

Learning is Our Moral Imperative: My Prairie Spirit Classroom

Lori Jeschke, Reagan Olson, Bob Bayles

My Prairie Spirit Classroom (MPSC) is an exemplar of a flourishing initiative informed by promising practices and pedagogy for learning. Administration and leadership efforts have shifted from a business and managerial-focused model, to an intentional focus on learning in all interactions within the division: in the classroom, in leadership meetings, in professional learning opportunities and in board and community meetings. As such, the vision, beliefs and institutional goals all focus on learning is seen as the school system's moral imperative. The purpose of the MPSC is to engage students and staff in side-by-side learning with a focus on assessment, innovation, relationships, relevance, and rigor. Learners, students and adults, are presented with the big ideas, but have significant choice in their learning and in assessing their own learning process, including planning next steps.

First of all, we feel it is necessary to describe the context (situational factors, engaged employees, and the influences of academics) that have informed and motivated the creation of MPSC. In order to explore why the MPSC document and associated philosophy are successfully creating a culture of positive affect, engagement, achievement, and meaningful relationships, the authors will provide the background and rationale on the development, processes, and influences behind MPSC. Significant emphasis will be placed on the manner that MPSC was initiated, developed, and allowed to grow organically; MPSC gave teachers and administrators space to find themselves within the project; which we believe ultimately lead to its success. The chapter will conclude with the current state of affairs regarding MPSC, namely asking: Where are we now? and How do we know that the work that we are doing in actualizing MPSC is positively impacting student and adult learning?

Our division's approach and telling the story of the creation of MPSC adds to the scholarship on flourishing schools for teachers, school administrators, system leaders and policy makers. It is a story of embedding learning in all divisional interactions and of shifting the culture in an unhurried and intrinsic manner. The intentional bottom-up approach has allowed staff members to personalize their adult learning, which, in turn, has provided effective role-modelling for fellow staff members and students. The

MPSC document has fostered opportunities within the school division to support lifelong learning and ultimately allow all learners to flourish.

Humble Beginnings: Context and Process

Learning Facilitators

How Do We Know?

Big Ideas of My Prairie Spirit Classroom

Relationships

Quality Assessment

Adult Learning

Outcomes and Feedback

Schools

School Division

Reflecting on our Journey

E
N
G
A
G
E
M
E
N
T

ASSESSMENT
INNOVATION
RELATIONSHIPS
RELEVANCE
RIGOUR



My Prairie Spirit Classroom
is diverse in world view, culture, language, gender identity, ability and interests and this is how we learn together.

In my classroom, 20% of the time consists of whole group teacher talk and 80% of the time is student talk (whole group, small group and independent self-talk).

All students participate in side-by-side learning opportunities with me several times a week in each subject area. Side-by-side learning opportunities include descriptive *next steps* feedback or reflective conversations.

My instruction includes opportunities for **all** students to construct knowledge, have choice in learning and experience explicit teaching and modelling of learning strategies that students can apply while exploring new ideas and concepts.

Learning opportunities for **all** students are characterized by high expectations (rigour), personal and purposeful application (relevance), collaborative learning environments (relationship), risk-taking to consider alternative instructional approaches (innovative) and student choice (engagement).

Formative assessment and various forms of feedback (e.g. self, peer, adult, parents) strengthen and inform my classroom practices and support **all** learners in their progress toward their learning goals.

My teaching begins with big ideas, sharing them with students and teaching and relating parts (knowledge and skills) to the big ideas throughout the learning process. **All** students understand, articulate and can provide evidence of their growth towards the big idea.

At least once a month, I have opportunities to discuss the *next steps* in my personal learning efforts. This can occur through learning walks or collaborative learning with colleagues.

Jeschke, Olson, Bayles (2018). *Learning is our Moral Imperative, My Prairie Spirit Classroom*. In S. Cherkowski & K. Walker (eds.). *Flourishing in Schools* (pp.91-107). Landam, MD: Lexington Books

<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781498579438/Perspectives-on-Flourishing-in-Schools>

References

- Andrade, H. (2010). *Students as the definitive source of formative assessment: Academic self-assessment and the self-regulation of learning*. NERA Conference Proceedings.
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(2), 117–148.
- Barth, R. (2001). *Learning by heart*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bennett, S. (2007). *That workshop book: New systems and structures for classrooms that read, write, and think*. London: Heinemann.
- Cornett, J., & Knight, J. (2009). Research on coaching. In J. Knight (Ed.), *Coaching: Approaches and perspectives* (pp. 192–216). Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Covey, S. (2003). *The seven habits of highly effective people: Restoring the character ethic*. New York: Free Press - Division of Simon and Schuster.
- Donohoo, J. (2016). Collective efficacy: Together we can make a difference. Retrieved from <http://corwin-connect.com/2016/04/collective-efficacy-together-we-can-make-a-difference/>
- Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1087–1101.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1087>
- Dweck, C. (2015). Teachers' mindsets: "Every student has something to teach me." *Educational Horizons*, 93(2), 10–14.
- Fahey, K., & Ippolito, J. (2014). How to build schools where adults learn. *Journal of Staff Development*, 35(2), 31–39.
- Fullan, M. (2011). Learning is the Work. Retrieved November 24, 2017, from <http://michaelfullan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/13396087260.pdf>

- Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16-20.
- Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2006). *Sustainable leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. New York: Routledge.
- Hattie, J. (2011). *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning*. New York: Routledge.
- Herbst, S. & Davies, A. (2015). *Triangulation: I understand the 'why,' now please tell me the 'when'* [blog]. Retrieved from <http://sandraherbst.blogspot.ca/2015/04/triangulation-i-understand-why-now.html>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013). Know thy impact: Teaching, learning and leading. *In Conversation*, IV(2), 1–18.
- Richardson, W. (2015). *From master teacher to master learner*. Bloomington: Solution Tree Press.
- Seligman, M. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York: Free Press.
- Tovani, C. (2015). Let's switch questioning around. *Educational Leadership*, 73(1), 30–35.
- Waring, J. (2014). Coaching for growth: The relationship between sustained coaching relationships and teacher professional growth. *Education Graduate Publications and Presentations, Paper 11*.