

LEADING, LOVING AND LEARNING

Volume 2 Number 1

COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

INQUIRY BASED LEARNING LIVES

Collaborating to Support Cognitive Outcomes and Active Learning

Inquiry-based learning is alive in the Library Learning Commons at Father Michael Goetz Secondary School. Today, the students in Ms. Romaniuk's Grade 10 Religion class were asked, "What qualities are necessary to be considered a person of good character"? This minds-on activity, also known as 'frontloading', created interest, established purpose, and activated background knowledge (J. Wilhelm, P. Wilhelm, Boas 2009). The students responded through rich discussion and collaborative completion of a mind map.

How can we continue to support and involve students in taking ownership over inquiry-based learning?

The next task was to research a real person of good character such as Nelson Mandela, Craig Kielburger, Martin Luther King, and to explore how they fulfill the criteria of a morally exceptional person.

Learners were engaged in a process that promoted text-to-text connections and real-world applications, an important purpose of inquiry, according to Wilhelm, Wilhelm and Boas (Inquiring Minds Learn to Read and Write, 2009). In small groups, while using technology, students were able to leverage each other's thinking,

deepen understanding, and problem solve.

In addition to promoting critical thinking, the inquiry tasks supported active learning. Group members were provided with assistance at the point of need, which stimulated their close involvement of the task, another valuable benefit of inquiry-based learning. The inquiry also allowed students to work in random groupings where they took ownership of their assignment and contributed unique strengths and expertise, key elements of differentiated instruction. While at task, students exuded an obvious sense of confidence and self-efficacy, a proven result of learning in a small-group context (Harvey & Daniels, 2009). Consolidation of the inquiry took place in the classroom where students shared discoveries through a simulated awards ceremony.

