**Field Study Report: Summary**

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Graduate Diploma Cohort: Inquiry based learning in the Reggio classroom

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**Teaching and Learning Environment in which your Field Study occurred:**

*(Please include the grade level, and general character of any classes involved in your classroom inquiry.)*

Grade 2/3 French Immersion class. Thirteen students in grade 3 and seven students in grade 2. Two new students to our school. High energy, creative and cooperative.

**Focus and Rationale:**

This question is important to me because writing is our school goal. I also wanted to explore other ways to engage my students in writing. I wanted to build a community of writers by having my students share their stories not only through writing but also through oral storytelling, which I hope will develop and increase their vocabulary in French. I had introduced an exploration table as part of my literacy centers at the beginning of the year and I noticed that my students were engaged with using the different materials that I provided for them and that on their own they began to create stories individually and together. As with all classrooms there is a diversity of learning needs, I found that I had quite a few students who were very hesitant to write in their journals because they were always "stuck" with "no ideas" With this field study on Story workshop I wanted to provide the opportunity for these reluctant writers to explore writing and creating stories in a different way.

Throughout this term we have explored the topics of play and exploration through our material encounters. I also had the opportunity to visit the Opal school in Portland where we had the opportunity to learn more of the topic of Playful Inquiry. This semester I'm finding that I am also investgating more on the Pedagogy of Play and the role it plays in the later Primary grades. I have found that as my students approach the intermediate grades there is more pressure for the academics and less value placed on learning through play. I have also wanted to investigate more in the 100 languages of children as well as the the theory of multiple intelligences.

**Inquiry Question(s) Pursued:**

 • How might I use story workshop in engaging my students in writing in French?

Sub questions:

How might I build writing stamina?

How might I encourage building French vocabulary?

How can I incorporate writing lessons within story workshop?

**Outline of Field Study Design:**

-October 2018-present: Opal School Online story workshop course

-December 2018: Before winter break introduce materials (loose parts) through exploration table.

-January 2019: Continue exploration of materials now with the question of "What stories live in these materials?"

-January-February: Discuss with class "What makes a story?" and "What do all stories have?"

-February-March: students creating stories collaboratively

-March-April: students creating stories independently and sharing with class through story congress. Student using different formats of writing their story eg. comic style, picture book.

-April: Student are choosing one story they want to take to the publishing phase. Students are using other materilas other than loose parts such as water colour paints.

**Successes and Challenges:**

Throughout my field study I found that all my student regardless of writing ability were able to see themselves as writers. I found that through Story workshop our class created a safe writing community that fostered growth and encouragement in writing amongst the students in the class. I was able to see growth in their creativity when creating and sharing their stories through oral and written language. A challenge that occurred during my field study was moving from play to writing. I loved seeing how engaged my students were when creating their stories and how they would race to the table to choose their materials to create. However there were always a few students that had a hard time transitioning from play to writing. On one occasion I had a student who asked me "After we create out story, can we play?" This was something that made me really reflect on the goal of my field study. I didn't want to say "no, you can't play" but I also didn’t want my stundents miss out on the opportunity to create a story. I still feel this tension when I see my students so engrossed in their play that they forget they are creating stories. I have found that often giving those students more time to play and explore the materials gives way to a story. I am learning that the play part is important to allowing ideas to flow and come together in order for a story to be born.

**Connection to Educational Research, Individuals, Theories:**

Throught the Story Workshop online course a big idea is the role of arts in Story Workshop. Kerry Salazar one of the instructors :

"My goal is not to develop highly skilled painters (or builders or sculptors or...) My goal during Story Workshop is to develop highly skilled writers."

Discovering for myself that the materials, whether it be loose parts, paint, plasticine, etc., are a vehicle for ideas, has helped me to remember that the process of coming up with idea is just as important as the idea itself. Throughout the Story Workshop course I have also come to learn about the power of questioning when creating with materials to capture an idea. In continuing with using materials whether to capture an idea or explore math concepts I want to be sure to provide questions to my students that will give opportunity to for reflection on their intention with the material, rather than just reminding them to use the material appropriately.

"We don’t want to teach children something that they can learn by themselves. We don’t want to give them thoughts that they can come up with by themselves. What we want to do is activate within children the desire and will and great pleasure that comes from being the authors of their own learning." Loris Malaguzzi

Around the end of first term, we began to do Free Write. Essentially this is an opportunitty for students to write about whatever they wanted. We had an idea jar that students could pull from when they were stuck on what to write. I found that at the beginning students were making quite a lot of use from this jar but their writing was a little bland. Shortly after we begun Story Workshop and as they had the oppportunity to capture ideas with materials in different ways I found that the idea jar was being used less and the writing that they shared was more engaging, diverse and detailed. Having the opportunity to explore and capture their ideas and "being the authors of their own learning" gave my students the opportunity to expand their writing in different ways. I know that I still have students who still struggle with coming up with ideas, however after participating in Story Workshop for the the past few months I have seen a greater desire to create stories from their own ideas rather than pull somehting from a jar.

**Summary of Learning:**

a) In one or two paragraphs, please summarize the significant insights you gained this semester. (What were your “aha!” moments?)

A significant moment in my field study was with one of my student's who is very creative but struggles with written output. Previous to story workshop our writing activities were very structured. Most of the time my students would have a writing prompt or a model to follow. However, I found that what would often happen would be that there would be many students who would just copy the model with slight variations rather than use their own ideas. With this student I found that even following the model or the writing prompt was a struggles for her to remain engaged in her writing. When I introduced Story Workshop I found that her stories became more alive with details as she was able to explore and play with the materials. I find that I still need to help her getting her story from her creation to the paper, but it is a big step forward to having no interest in writing.

Previous to storyworkshop this student did not want to share her writing in any way. When we began to do story negotiation she was more willing to share what her story was going to be about that day. It was great to see how she developed characters with different names and how a whole world developed through her exploration of the materials. I also noticed how other students in the class enjoyed hearing more about her characters and began to ask her for help in creating characters for their stories. Previous to this experience she was oftent the one aslking for help. Having the experience of her peers seeking out her expertise helped build her confidence in how she can contriubute to our writing community.

b) How has this Field Study impacted yourself and your practice in relation to the program capacities?

 Collaborate in learning communities to support your teaching practice

Throughout this program I have found that having the opportunity to be in mentor groups for each one of my field studies has helped me grow in my teaching practice. I have had the opportunity to work with three different mentors and each one has given me different perspectives in my practice particularly in what my intention was for my field study. My colleagues in my mentor group this term have had a significant impact in in my learning as many of us had the similar questions regarding Story workshop in French. I have been able to discuss with my colleagues strategies and resources that they have tried in their classroom. One of my colleagues shared a way of assessing her students through a simple assessment chart. This was something I have tried to do a in a few ways but was never really able to stick with it for long term. I really liked how she organized her students data and how it helped her when writing formal reports. I decided to give her method a try and have been more successful in keeping up with it. I also found that I was able to use it not only for Story Workshop but also for keeping notes in other subject areas.

Throughout this program I have also had the opportunity to begin and finish this journey with a colleague from my school. Having someone that is within the same school learning about the same practices and principles has reinforced my belief in how collaboration time with my colleagues is so valuable and essential to our growth as educators. Despite being in different grade levels, we have been able to support each other when we have hit those walls during our Field study. Having the opportunity to be part of the BC interdistrict cohort of Developing your Story Workshop has also given me the opportunity to connect with teachers across different districts and has reminded how together we are facing similar challenges in our classrooms with our students. Having the opportuniy to connect with these teachers has helped me feel more supported. Being able to share my learning with my colleagues both in my cohort and in my school has also helped me to feel that my learning has as much value as my students' learning.

This year I also has the opportunity to visit the Opal school in Portland. There were many other educators from across the province. Some of them, like me, had not visited the Opal school before others had come a few times before. Being able to connect with these educators and the ones from Opal was uplifting and encouraging and again was another reminder that what I am learning has value for myself and for those I teach and interact with, students and colleagues alike.

c) Describe how these insights have (or will) change your teaching practice and approach to inquiry.

Moving forward with there are a few key things that I would like to change. First off is giving more time to explore materials as they are. I found that with some of the materials this was easier to do as my students were familiar with the affordance of the material because they had the opportunity to use it for other activities in the classroom. Next year I would like to begin my mornings with a soft start through Explorations using a few materials at a time to allow that time of discovery and play before creating a story and also being able to introduce new materials or combining materials to be explored in creative ways. The next objective I would like to improve upon is managing time. I know this is something that is not completely in my control as much of it depends on scheduling for other blocks of the day such as Music and Library which are dependent on other teachers' time. That being said I would like to dedicate more time in my weekly schedule for Story Workshop as I found the times when we very engaged in creating our stories it becames time to clean up or transition to another activity. My third objective would be continue to collaborate with my colleagues with regards to Story Workshop and other inquiries that come along the way. I have had the advantage this year of having a combined music block with the other grade 2/3 teacher in my school. Together we have been able to work together in planning and seeking advice in meeting the needs of our students.