reflection of teachers and students alike.

Learning is the work ...

is Secret Four in Michael Fullan's *The Six Secrets of Change*. He suggests that an effective organization does three things:

1. identifies critical knowledge
2. transfers knowledge
3. verifies learning and success

Fullan emphasizes that you don't get shared understanding from workshops or site visits, but rather by doing the work on a day-to-day basis and *learning from it*.

Where it all began ...

During their work in History, it became apparent that the students were struggling with complex texts, especially in the content areas. In order to improve their comprehension and writing, students needed to understand the structure of different non-fiction text forms.

Working in a variety of groupings, students examined features of different text forms. As they discovered each form's unique characteristics, they co-constructed a chart to organize their information. This chart later became known as the "Thinking Matrix." Students and teachers generated success criteria and deconstructed exemplars of the text forms to include on the chart. These tools were posted as part of the organizer to guide student work. Students valued and understood how to use this tool to support their reading and writing. The organizer continues to be revised as student thinking evolves.

After an in-depth study of several text forms, students applied their new learning to the documentary about Al Gore's efforts to raise awareness about the environment, *An Inconvenient Truth*. They analyzed the film's key messages and determined whether the text was biased. Students selected one aspect of *An Inconvenient Truth* to explore further, then stated their personal opinions based on their inquiry. This learning experience helped students develop their critical literacy skills.

Changes in classroom practice ...

In these classrooms, students are included throughout every phase of the teaching-learning cycle. They are actively engaged in authentic inquiry, self-assessment and reflection. Students understand the relevance of developing digital and critical literacy skills. Through their collaborative inquiry, they learn about content, process and themselves as learners.

Through their work, students develop a critical stance and become more metacognitively aware of themselves as learners. Teachers become more consciously skilled as they reflect deeply on the impact of their practice on student learning.

Each voice in this learning community is valued. The relationship between teachers and learners is one of trust, reflection and honesty. The focus is to improve student achievement by improving teacher practice and, to that end, probing, challenging and action-oriented questions are welcome.

Everyone learns in this environment and everyone is energized by the potential of collaborative, authentic inquiry.

Webcast Segments

New Learning

Investigating Text Forms

Students gain insight into the elements of six writing forms and the thinking required for each one by deconstructing and constructing samples of each. Students and teachers collaboratively create an organizer for their analysis of each form, including success criteria, exemplars and meta-tags (details to look for or words to use – e.g., “in my opinion”). They return often to consult this tool for support.

Students deepen their understanding of various text forms as they participate in the construction of this organizer. In your opinion, what was the most significant learning for students as they worked with various text forms?

What did the teachers need to consider when they designed the task of co-creating the visual organizer?

How might you use the strategy of deconstructing exemplars in Science or History?

“We become more proficient in our work when we explore students’ work and become deliberate students of our students.” MCDONALD, 2007

Establishing Success Criteria

Students deconstruct six writing forms and determine what makes each one unique and effective. They collaboratively decide on success criteria for each text form and post their ideas on the Thinking Matrix. This graphic organizer remains posted as a resource for students to refer to during their inquiry.

What do you see as the benefits to students of the co-construction of success criteria for each writing form?

What pre-teaching would you need to do in order to make this task doable for students?

What new learning do you think took place for students and teachers as a result of working with success criteria?

Students Moderate Peer Writing

Students use the Thinking Matrix to guide their moderation and deconstruction of peer writing samples. First, they identify the type of writing according to the meta-tags. Then they confirm the strengths and needs of the piece against the success criteria. Students improve their vocabulary, communication skills and understanding of the content and process during the moderation and consensus-building process.

How might you make students aware of what they are learning through the moderation process?

As students assess different text forms, they are applying their new learning and developing the vocabulary with which to think and talk about text. How might you further scaffold this task for students who need additional support?

“Thinking with others during focused discussions creates the potential for students to become much more aware of their actual level of knowledge.” MOSS, 2009

Teacher Reflections

In an effort to improve students' literacy skills, teachers and students address the Ontario Reading expectations that are the most robust: 1.6 (extending understanding), 1.7 (analyzing texts), 1.8 (responding to and evaluating texts) and 1.9 (point of view). Teachers engage in their own professional learning in order to update their knowledge base of traditional and digital literacy skills.

Teachers integrate design-down planning, the inquiry process, technology and cross-curricular content to come up with a focus for the students. The big idea they zero in on for the class to explore is Conflict and Change, and the essential question is, “Louis Riel, Hero or Rebel?”

Teachers engage in the deconstruction of student writing to determine next steps for teaching and learning.

After watching this segment, what do you think was the most significant change these teachers made to their practice?

As you view this segment, you will hear teachers discussing many ideas and issues. Which insights would you like to explore further in relation to your own practice?

You may wish to use the following organizer to jot down ideas as you watch this segment.

<i>Aspect of Practice</i>	<i>Insight</i>	<i>Personal Reflections / Questions</i>

“Our impact on students’ learning is seen clearly through their work.”

MACDONALD, 2007

“Inquiry constructs understanding of the classroom encounter where instruction, curriculum and student actions intersect.”

MOORE, 2004

Applying New Learning

Digital Monologues

Students explore point of view by writing and presenting a monologue on a topic that is of passionate interest to them. Their challenge is to write and present their view so clearly that the audience would be able to imagine the other side of the conversation. This experience allows students to develop a deeper understanding of point of view. It also helps them clarify their thoughts and feelings on a personal level.

This task was relevant to these students, and, therefore, thinking deeply and considering the “other’s” point of view was authentic and meaningful. What cautions would you as a teacher consider before assigning such a task?

What teaching do you think occurred prior to this presentation in order to set students up for success?

What new learning do you think happened for the students and the teachers as a result of this experience?

“Discussion dramas provide opportunity for sustained conversation around an issue, a chance to consider and engage alternative points of views, to take a tentative position, to articulate where one stands and why**”** WILHELM, 2002

Digital Report

After considering their purpose and audience, the students decide that iMovie and GarageBand are effective digital tools for demonstrating their learning. As their culminating task, they present their research on the Red River Rebellion and their opinion on whether Louis Riel was a hero or a rebel. Showing the iMovies to the class allows for authentic peer assessment and feedback. Students are fully engaged throughout their inquiry as they learn content and process in an authentic and independent way.

Students are able to utilize their knowledge of point of view to identify bias and to recognize the value of empathy.

Authentic inquiry fully engaged these students in learning content, process and media literacy skills. What do you think teachers learned as a result of this experience?

What was the enduring learning that occurred for students as a result of this task?

What might be the challenges of introducing digital learning to your students?

Digital Interview

To further explore “point of view,” students use the interview process and a variety of digital tools to record and share information that represents an immigrant’s journey, from their own perspectives. Students are challenged and fully engaged in the process as they create a photo essay using iMovie. They learn about immigration from an immigrant’s point of view. They also learn about inquiry in an authentic way and, in most cases, change their thinking about the immigrant experience, as a result of their new learning.

Students learned the value of using primary sources to gain information for their inquiries. What prior learning was necessary in order for these students to be successful with their interviews? How might you assess this task?

Students were given the freedom to engage in an authentic inquiry. What do you think might present the greatest challenge to students? How would you support students to deal with this challenge? What might be the greatest challenge related to this type of learning for teachers? How might you address this challenge?

Blogging

As students engage in their inquiry, multiple and sometimes opposing points of view surface and heated debates develop in class. The teachers create a blog, coaching students on how to engage in open-minded conversations that nurture thinking and keep ideas flowing.

The blog motivates students to do their best thinking and writing. It provides for peer review and assessment, knowledge creation and innovation. Participation in the blog stretches everyone's thinking and provides opportunity for further research and reflection on the part of the students. Using the blog enables students to read each other's work and reflect on their own writing until they feel confident that they are providing their best possible response.

Blogging connects learners. There are many benefits to blogging. What might the challenges be?

How would you capitalize on the benefits and minimize the challenges of using blogging with your students?

Digital Literary Response

Podcasts allow students to listen to each other's thinking and language. Students develop open-mindedness and critical thinking skills as they think about the impact of war from the varying perspectives of characters introduced during the reading of *The Faithful Elephants* by Yukio Tsuchiya. Students are asked to write "in role" and digitally convey the thoughts, feelings and actions of a secondary character in the story. Students are highly motivated to write, record and upload their ideas to iTunes and their iPods.

How might you integrate media literacy and the use of digital tools into your classroom program?

This task is a rich source of assessment information about reading comprehension, writing, media literacy and oral communication. How might you assess this task and make students aware of how much they learned through the process of creating the podcast?

Designing a Robust, Open-Ended Task

The Task: Teacher Rationale

An inquiry approach to learning offers students choice and voice in selecting a topic of interest and a format for presenting their learning. Teachers intentionally plan their lessons and student tasks based on the Ontario curriculum expectations and on what ongoing assessment reveals their students need in order to continue to develop their communication skills. They follow the design-down model, which begins with the end in mind, and plan accordingly in order to move student learning forward. This requires teachers to be actively involved throughout the inquiry, providing just-in-time support as students independently tackle their task.

What do you think might be most challenging about creating a robust open-ended task? How might you address this challenge? How might you know when you have created an appropriate task?

Defining the Task

Students and teachers clarify the task by reviewing success criteria and the related rubric that guided their inquiry and writing. The teacher scaffolds the writing task, explaining each major component as outlined in the rubric. The class also discusses how to determine the validity of their sources and how to identify the missing voice. Using the Thinking Matrix, success criteria and rubric, students develop their inquiry skills and become more independent as learners.

Although success criteria and exemplars clarify expectations for students, some educators believe that there is a danger that creativity and innovation will suffer. How will you ensure that students benefit from using success criteria and exemplars without compromising the quality and originality of their work?

Preparing for Inquiry

Students discuss the Al Gore documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, with a focus on point of view. They refer to the questions and ideas they jotted down during the viewing to select a question for their inquiry. They subsequently investigate this topic, considering diverse perspectives in order to come up with a personal view.

The teachers and students in this resource are engaged in inquiry learning. In your opinion, what is the enduring learning for students facilitated through this type of task? What might the enduring learning be for teachers?

Developing a Critical Stance

Students in this segment are engaged in inquiry using digital and traditional sources of information, and are developing their critical literacy and information skills. Students use the success criteria as a guide during their analysis of *An Inconvenient Truth* to look for point of view and whether Gore's work is biased. Students present their writing in small groups, giving each other feedback and suggested next steps to move their thinking forward.

This rich task is helping students develop their collaborative, critical thinking and writing skills. What assessment strategies might you use to identify student strengths and needs in these areas?

What is the learning for teachers and for students that results from the collaborative examination of student writing? What specifically do teachers need to be observing?

How might you support students to become more metacognitively aware of themselves as learners?

Reflecting on Learning and Success

Teachers and Students Debrief

Students and teachers in this classroom are collaborative and reflective. They think critically about their learning, celebrate their successes and determine ways to push their learning forward. As students examine their new skills and understandings, they recognize the relevance of their learning to their future lives.

Motivation is a key factor that impacts on learning. What do you think motivated these teachers and students to be so committed to their learning? How might you use this insight in your own practice?

Educating Ourselves: Reflections

The Grade 8 teachers and their administrators meet often as a team to engage in professional dialogue about moving forward their students' learning. Based on their ongoing assessment, they adjust their teaching approaches, Thinking Matrix and assessment tools to meet the needs of their students. Their understanding evolves, as do their teaching strategies, digital integration, tasks and assessment tools. Honest and open-to-learning conversations result in changes that make a difference for their students.

What aspects of the teachers' reflections resonated with you in relation to your own practice? How might you explore these aspects further?

In-depth with Michael Fullan

Michael Fullan explains learning is the work as what happens between professional learning sessions. He discusses the benefits of job-embedded professional learning and how they can be sustained.

What might you do to support on-going meaningful learning with your staff?

What cautions might you suggest practitioners be aware of when engaging in job-embedded professional learning?

Sustainability becomes less of an issue as a result of effective leadership and success. How might you support sustainability with your team?

General Viewing

The following questions are intended to spark connections and reflection related to the viewer's own practice. Please consider these prompts as you watch *Learning Is the Work*.

The teachers featured in this resource are fully engaged in their new learning. What suggestions might you make in order to help them maintain their energized focus?

After viewing the clips featured in this resource, what major shift in practice do you think might be responsible for the positive impact on student achievement? How might this insight influence your practice?

The students are very involved in learning about how they learn best. What did the teachers in this resource do to support students in becoming more interested in their learning? How might you involve your students in taking greater ownership of their learning?

Resources and Related Reading

Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change: What the best leaders do to help their organizations survive and thrive*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Jennings, C. (2010). Why focus on informal and social learning. As referenced by J. Hart, *The state of learning in the workplace today*. <http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/handbook/state.html>

McDonald, J. P., et al. (2007). *The power of protocols: An educator's guide to better practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Moore, A. (2004). *The good teacher: Dominant discourses in teaching and teacher education*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

Moss, C. M., & Brookhart, S. M. (2009). *Advancing formative assessment in every classroom*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Wilhelm, J. (2002). *Action strategies for deepening comprehension*. Toronto: Scholastic.

Wilhelm, J. (2007). *Engaging readers and writers with inquiry: Promoting deep understandings in language arts and the content areas with guiding questions*. Toronto: Scholastic.

Technical Instructions

How to Access the Print and Video Resources

To access the Print and Video Resources folder in Windows, insert the DVD into the DVD drive of your computer and:

1. Click on the Start menu.
2. Select My Computer.
3. Right-click the mouse on the DVD icon titled LEARNING_IS_THE_WORK_DVD to open a drop-down options list.
4. From the drop-down list, select and click on the Open option.
5. Double-click on the folder titled Print and Video Resources to access the files. Ignore the folders titled Audio_TS and Video_TS.
6. Select the resources you wish to use directly from this folder, OR Copy onto the Desktop and open files from the Desktop.

Alternatively, when the DVD is inserted and the options box opens:

1. Select the option Open Folder to View Files.
2. Click on the Print and Video Resources folder.
3. Select the files you wish to use directly from this folder, OR Copy the files onto the Desktop and open them from the Desktop.

To access the Print and Video Resources folder in Mac OS X, insert the DVD into the DVD drive of your computer and:

1. Exit from the DVD player (which typically opens automatically when a DVD is inserted in the drive).
2. Double-click on the DVD icon titled LEARNING_IS_THE_WORK_DVD.
3. Select the files you wish to use directly from this folder, OR Copy the files onto the Desktop and open them from the Desktop.

How to Save the Video Files to Your Computer

The video files can all be copied and saved to your computer using either of the following methods for copying and pasting files.


Method 1

1. Right-click on the file and choose the Copy option.
2. Right-click within any computer folder into which you would like to save the file, and choose the Paste option.

Method 2

1. Left-click the mouse on the file you want to save, so that the file is highlighted.
2. Simultaneously press the Ctrl and C keys (or, for Macintosh users, the Command and C keys) to copy the file.
3. Left-click within any computer folder in which you would like to save the file, and simultaneously press the Ctrl and V keys (or, for Macintosh users, the Command and V keys) to paste the file there.

For Macintosh users, the Command key is the one with the following

symbol: 

NOTE: If you want to insert video files into a PowerPoint presentation, you must save these video files in the same folder that contains your PowerPoint file. If you save a PowerPoint presentation to another location (e.g., a memory stick, CD-ROM, etc.), you must also save the video files in the same location in order for the video to play. So, if you transfer the presentation to another computer, you must also transfer the video files with it, or else the video will not link to the PowerPoint presentation.

How to Insert Video Clips (WMV files) into a PowerPoint Presentation

On this DVD, you will find WMV versions of all segments of the webcast. To insert a clip into a PowerPoint presentation, follow the directions below:

1. Open your PowerPoint program.
2. Create a new PowerPoint presentation OR open an existing PowerPoint presentation, and within it, open the slide on which you would like to add the video.
3. Insert the webcast DVD into the DVD drive of your computer.
4. If a new window opens asking how you would like to view the files on the disk, choose the option Open Folder to View Files; OR
If a new window does not open, open the My Computer window from the Start menu. In the My Computer window, double-click on the icon that is shaped like a disk, which will likely be labelled D: or E:.
5. Save the video segment that you want to insert in a PowerPoint into the same folder that contains your PowerPoint presentation.

NOTE: Video files that have been saved to your computer can be cropped and edited into smaller segments using Movie Maker (free on PCs) or iMovie (free on Macintosh).

6. Open the PowerPoint slide on which you would like to insert the video, and click on the Insert menu in the PowerPoint menu bar.
7. From the Insert menu, select Movies and Sounds, and click on the Movie from File option.
8. A window opens, prompting you to select the video file that you would like to add. Find and select the video file that you saved in step 5.
9. Once you have chosen the video file you need, another window opens and asks whether you want your movie to play either automatically when you enter the slide, or only when it is clicked. Choose your preference. (You will notice that the starting image of your movie is not displayed on the slide.)



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