

## Transforming My Practice through Inquiry, Gr. 6 & 7

Female: **[00:00]** I began transforming my teaching practice about four years ago now, where I decided that in order to remain relevant and significant to my students for the world that they're going to end up as adults in, I needed to rethink everything about education. And I made a commitment to do that. And I was not a, I would say, technologically literate person at that point in time. I thought technology was word processing and I was doing a good job if I taught that. Get a document published and printed. And I looked at my own, my own children and my husband, because he teaches IT. And I, and I recognized I need to make a shift. So I made this commitment to just learn everything that I possibly could. And started by teaching myself how to blog. So I've been documenting my entire process, my entire journey and all the work I've—we've done in our classroom throughout this transformation on my blog, the Amoris(?).

And I—I suppose I've gone through different stages. So my—my—the first stage of my transformation was really all about technology and web 2.0 and discovering the power of web 2.0. I don't even know if we call that—it that anymore, but that's what it was at that point in time. So we went full, full out into that world. So my students hosted the first student led global Twitter chat on the Holocaust. We—my students worked with programmers in Finland and Australia and digital media artists in New York City to design a tourism app for the iPhone. That was a project that li—came about through Twitter and the good-heartedness of the programmer who, you know, donated his time for the programming.

So I—I realized that I could take my students out into the world, make global connections and have them participate in projects that weren't just created for the purposes of school, but that could actually have impact on the world. So some of the things that my kids do is that they busted the door open on Twitter, I would say, for many classrooms, not just in our board, but in, in other places, who were following what we did. So that was the first part of my transformation.

**[01:54]** And then I recognized that really, it's all about inquiry. And so the next part of my process was learning the different aspects of inquiry. Project-based learning, problem-based learning, challenge-based learning, inquiry, and how that works in a classroom. And how it works so that there's not chaos, which can easily happen, which happened many times as I was learning this. And so how you—as—you can put into place what Neil Stevensons(?) calls the liberated constraints, the structure of it so that real, true inquiry can happen.

And so this year my students have gone through a lot of different inquiries. Probably our most successful one was the War of 1812 inquiry, because they really were independent in that process and I really did no direct classroom teaching other than facilitating discussion. And just prompted them to think more deeply, more deeply, more deeply. And when they presented to the class, they all used the same presentation to align with. But they had to really justify their content decisions, their design choices, their lingering questions. So—and defend those choices to the classroom. So it was a, it was a really interesting process to watch. And from that we developed a lot of conversation about feedback, engagement, process.

And then—so I got the inquiry part in piece, I understood how to embed the technology into it. So the last process for me has been learning how to create really

deep thinking as we move through the process of inquiry. And so what I've come across, or what I'm working with now, I'm connected with the Rotman School of Management and their I-Think Integrative Thinking Initiative, K to twelve. It started in 2009. It's still in its infancy and I happened to ha—to go to the, their first large event that they had, and watch the presentation on these tools. I thought, "This is the missing piece for me." Because these are tools that kids can use to actually move through deep thinking. They're simple tools to use, and they can't help but become better thinkers for that.

And there's actually a process to be—not just to becoming a better thinker, but to generate many good innovative ideas in response to their thinking. So I've been experimenting with these tools in my classroom for the last couple of months and, and documenting it and figuring out how these can possibly be used in middle school. And that's kind of the stage that I'm at.

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