

Heath Traditional Elementary

By Janet Lauman, Principal, Heath Traditional Elementary (January, 25th 2013):

I have the privilege of being the official leader at Heath Traditional Elementary, a school in which all the adults are leaders who continue to seek innovative ways of practicing that have as their central purpose, learner success. This fall we welcomed a new initiative for our intermediate students.



Every Thursday morning all of our intermediate students are involved in Learning in Depth (LiD). The idea for this kind of learning comes from Keiran Egan's work (a professor at SFU). The purpose of this initiative is to have students experience what it is like to take charge of their learning and become an expert on a topic. Why would we do this? In school, students often learn a little bit about a lot of things. There is much research that tells us that students need to have longer periods of time with fewer topics in order to learn deeply and in order to understand how they learn best, and to furthermore use this knowledge about their learning in order to help them with their future studies/life. This means students keep their topic for the whole of their time in grades 4 to 7.

It is exciting to watch the students' excitement. And it is equally exciting to see the staff show their passion for improving student learning. It is interesting that a truly educated person often thinks that, "The more you know, the more you realize how much you don't know – the less you know, the more you think you know." (David T. Freeman)

The logistics of having all intermediate students work together on LiD at the same time also gives us the opportunity to explore "bring your own device" (ipad, laptop...) for Thursday mornings, which our students love.

When staff recently tried to move to LiD classes every second week, students overwhelmingly expressed their desire to keep meeting every week, so we are back to meeting every Thursday morning!

This is my third year at Heath, and each year I notice growth in the creative and organic way in which we structure our collaborative endeavors, and how this positively impacts our learning community. The accompanying video filmed by students, of fellow students' thoughts about LiD, is illustrative of our students' thoughts generally. I am looking forward to seeing what the rest of the year brings!