

Capitol Hill Elementary, Burnaby

Contact: [Olwen Cowan](#) – MACC Teacher – 4/5 Class

“Yes, it’s LiD day!” is the most common thing I hear when greeting my students on Friday mornings.

This fall I implemented the Learning in Depth program with my classroom of high ability learners (part of Burnaby’s Multi-age Cluster Classroom pilot program for gifted/high ability children in grades 4 and 5). My intention was to maintain and sustain the love of learning the majority of my students have. But, of course, some questions lingered. Would the students feel engaged with the topics? Would they see the interconnections that LiD provides? Could LiD help in building community with students who travel from all across the school district for this specialized program? The answer to the above questions is a resounding, deafening “YES”.

Creating the pomp to the Topic Ceremony was crucial for me. I wanted to ensure all stakeholders would feel involved and attached, and as such we invited our parents, school staff, and district staff and were fortunate to have Dr. Kieran Egan attend. Modelled after the Hogwarts sorting hat ceremony, children were called up to the front individually. They were presented with a LiD medal from our school principal. They then crossed the “stage”, were welcomed to LiD by Dr. Egan and then given an envelope in which their very own special topic was held. Students (and audience) were then told extreme facts about each topic. One by one the children went through this process and quickly became the class experts on a variety of topics. I too received my topic that day - circus. We also had a cake. Every ceremony needs cake.

The students in the classroom are creative, critical, and hungry for knowledge. As I act as a facilitator during their LiD time, I often am not privy to the amazing research they are conducting or projects they are starting. Children are building model airplanes, folding related origami, creating user manuals, building dioramas involving the knowledge from four topic areas, writing short stories, creating quizzes for one another, and starting blogs. Students have written poems in the “epic” form, plays, and created flashy multimedia presentations. They have done all of this in just under four months. I can’t help but wonder what their futures will be like when I see this type of drive and enthusiasm for learning. Learning unhinged and free is what I see during our LiD times.

The pride and emotional connection children have about one another’s topics is what surprises me the most. Learners often come to school on Friday mornings with an artifact, or fact-fact, for a class “expert”. The ownership children feel about their topics has built courageous and proud learners. LiD has given me as an educator so much already and I believe the strong community feeling in our classroom can largely be contributed to LiD. Having said that, many thanks to the mighty brain of Dr. Egan and the LiD team.

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