

APRIL 2007

President's Message

RAQUEL CHIN, COQUITLAM

As I write this edition of the President's message, I am preparing to attend the 90th anniversary of Vimy Ridge in Ottawa. Throughout the past 3 weeks my students have been preparing their presentation on Piper James Richardson and why he should receive the Historica Foundation of Canada's prestigious Order of Historica award. Most striking perhaps is their research into their personal family history and the fact that only 2 Canadian WWI veterans remain, and only 34 internationally. Their personal history gets lost with every passing generation and all that remains is what the historians write in our history books.

Throughout the semester, my students have begun their journey in identifying for themselves "what it means to be Canadian?" Based on their reference to rights and freedoms, I have then challenged them to contemplate "are their rights and freedoms absolute? Are they worth fighting for?" Currently, my students are now pressed to answer, "whether or not war is worth the ultimate sacrifice along with the question, should war be glorified?" Their responses are located on Historica's Youthlinks website on their forum page. If interested please visit the site and join your classes to participate in the discussion www.historica.ca/youthlinks.

As teachers we bear the responsibility of trying to make historical events meaningful, albeit in varying degrees, to our students. Sometimes we are able to make the connections, other times we are hard pressed to do so. Vimy Ridge is significant to our history books as a moment that defines Canada as a nation.

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Great efforts have been made since 2004 to refurbish the 1936 Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France where approximately 3,600 Canadians lost their lives. Canadians were an integral part of the Allies success at Vimy. Hopefully we continue to teach its lessons so that the sacrifices for our present day freedoms are not lost to the next generation. On behalf of our association, a BC Social Studies Teachers' Association wreath will be laid at the memorial.

In addition to Vimy, 2007 marks many anniversaries for us as British Columbians. It is the 100th year anniversary of the Vancouver's anti-Asian riots of 1907, the 93rd anniversary of the Komagata maru" and the 60th anniversary of the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, just to name a few.

As we glance towards 2008, BC will celebrate its 150 anniversary of the founding of the crown colony. In addition, 2008 marks Simon Fraser's Bicentennial, and the David Thompson Bicentennial. Last, Quebec's quadracentennial is also on the horizon. In collaboration with the Ministry and BC government, teachers should be asked to come up with educational ideas for celebrating the year 2008. The Social Studies Teachers' Association is considering celebrating 2008 and encourages enthusiastic teachers to contact the PSA with their ideas so we can showcase them on our website and newsletter. Let's not forget these moments which define us as a nation and as a province. Remembrance is more than a given day highlighted on our calendars.

Editor's Comments

ROZ MACLEAN

It must be because it is spring. With classroom activities and the outdoors calling the content is much lighter in this third edition of our electronic newsletter. There are some useful ideas here - from workshops and opportunities to lesson plans – but we'd love to hear of more. Some teachers are sending news items about their class activities. It is a good way to share ideas. Thank you to everyone who submitted items for this issue. Deadline for the next newsletter is JUNE 10. Articles are generally 500-1500 words and submitted as a Word document. Graphics or photos are greatly appreciated because they make everything look better. Send to irmaclean@telus.net.

We listen to your comments too. People have asked for a Table of Contents so here it is. I haven't been able to set it up with links within the newsletter due to the format we use to post the newsletter. We keep trying though. Each issue brings something new for this editor, but everything runs pretty smoothly now.

Are you interested in being editor? It is a great opportunity to be involved, learn what is going on in teaching Social Studies and contribute to your own and other's professional development. Contact Raquel Chin raquelchin1@hotmail.com or myself irmaclean@telus.net. We can tell you all about it.

Greg's TOP 10 Picks

Exciting Ideas and Opportunities for Social Studies Teachers and Students!

1. **Dominion Institute.** This site provides educators with many educational programs and resources to help engage youth in learning about Canadian history, heritage and institutions. <http://www.dominion.ca/programs.htm>
2. **Farm Ed. in BC.** Students explore the links between a healthy environment and human well being. Emphasizes lifelong learning, community mindedness and social citizenship. <http://www.cust.educ.ubc.ca/landedlearningproject/index.htm>
3. **GVRD.** The place for teachers looking to integrate sustainability concepts in innovative and engaging ways into their classroom. <http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/education/index.asp>
4. **Heritage Fairs.** Celebrate all the wonderful stories of this great land with your students. An incredible experience for students and teachers alike! <http://www.histori.ca/fairs>
5. **Knowledge Network.** A new communication tool to help educators utilize Knowledge Network programming in the classroom. Global warming, shipbreakers and much more all linked to social studies curriculum. <http://www.knowledgenetwork.ca/intheknow/march2007/index.html>
6. **Museum of Anthropology UBC.** An informative and unique educational experience for K-12 students and teachers alike. (=field trips (ed.)) Check out the opportunities for students to explore various cultural traditions. <http://www.moa.ubc.ca/programs/k12.php>
7. **National Geographic Society.** Geography, geography, geography and more geography resources for students and teachers. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/siteindex/education.html>
8. **Sierra Club of Canada.** Empower students to appreciate the many values, beliefs and perspectives surrounding environmental issues and to take action in a fun, engaging, and credible way. www.sierraclub.ca/bc/programs/education
9. **Social Studies 11 (BC) Digital Handbook.** Resources for teachers and students collected by teacher-librarians in District #43 Coquitlam. <http://www.bestlibrary.org/ss11/>
10. **History of Canada Online.** Northern Blue Publishing produces a number of innovative online textbooks and information portals available under license to schools. http://www.northernblue.ca/products/index.php/Products_and_Portals

Comments and ideas...Call Greg at 250-485-8295 or gtgsmith@yahoo.ca
Check out all the Top Picks for 2007 at the BCSSTA website.
<http://www.bctf.ca/bcssta/> and click on "links".

The Sierra Club Addresses Climate Change

KERRI LANAWAY, SCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Part I: The Climate Change Challenge

“Future generations may well have occasion to ask themselves, “What were our parents thinking? Why didn’t they wake up when they had a chance?” We have to hear that question from them, now.” Al Gore

Climate change has hit the ‘main stage’ in Canada. Turn on the T.V., open the newspaper or flip on the radio and the odds are good that climate change is being discussed. The climate change challenge has moved into the mainstream. And “What schools can do about it?” is a question many teachers are asking. Fortunately, many answers are available.

For the past few years the Sierra Club of B.C.’s *Education Program* has made available our *Climate Change Education Program (CCEP)*. We started the CCEP in response to the numerous teacher requests we were receiving, seeking help on how to teach about the climate change challenge:

Climate change is a subject that all teachers should be teaching. But it’s difficult to get access to good curriculum-linked educational materials and presentations that teach about climate change. And even if we had them – climate change is such a BIG topic – I would need someone to teach me how to teach my students about it. We hear about it in the news all the time but we don’t really understand it! Help! *Grade 8 teacher, Abbotsford, 2006.*

Teaching about climate change is a multifaceted issue. The Earth’s systems are complex, and the consequence of humans’ interference in these systems is even more complex. Not only is the global scale of this issue difficult to demonstrate in a classroom setting, but students and teachers often find themselves up against a society deeply entrenched in their habits and values. While many are taking action, the majority of our society continues to consume in ways that greatly increase our carbon emissions rather than reduce them. We may accept that climate change is a real and pressing issue, and that we as a people are the problem, but we have yet to demonstrate a willingness to change our personal lifestyles. For example, how many of us believe climate change is a problem but still drive SUV’s? The student who wishes to address this has a difficult task ahead of them. So how can we help them? How we decide to teach climate change continues to carry some controversy. Identifying the problems often becomes an exercise in blame laying and finger pointing, which many feel is an ineffective tool for change. For this reason, we stress the power of personal action.

Before we can begin to tackle the challenge of teaching about such a complex issue, we must first ensure we are starting from a solid foundation of conceptual knowledge. We must ensure that all *misconceptions* and media myths have been dispelled. In other words, there is a need to back up our efforts with sound science. A classroom program that attempts to teach the many complexities of climate change should be a well thought-out program that includes the fundamentals of teaching environmental issues. In *The Education Challenges: a Framework for Teaching about Climate Change*, two well-regarded environmental educators Milton McClaren and William Hammond discuss the

five fundamental concepts on which a well designed program of climate change education is based¹.

1. Knowledge of the earth's natural systems
2. Understanding that these systems have complex interactions and that when these interactions are broken or damaged, powerful consequences can occur.
3. Global change affects all life (often in unexpected or subtle ways).
4. Local, regional and global changes are often linked.
5. Humans have become major agents in global change.

And learning these climate change basics does not have to be all work and no play. Climate change education can be fun! Look for activities that address the above fundamentals, but be sure to ask: is it relevant? Does it actively involve all students? Will they gain a sense of accomplishment?

Students may ask (and indeed many people do), “Why is a temperature change of just a few degrees such a big deal? How does this affect me? Why should I care?”

Much can be done in the classroom to address the science behind this and real-world examples abound. Activities that encourage students to consider how changes in the climate affect them personally not only make learning about climate change relevant to their lives, but also contribute to a better understanding of the global affects.

Students want to feel a part of the solution, and indeed, they are!

Before the Sierra Club leaves the classroom, we ask students: Are you up for the challenge? The answer is always a resounding YES! The Sierra Club's Action Challenge Program, a component found within all our school presentations, engages students at the take action level. When students see the tangible results of their efforts, such as a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, they experience feelings of accomplishment and empowerment. In this way even small victories – a class reducing its GHG's by 105 kg's, goes a long way when you consider the success each student has felt as a result of their action.

Understanding what we can do as individuals and realizing that these actions do have tangible effects is the single most important thing we can do to combat climate change.

Join us again in Part Two when we discuss some of the ways the Sierra Club's Education Program can support you in this important challenge; and learn what new teaching opportunities exist. We have some great new activities and other learning resources we'd love to share with you!

The Sierra Club's Education Program has been delivering interactive programs since 1998. Designed to investigate key ecological concepts, environmental issues, and stewardships solutions, our programs have also come to include access to our bi-monthly publication, the Green Star Newsletter, as well as our monthly Environmental E-Newsletter. Visit us at www.sierraclub.ca/programs/education for a more comprehensive look at our programs and the many varied resources available. To get involved contact us at (250) 386-5255 ext. 252.

¹ McClaren, Milton and Hammond, William, “The Education Challenges: a Framework for Teaching about Climate Change”, from Teaching about Climate Change: Cool Schools Tackle Global Warming, (Editors Tim Grant and Gail Littlejohn), New Society Publishers, 2001.



BC STUDENTS PREPARE FOR HISTORICA HERITAGE FAIRS

Fairs

www.HISTORI.ca

Contact:

Gail Sumanik, Coordinator BC Historica Fairs (gsumanik@histori.ca)

or

Becky Burns, Manager, Historica Fairs (bburns@histori.ca)

BC students are currently preparing for Regional Historica Heritage Fairs held across the province in May. This educational initiative provides an opportunity for students in Grades 4 to 9 to research Canadian heroes and legends, milestones in their communities, or family achievements and then present their work at public exhibitions organized by local museums and school boards.

Fifteen students, at least one from each BC Regional site, will be selected to attend the National Fair, which will be held in Lethbridge, Alberta, from July 9 – 16. Students representing all provinces and territories take part in this annual week of historic tours, hands-on workshops and special events. The National Fair is a unique opportunity for students from across Canada to meet and establish friendships with other young people from a diversity of backgrounds.

The BC government has invested \$150,000 over three years in the BC Historica Fairs program to fund a part-time provincial coordinator for the program until 2008. The provincial government is also supporting a Provincial Historica Fair in 2008 as part of the BC2008 festivities celebrating 150 years since the establishment of BC as a colony.

The public is invited to visit a Regional Historica Heritage Fair at one of the following locations:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Bulkely Valley–
Burnaby/Coquitlam-
Fraser Valley – | May 5, 6 at John Field Elementary School, Hazelton
May 4 and 5 at the Burnaby Village Museum
May 3 and 4 at University College of the Fraser Valley,
Abbotsford Campus |
| Kootenay Valley -
Okanagan-
Prince George –
Richmond/Delta -
Sea to Sky-
Surrey -
Kamloops/Thompson-
Vancouver -
Vancouver Island North-
Vancouver Island South- | May 5 at the Creston Museum
April 13,14 at the Kelowna Museum
May 3 at The Exploration Place, Prince George
May 4 and 5 at the Richmond Museum
April 28 at the North Vancouver Museum and Archives
May 4 at the Surrey Museum
May 10,11,12 at the McArthur Island Sports Centre
May 4 and 5 at the Vancouver Maritime Museum
May 4 and 5 at the Alberni Valley Museum
May 4 at the Royal British Columbia Museum |

Non-Judgemental Teaching

BRAD WILSON teaches Japanese at Kwalikum Secondary, in Qualicum Beach and is the web-master for nihongobc.com, the web-site for the Japanese teachers of BC. He is also organizing the following seminar.

Where do our best teaching moments come from? Those moments when we are at our best, the students are engaged and time just flies by. Those moments when teaching is effortless, fun and rewarding. The obvious answer is that they come from an imaginative, well prepared and dedicated teacher. But if we look deeper at those moments - which happen everyday for some of us, but somewhat less often for a lot of us - we see that the teacher is connected to his or her heart. Consciously or unconsciously they are drawing from a deep source of energy that can touch the hearts of their students. If we reflect on our practice and examine what happens when we are really able to connect with our students, we see the connection is one that is hard to express in words but deeply understood when experienced.

Non-Judgemental Teaching (NJT) is a form of reflective practice that looks at this heart connection and helps teachers learn how to access it in their everyday life in and out of the classroom. This is done through guided meditation, contemplation and discussion. NJT was developed and is taught by Junko Lowry, an educator at Kamehameha Schools in Hawaii. She has been presenting seminars on NJT in Hawaii and Vancouver since 2004. For more information on NJT and Junko Lowry, visit her website at <http://kapalama.ksbe.edu/faculty/julowry/>

Junko will be in the Vancouver area to hold a two day intensive NJT seminar on July 14th and 15th.

Date and Time: Saturday, July 14, 9a.m. To 3 pm. Sunday, July 15, 9 am. To 3 pm.

Individual one hour sessions also available from 4 pm. On each day.

Cost: Full Two Day program \$100

One day \$75

Individual one hour sessions \$30

Location: Sentinel Secondary School, 1250 Chartwell Drive, West Vancouver, BC

Registration: Contact Brad Wilson at bwilson@sd69.bc.ca

MEDIA LITERACY: A Five Day Summer Institute with John J. Pungente SJ and Carolyn Wilson

BCTF BUILDING
550 WEST 6TH AVE
VANCOUVER

9.00 A.M. TO 2.00 P.M. (LUNCH PROVIDED) **AUGUST 13 - 17, 2007**

The five day institute will introduce teachers to the basics needed to teach media literacy in their classrooms. Links to curriculum outcomes in English and Social Studies will be addressed. While the course is basically designed for teachers of grades 8 – 12 in any subject, there will also be material of interest to teachers of younger grades. The course will deal with such topics as the Key Concepts of Media Literacy, Prime Time TV, News, Global Issues, Movies, Advertising, Gender, Diversity, the Internet, and Resources.

Presenters:

John J. Pungente, SJ is the President of the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO), Director of the Jesuit Communication Project, and co-author of Media Literacy: A Resource Guide, Meet the Media, and More Than Meets the Eye. He is the producer of the award winning teaching kits Scanning Television and Scanning Television 2, and the creator and host of the award winning media literacy TV show Scanning the Movies, now in its tenth season on Bravo!

Carolyn Wilson is a recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence and the President of the Association for Media Literacy in Ontario. Co-author of the best-selling textbook, Mass Media and Popular Culture, Version 2, Carolyn has written about and given presentations internationally on a number of media topics. Carolyn is an instructor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

Dan Blake has taught in the public school system in British Columbia for 25 years. He was the English Language Arts Coordinator for the Surrey School District for two years and an Assistant Director of Professional Development at the BCTF for four years. He has given numerous workshops on media literacy throughout the province and is currently President of the BC Association for Media Education.

Fee:

\$50 for five day session
(lunch included).

Student Teacher fee \$30
(lunch included)

Space limited to the first 35
participants - early registration
recommended.

Registration by mail before
August 8 to:

Dan Blake
327 – East 44th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5W 1W1

For further information contact
Dan Blake at
604-301-1247 or
deblaca@telus.net

Funding provided by

Citytv
Vancouver

Special thanks to BCTF.

Registration Form: (detach and send with your cheque to Dan Blake, 327 – East 44th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5W 1W1)

Name

Address:

Telephone (home):

Email:

Postal Code

Telephone (work):

School Affiliation:

Please make cheques payable to: CAME. No refunds.

News Release:

PORT COQUITLAM STUDENTS TO ATTEND VIMY REMEMBRANCE SUMMIT IN OTTAWA, ONTARIO

Toronto –March 26, 2007 – Teacher Raquel Chin and seven of her students from Riverside Secondary School have been selected to represent British Columbia at the 2007 Historica Remembrance Summit, being held at the Terry Fox Canadian Youth Centre in Ottawa, Ontario, from April 8 to 14. On Monday, April 9th, the students will be directly involved in national events commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Eighty-two high school students and thirteen teachers from across Canada will spend a week in Ottawa exploring the central question: “How do we make Remembrance meaningful for future generations of Canadian youth?” In workshops hosted by the National Film Board of Canada and 7th Floor Media, the delegates will develop their answers through online publications, PSAs and short animations.

The Summit participants will experience first-hand the international implications of remembrance as they link up with Canadian students traveling to France for the re-dedication of the Vimy Memorial. The team in Europe will act as the “eyes and ears” of the Summit using online tools to upload articles and images for their counterparts in Ottawa.

In addition, each day of the Summit one of the provincial/territorial delegations will present and defend their choice for the Canadian wartime historical figure they think should be awarded the Order of Historica. The students will debate, discuss, campaign for and vote on candidates - from soldiers to nurses to war artists – eventually narrowing the field to one recipient.

The British Columbia delegation has chosen Piper James Richardson who rallied his company under enemy fire at the Battle of the Somme.

At the end of the week, the delegates will present their findings on engaged citizenship and remembrance to government officials at the Terry Fox Canadian Youth Centre. *Remembrance for a New Generation*, developed by youth, for youth, will provide a valuable educational framework for future generations of Canadian students.

While in Ottawa, the students will learn about their role in the global community through excursions to Parliament Hill and the Canadian War Museum. They will take part in panel discussions on peacekeeping and will meet notable Canadians such as Chief Stephen McGregor of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg Algonquins and leading actor and playwright R.H. Thomson.

The 2007 Historica Remembrance Summit is being held in partnership with the National Film Board of Canada and 7th Floor Media. Historica gratefully acknowledges the support of Veterans Affairs Canada, Exchanges Canada, a program of the Department of Canadian Heritage, and Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life.

The National Film Board of Canada produces and distributes bold and distinctive social issue documentaries, auteur animation and digital content that provide the world with a unique Canadian perspective. Since its founding in 1939, the NFB has created over 12,000 productions and won over 5000 awards - including 12 Oscars and over 90 Genie Awards. The NFB is renowned for its technical innovations and is a leader in content for new platforms. For more information about the NFB or to order films, go to www.nfb.ca or call 1-800-267-7710.

The Historica Foundation is a charitable organization dedicated to helping Canadians discover the fascinating stories that make our country unique. Through our education programs and authoritative resources we connect Canadians to our many histories. We invite you to discover *your* place in history at www.histori.ca.

5th International Conference on Imagination and Education

July 18 - 21, 2007 at the [Coast Plaza Hotel and Suites, Vancouver, Canada](#).

Hosted by [The Imaginative Education Research Group](#) of [Simon Fraser University, Canada](#), this conference showcases presentations by teaching and scholarly communities from around the world. Featuring [Dr. Vivian Gussin Paley](#) as keynote speaker, as well as invited sessions by Drs. Rosalind Horowitz (USA), Tony Sherborne (UK), Kieran Egan (Canada), Sean Blenkinsop (Canada) and Mrs. Annabella Cant (Romania), the program is full of thought provoking sessions addressing imagination and education across the curriculum.

Optional evening events are also planned including a 4 hour Sunset Dinner boat cruise along the coast of Vancouver and surrounding areas. Past delegates have shared with us that this conference has consistently been a great opportunity to get together for lively discussions and learning opportunities centered in education practice, research and theory.

Register before May 14th, and receive a free copy of "Teaching and Learning Outside the Box: Inspiring Imagination Across the Curriculum" in your delegate package. This Althouse/Teachers Press book, to be published in May 2007, is edited by Kieran Egan, Maureen Stout, and Keiichi Takaya of the IERG.

For registering information please go to <http://www.iERG.net/confs/registration.php?cf=2>. If you are ready to register, our online registration is available at: <https://webform.sfu.ca/form/edu.iERG.conf.2007> Registration inquiries can be directed to SFU Conference Services at conference_services@sfu.ca

Please do come to Vancouver this year and join the many students, researchers and teachers who will be engaging each other in this ongoing conversation about imagination in education.

Vimy Ridge in Northern France

GREG SMITH, OLIVER gtgsmith@yahoo.ca

Sunset Ceremony, April 7, 2007

A cold breeze is blowing on an otherwise beautiful spring evening in pastoral northern France. It's about 6pm as I stride up a gently sloping hill and see for the first time the Vimy Memorial to Canada's fallen soldiers of the battle that took place here 90 years ago. It is striking! Two massive columns soar skyward from the edge of this famous ridge. I stand and reflect and listen and watch as Canadians from every branch of our Armed Forces march past and take up their positions on the monument. It was a great time to watch and reflect and to wonder about the battle that occurred so many years ago and to be with the 3,000-4,000 other people standing on the cold windy ridge this night.

What is Vimy Ridge and why is it so important to Canada?

The facts are bizarre:

- The Great War (1914-1918)-later renamed WW1, was at a standstill.
- Germany captured and held the high ground at Vimy Ridge for most of the first 3 years of the war.
- France lost 150,000 men trying to capture the Ridge and failed to dislodge the Germans from their heavily fortified trenches.
- The British tried next and failed.
- On Easter Monday April 9, 1917 it was the Canadian's turn.
- Over 1000 artillery pieces and machine guns shatter that cold peaceful morning at 5:30 am.
- When the barrage ended 100 minutes later, 6 million shells had been directed on the German positions.
- Believed to be the loudest human produced sound in history!
- The artillery barrage that morning was heard in London.
- 20,000 Canadian soldiers in the first wave of the attack.
- 10,000- more right behind the first wave and another 70,000 Canadians in reserve and in support of the battle.
- The French Commander for the whole offensive, General Nivelle, believed the attack on Vimy Ridge would "end in disaster" for the Canadians.
- The Germans did not believe the Canadians could do it.
- This was the first and only time when all divisions of the Canadian Forces fought together with Canadian commanders.
- Almost every Canadian who fought at Vimy Ridge had been a civilian when WW1 broke out.

German soldiers had held Vimy Ridge for 32 months and the Canadians took it in less than 48 hours. We did it when so many others had failed.

We must remember Vimy Ridge. The lessons are too important to forget. We reinforced a new sense of pride as a Canadian family. Britain expected us to fight within British forces at the outset of WW1. Sam Hughes, Canada's Minister of Militia would have none of that nonsense. We were going to fight as Canadians, not colonials.

Both Britain and France felt most of the Canadian Militia consisted of rough and rowdy farm boys and not disciplined soldiers. We showed them and ourselves that by working together (from the top brass to the youngest private) in the planning and execution of battle plans. We would prevail where others had failed.

After Vimy Ridge, German, French and British officers and soldiers had a new and very profound respect for the Canadian way of doing things. The world had a new respect for Canada and most importantly, Canadians had a new respect for themselves. We were very much the true north strong and free and proud to be Canadians.

On April 9, 2007, 90 years after the battle, over 20,000 Canadians including 5,000 Canadian students made the pilgrimage to Vimy Ridge to see the rededication of the Vimy Memorial and to share in the experience with so many of their countrymen. It was also a proud moment for me as I presented a wreath at the Memorial on behalf of the **BC Social Studies Teacher's Association**. I hope and pray that the stories and lessons from these events are not forgotten and that we always strive for a more peaceful path as we continue to mature as a nation.



Greg Smith (on right) with wreath from BCSSTA at Vimy Ridge.

Reprinted article from Standards and Accountability in Public Life, The OHASSTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE November 6th, 2004. The article has been edited, as shown by () or ... , so it applies to this newsletter rather than the workshop originally intended.

The Power of Pairs for Promoting Purposeful Talk

JOHN MYERS, OISE/UT

The Challenge of Linking Research to Practice

The research affirming the value of oral discourse in small group situations is powerful. Those who talk more, learn more. Groups that work co-operatively generate more purposeful talk from all members than other approaches. The connections between purposeful talk and student achievement have been confirmed in hundreds of studies and through at least four major reviews of those studies.

Yet we face a number of challenges in making these tools for thinking and learning work. Among these challenges are:

- the tyranny of content “coverage” either self imposed or forced by pressure to meet state and provincial standards, including the tests
- the lack of social skills many students display .resulting in concerns about classroom management and teacher control
- a strongly held belief by many that teacher-directed lessons are best in most if not all circumstances.

This package... offer(s) some promising directions for all teachers and students.

Two Overview Articles to consider:

Myers, J... (2004). Cooperative learning: An “inadequate” introduction. SEG Ways. 11 (October). 5-8. outlines ideal places for promoting purposeful talk in small groups and suggests answers to other questions about the use of small groups in classrooms..(This is being revised)

McEwan, S and Myers, J. (2002). Graphic organizers: Visual tools for learning,

Orbit, 32 (4).presents an overview of the use of visual tools with examples from science and social studies.

The rest of the package pulls these ideas together as we do tasks for exploring ideas, checking for understanding, and review in 7-12 social studies, primarily history content, through some simple yet dynamic applications of information through work begun in pairs.

Dedications:

To Tom Morton and the late Linda Duez in whose classrooms I had the privilege of working from 1991-1998 where these and similar tasks resulted in significant gains for all, particularly for struggling students and ESL learners.

Why Talk?

Talk allows students to

- take risks with colleagues
- try out ideas through hypothesizing, verifying, adapting, and revising
- gain deeper insights and understandings when the talk is purposeful and in pairs than can be attained by one student working alone
- promote quality writing and/or quality whole classroom discussion after students have talked through the ideas, issues, concepts, and information.

The More We Talk, The More We Learn!

Why Pairs?

- easier to set up than larger groups
- can be combined and divided when appropriate
- easier to monitor and manage to ensure individual accountability

It's Hard To Hide in a Pair!

Why THESE Tasks?

- the use of visual tools helps all learners better see patterns and relationships
- the tasks in this session can precede individual writing tasks from position papers (1 paragraph to 1 page opinion pieces supported by evidence and logic) to full research papers: tools for assessment and evaluation purposes..
- these prewriting tasks do not take up a lot of time and make subsequent whole class work more productive, in the end using valuable time even more effectively.

Students Learn in Different Ways: Visual Tools Help!

Why Mainly History Examples...?

- making history engaging has challenges that geography, civics, and economics may not have, due to its abstract nature and the perception among many that the past is irrelevant
- the role of talk can make history more intelligible especially with the tasks provided here as students discuss open-ended questions for which the answers are not obvious nor limited to one single correct answer
- when students interpret evidence and make informed reasoned judgments about the past, it brings the past alive.

How Can We Assess the Learnings?

While Linda and I experimented with scaffolded tests ...any of the tasks in this (article), as noted earlier, can precede an individual writing task to be graded in the usual ways (sound criteria, exemplars, etc.).

Under many circumstances the graphic organizations in this (article) are interchangeable or at least compatible. Together they

- add variety to lessons and novelty to the learning task
- tackle important ideas in history such as evidence, significance, change over time and causation in a variety of ways, thus deepening student understanding.
- act as forms of scaffolding so that more students can succeed when it is time for a traditional assessment such as a position paper.

When students justify their choices based on clear criteria, they are engaged in critical thinking. See Roland Case and LeRoi. Daniels' Introduction to the TC2 conception of critical thinking, SEG Ways Oct. 2003., pages 7-11 for an overview of this approach originating in British Columbia and now introduced to Ontario.

The Tasks

1. SPECTRUM

Many lessons involve the use of higher levels of thinking when students discuss local, national and global issues. One structure that promotes both communication and thinking skills is called spectrum. This structure gives students who are visual or kinesthetic learners more chance to demonstrate what they know when they “place” views along a spectrum. It is particularly useful as a closure to a lesson whose outcome is for students to apply their learning by discussing a question with many possible answers.

Procedure

1. Students in pairs are given a spectrum worksheet in which they examine a number of significant events related to a key question. Each event is numbered.

2.. The line or scale at the top of the page represents a spectrum of views about the question or issue. Opposing criteria are placed at each end of the line. Students work in pairs to reach consensus as to where to place events on the spectrum line according to the criteria. If students are looking at reasons America went to war in 1917 (see Appendix One) they might locate a set of events or ideas along the spectrum based on their influence as follows

towards war _____ away from war

3. Each pair positions the number of the event on the spectrum line according to its significance the opposing criteria.

4. Students write a sentence beside each event justifying its position on the line.

One Variation

Cut and Paste Relevance Square- Students cut out the rectangles and place them inside or outside the square depending on the relevance.

This simple task may begin the study of causation. From here students can, using other graphic organizers such as ladders, fish bones, or ranking diamonds, learn how to identify trigger events, long-range, short-range, and immediate causes, the nature of contingency, chance, as well as necessary and sufficient conditions,. All of these concepts are important for students to reach sophisticated conclusions as to why things happen.

3. HISTORICAL TRIANGLE

People make history, but why?

- Were they born great and made history all by themselves? Did they have the “right stuff”?
- Were they made great by working with others? Were they the leaders or figureheads representing a larger group? Can any leader do it all?
- Did they have greatness thrust upon them by outside forces- the right person at the right time? Would someone else have come along?

Procedure: Who Makes History?

1. After reading a biography about any historical figure, pairs of students try to reach a consensus as to whether the historical figure alone, as part of an organization, or as a passive agent of external forces played the greatest role in each of the events described in the biography. Based on their decision, students place the number of each event in the appropriate place in the triangle. For example, if a group agreed that the Watergate Scandal was largely the result of President Nixon’s actions, it would place the number close to “on their own” in the triangle.

In one sense, the placement of the number is not as important as the discussion students have to determine how President Nixon influenced history. For each event, students must provide reasons to justify their placement.

Once they have completed their triangles, have students draw conclusions and write a report interpreting the significance of the person in history.

4. HISTORICAL GRAPHS

Students often construct graphs exploring the relationships between price and demand in economics and sets of demographic data in geography. Historical graphs add a dimension to traditional timelines by helping students explore the nature of significance and chronology (change over time) in rigorous and meaningful ways. They also add a chronological dimension to the spectrum task done earlier so that students can see patterns over time and recognize that history is not an unbroken line of progress. Historical graphs push students to construct meaning from the graph through making connections between the abstract nature of data and the people and events which lay behind it. An added benefit is to help students gain a more realistic notion of change over

time; namely, that things do not always improve, that progress, however defined, is not inevitable.

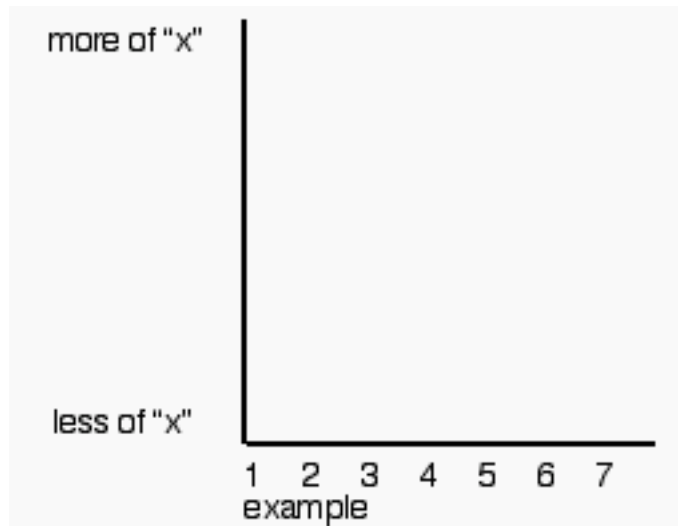
Procedure

1. The horizontal axis usually represents an element of chronology such as: decisions by a leader or a group, a series of events around a common theme; e.g. strikes, inventions, diary entries, public speeches, dates of events in the series (See Appendix Three for examples)

The vertical axis represents some comparative criteria such as

- unimportant - very important
- good leadership - poor leadership
- good example - poor example
- strongest influence - weakest influence.
- more or fewer of ____
- positive or negative examples or views of ____

2. Students place the events or a number corresponding to each event on the graph depending on their assessment of the degree to which the event, quote, feeling, decision, etc. exemplifies the criteria on the vertical axis.



Additional References:

Morton, T. (1996). Cooperative Learning and Social Studies: Towards Excellence and Equity. San Juan Capistrano, California: Kagan Cooperative Learning (Available through <http://www.kaganonline.com/> or 1-800 wee coop)

Fisher, P. (1999). Analysing Anne frank: A case study in the teaching of thinking skills. Teaching History. 95. 24-31.

Appendix One: Sample for Grade 11 U.S. History

TOWARDS	AWAY FROM	
WAR	WAR	
JUSTIFICATION FOR RANKING (ONE SENTENCE FOR EACH)		
GERMAN ANCESTRY OF MANY AMERICANS	1	_____
SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA	2	_____
ANGLO-AMERICAN ECONOMIC TIES	3	_____
IRISH AMERICAN HATRED OF BRITAIN	4	_____
BRITISH, FRENCH AND CANADIAN DESIRE FOR AMERICA TO ENTER WAR	5	_____
PRESIDENT WILSON'S CAMPAIGN SLOGAN "HE KEPT US OUT OF WAR"	6	_____
THE ZIMMERMAN TELEGRAM	7	_____

Appendix Two

THE REGINA RIOT JULY 1, 1935: A QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

(the account and the original task are adapted from a workshop in Saskatchewan I attended decades ago)

In 1935 Canadians were experiencing the worst effects of the depression. Drought had turned the prairie region into a giant dust bowl. Manufacturing plants were cutting back production and workers. By 1933 well over half a million Canadians were unemployed: over 20% of the work force. Those lucky enough to have a job saw their wages plummet. By 1935 ten percent of Canada's population received public relief: an early form of welfare.

The Conservative government led by R.B. Bennett, was concerned about the large number of single young males who were travelling from city to city looking for work. These transients had no stake in society. They were always last hired and first fired. Relief camps in British Columbia were created; it was said, to provide them with a stable life style and to lessen their hardship.

These camps were run by the Department of National Defense. They accommodated as many as 20,000 unmarried unemployed men who were paid 20 cents a day for their labour. Conditions were harsh and in many camps little useful work was accomplished. Yet the government insisted that unless these men went to the camps they would be denied welfare. In fact, the government feared that in the cities these people would be subject to Communist propaganda and become a threat to law and order. It was true that, Communist agitators, along with others concerned about the effects of the Depression on ordinary people, had organized peaceful protests against injustices in housing and welfare. So keeping transient workers busy in the country until the economy improved was thought to be a good idea.

The camps soon became hot beds of discontent and led to the organizing of the "Trek to Ottawa". As the unemployed rode the rails eastward, the number of protesters grew so that by the time the trekkers had reached Regina on July 1 in 1935 there were over five thousand of them.

Prime Minister Bennett decided to stop the trek in Regina. On July 1st four to five hundred trekkers met downtown at Market Square. Meanwhile four furniture vans filled with R.C.M.P. officers, armed with baseball bats, rolled into the square. A riot ensued. When the dust was settled, the R, C, M, P, had encircled the trekkers. A squad of men armed with mounted Vickers machine guns guarded entrances to the campsite.

Approximately 1000 trekkers were jailed as a result of the riot. Forty of them suffered from gun shot wounds, and one man was killed. The man killed was Detective Charles

Miller, a Regina policeman. On the day of the riot Miller, an experienced officer, was off-duty and in plain clothes.

There were two conflicting stories as to who was responsible for the death of Miller: the trekkers blamed the R.C.M.P., and the R.C.M.P. maintained that the rioters had killed Miller.

TASK

Based on the available evidence, rank the following in order of responsibility for the death of Charles Miller,. Justify your ranking.

- RELIEF CAMP MANAGERS
- PRIME MINISTER BENNETT
- TREKKERS
- THE DROUGHT
- R.C.M.P.
- CHARLES MILLER
- COMMUNIST AGITATORS

LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY	REASON(S)
MOST _____	_____
2 nd _____	_____
3 rd _____	_____
4 th _____	_____
5 th _____	_____
6 th _____	_____
LEAST _____	_____

Relevance Square Variation (one pair's response)

1 RELIEF CAMP MANAGERS
2 R.C.M.P.
3 PRIME MINISTER BENNETT
4 CHARLES MILLER
5 TREKKERS
6 COMMUNIST AGITATORS
7 THE DROUGHT

7

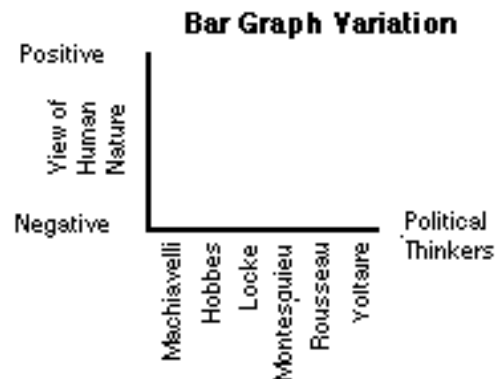
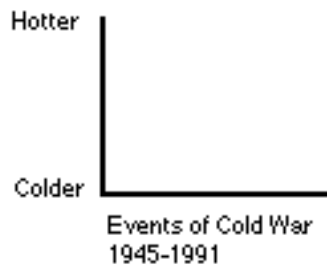
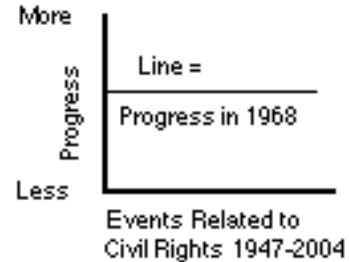
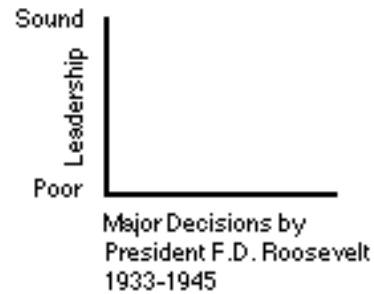
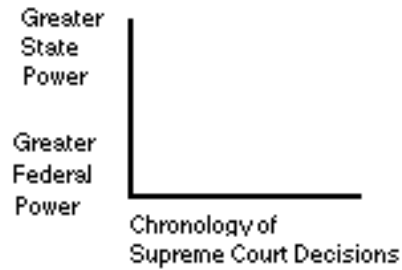
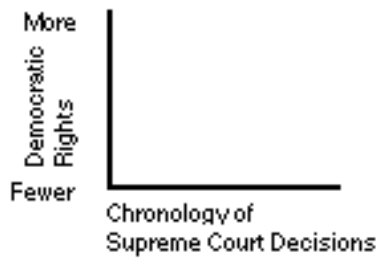
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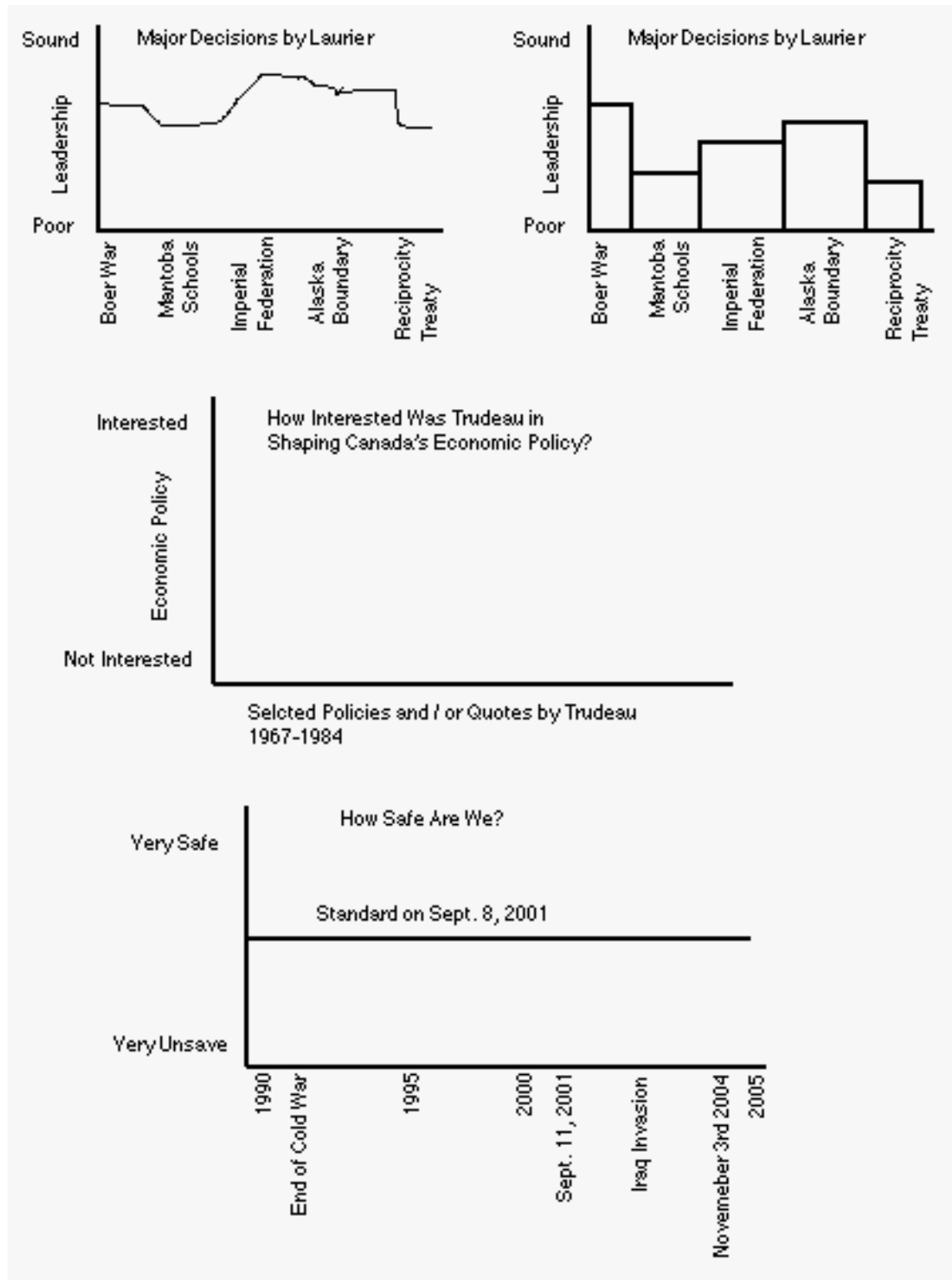
CHARLES MILLER 1

3 5

6

Appendix Three: Sample Historical Graphs
(various courses)





Variation and Extension:

Students conduct research to identify key events, quotes, policies, etc. to be placed on graph. Justify in a class report taking on the roles of policy advisers or lobby groups such as the Fraser Institute to the Canadian Labour Congress trying to persuade. An exercise to understanding bias.