



State College Area School District &
The Pennsylvania State University
Professional Development School

NINETEENTH ANNUAL INQUIRY CONFERENCE

Saturday, April 29th, 2017
Mt. Nittany Middle School

Sponsored in part by the Georgia Townsend Fund, the Thomas Newton
McCreary and Geraldine McCreary Endowment for Innovative Teacher
Preparation Programs and the Penn State Undergraduate Research Funds

The Penn State University-State College Area School District
Annual Teacher Inquiry Conference
A Brief History and Our Program Goals

In 1998 Penn State’s College of Education and the State College Area School District began a Professional Development School (PDS) Partnership that included two elementary schools and English classrooms in the middle and high school. The PDS Partnership has grown to include all nine SCASD elementary schools and secondary English and social studies classrooms. Over the years, teachers, administrators, higher education faculty, parents, and community members have supported the partnership enthusiastically. The Inquiry Conference, now in its nineteenth year, is pleased to once again welcome the World Languages student teachers.

In addition, those attending the conference will have an opportunity to visit a mid-morning session, “Posters and Pastries,” during which posters will feature inquiries from PDS partners and alumni members. These presenters will be sharing their classroom-based research in and around the partnership.

From its inception, the Penn State-State College Area School District PDS collaboration has been based on a strong platform of beliefs about the nature of education, teaching, and teacher education. One of the fundamental beliefs that undergirds our collaborative efforts is that teaching is a complex, multi-faceted problem-solving activity that requires ongoing question asking and data collection within the classroom in order to understand the impact of educational experiences on students and learning. Student learning forms the centerpiece of inquiry and professional development for interns and mentor teachers. The partnership seeks to educate and support teachers who have an inquiry-oriented stance, consistently looking to examine their practice and its impact through classroom-based research. Interns, mentors, other veteran teachers, and teacher educators embody this inquiry-orientation in the teacher inquiry investigations that are conducted. The Annual Inquiry Conference provides an opportunity to share inquiry investigations, celebrate accomplishments and generate a community of reflective practitioners.

One of our goals is to continue to increase the size, scope and impact of this annual event in order to foster rich, intellectually engaging dialogue about classroom teaching and classroom-based inquiry that can have a dramatic impact on how schools, teachers and teacher education are viewed. We invite you to join us in this effort.

**State College Area School District & The Pennsylvania State University
Professional Development School**

Nineteenth Annual Inquiry Conference

April 29, 2017

Mt. Nittany Middle School

8:00-8:15 a.m. Registration MNMS Lobby

8:15-8:35 a.m. Welcome and Recognitions MNMS Aud.

Rose Zbiek, Department Head, Curriculum and Instruction, Pennsylvania State University

Dr. Bob O'Donnell, Superintendent, State College Area School District

Michaela Colavecchi (3rd grade teacher - Gray's Woods) and Carly Colavecchi (17-18 PDS intern)

8:45 – 9:10 a.m. Session I

**Room 111 Kindergarten Kindness Counts: Fostering an Understanding of
Empathy Within the Classroom**

Melissa Newton
Melissajn7@gmail.com

Kindergarten
Corl Street Elementary School
Mentor: Katie Shoemaker

After seeing evidence of egocentric behavior in my classroom and observing its impact on the well-being of the classroom community, I wondered how I could aid my kindergarten students in being kinder towards one another. Over time, I extended this wondering in considering potential ways I could help my students learn how to put themselves in another individual's shoes. This presentation is devoted to sharing the various instructional strategies I implemented while using data collection methods to reflect on my students' responses to such interventions.

**Room 112 Seesaw in the Kindergarten Classroom: Exploring the Digital
Portfolio World**

Jennifer Apple
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Kindergarten
Lemont Elementary School
Mentor: Kathryn Narber

Since the very first day of school, the students in my classroom showed a unique aspiration to communicate their learning with others. While there were many opportunities for this in place, I wanted to combine the students' love for technology with a new outlet for students to share their work with each other, their teachers, and even their families at home. This presentation will outline how I taught students the skills needed to use seesaw successfully and ultimately how students were able to post and interact with seesaw independently and seamlessly throughout lessons across content areas.

Room 113 Genius Hour: Student Inquiry into Science and Social Studies

Hayley Hassinger
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3rd Grade
Gray's Woods Elementary School
Mentor: Katie Roth

Have you ever felt like there is not enough time in the day? My inquiry stemmed from not having enough time for science and social studies during the school day. I also noticed that my students had an interest and were more engaged during our science and social studies times. I implemented a Genius Hour into my classroom where students had the opportunity to participate in their own inquiry process based around our science and social studies units. Throughout this inquiry, I wanted to see if I could accomplish multiple standards across academic subjects, cover content, and engage all students.

Room 114 Painful to Peaceful! Establishing a Productive and Positive Morning Routine

Madison Hilliard
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4th Grade
Park Forest Elementary School
Mentor: Ron Meyers

After taking over the morning routine early in the school year in my fourth grade classroom, I wanted to find a way to give my students freedom to socialize with their peers in the morning but also responsibility. After having my students complete a survey and draw a picture of what they thought our morning looked like, I took action to create a calm and welcoming start to the school day. My interventions included changed seating arrangements, assigned morning work, community jobs, altered lunch sign up procedure, and deep breathing exercises to help improve the beginning of my students' day.

Room 115 “Hocus Pocus!” How Can I Magically Get the Kids to Focus?

Mackenzie Fries
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2nd Grade
Park Forest Elementary School
Mentor: Jackie Ondik

While teaching my second graders, I found myself constantly reminding the students to “focus” or “please get back to work” to help them stay on task. I started to wonder, how can implementing new management strategies increase time on task throughout the school day, particularly during Reader's Workshop. Throughout the Spring semester, I implemented mindfulness techniques through relaxation, movement and music to help students develop a toolbox of mindfulness strategies for staying on task. Each day we journeyed into the world of mindfulness and discovered what it could do for our focus.

Room 116 Movement or Mindfulness: How Can I Improve Focus in Second Grade?

Brooke Seidel
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2nd Grade
Radio Park Elementary School
Mentor: Mary Yahner

Through observations during large group instructional time, I noticed that gatherings on the carpet were a challenge for my second grade students. Calling out, moving around, touching others were all common behaviors that impacted learning. I wondered how could I increase attending time? Specifically, how would implementing movement and mindfulness strategies improve student focus and engagement during large group instruction? With the goal of increasing student focus, I engaged my students in various movement or mindfulness strategies various times throughout the day. In my presentation, I will share my strategies and findings.

Room 117 “Do we *REALLY* have to participate?” Student Participation: Does it Increase When Given a Grade?

Brian Bondiskey
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French 1 & 2
State College Area High School
Mentor: Michelle Graham

One of the best ways to improve your second language competencies is to practice, practice, practice. However, not all students see the need or the benefits of participating on a daily basis. As a World Languages educator, it is my personal goal to have all students motivated and willingly participating in my class. In the L2 classroom, we have readily available resources and opportunities for students to flourish in the language they are learning, but they must do one thing on their own: participate. In this inquiry, I have researched the effects of participation in the World Language classroom. I will discuss student participation before the implementation of a participation grade and the results after the implementation of the new grading system. I will also discuss the effects of participation has on student achievement in the L2 classroom.

Room 118 “Is This Graded?” Discovering Student Motivation in the Classroom

Amanda Mattern
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9th grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Elizabeth Delafield

What drives students to complete assignments, study, and collaborate? It is not unusual to hear the questions “is this graded?” or “how many points is this worth?”. Four main concepts affected the motivation of my 9th-grade students: grades, no grades, level of engagement, and the acquisition of knowledge.

Room 119 Exploring Character Traits in 1st Grade: How Are Relationships and Learning Impacted?

Olivia Guthoff
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1st Grade
Gray's Woods Elementary School
Mentor: Jennifer Lawrence

Over the course of four weeks, my first graders explored multiple character traits. Each week, there was an activity/discussion that was used as a pre-assessment, a focus lesson activity to develop an understanding of the character trait, and at least two supporting read-alouds. Students had a character trait binder that housed their work, which included a class definition, activities completed in school, and a parent response paper. This binder went home on Tuesdays. Children and their parents worked together to represent how they practiced each character trait and on Friday, they had an opportunity to share.

Room 120 “Looking Back into Your Mind”: Reflective Practice to Enhance Student Self Awareness Academically and Socially

Molly Maloney
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2nd Grade
Ferguson Township Elementary School
Mentor: Jodi Bierly

As I noticed my second grade students struggling to communicate about books and find intrinsic motivation to engage in small group conversations, I formed a wondering. I began to wonder in what ways student reflective practices could influence my second graders self-awareness academically and socially when communicating with one another about books. I implemented reflective writing lessons and introduced reflection strategies, which encouraged my students to write, draw, or video record their reflective thoughts. Additionally, my students set individual reading goals to support their metacognition, academic progress, and/or book talk conversations.

Room 214 Kindness Starts with Me: Spreading Kindness Within Ourselves and Throughout the School.

Jessica Riben
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1st Grade
Gray's Woods Elementary School
Mentor: Jill Corkery

What would you do with a classroom full of kind, caring, and curious first graders? I wanted to devise a way to pass their “awesome” to others who might need support. Would you set up interviews to learn about school staff or maybe use a wall to track the various acts? You could even create a “Take What You Need” board so the entire school could participate. This inquiry focused on the many ways my first graders spread their kindness beyond our classroom walls, and throughout the entire school community.

Room 216 “Oh, Why Can’t We Be [Collaborative] Friends?” An Inquiry into Meaningful Student Conversations

Hannah Harris
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4th Grade
Ferguson Township Elementary School
Mentor: Jodi Kamin

With a class of twenty outgoing and eager fourth grade students, conversations seem to be ever-present; however, I realized that although my kids were talking, their conversations weren’t as productive as they could’ve been. The students were active, engaging, and contributing members of each conversation, but they rarely valued the feedback of their peers. Through talking stems, structured conversations, and weekly progress check-ins, I encouraged my students to take to heart the ideas, suggestions, and critiques of their peers. After much modeling and practice, my classroom became a group of twenty teachers, working and collaborating together to advance their thinking.

Room 222 Differentiation: What Strategies are Most Effective for Engaging Special Education Students in the Language Classroom?

Carina Barreiro
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6th, 7th, 8th grade
Mount Nittany Middle School
Mentor: Kelly Corman

In order to explore and work towards improved differentiation for all special education students in the Spanish classroom, I focused on one particular 7th grade student with an IEP who was challenging to engage during my student teaching experience. I implemented different strategies and some interventions to try to help her best learn and practice the language in my classroom. In my presentation, I will discuss the methods I found most effective and share the data I collected throughout my inquiry of this student.

Room 224 Possibilities of the Pictorial: Focusing on Textual Analysis through Visual Expression

James Sumereau
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12th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Kate Walker

Teens participate in a modern shift toward a visually-oriented culture engaging with media dominated by photos, illustrations, and video. Capitalizing on this cultural shift in my AP Literature class, my students authored visual artifacts of reflection and analysis generating responses comparable to that of writing assignments. These assignments also generated multi-modal forms of thought, expression and articulation due to crossover between visual and textual modes of engagement.

Room 226 “To Participate or Not to Participate?”: Students’ Level of Engagement and their Motivation

Erin Ludy
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10th Grade
State College High School
Mentor: Dana Zuhlke

Students’ insights into activities they enjoy and what encourages their participation, in combination with my observations of four students, suggest the characteristics of their motivation. Some of these characteristics include being able to share ideas, being held accountable for getting work done, and being present in individual, partner, small group, and full-class activities.

9:15 – 9:40 a.m. Session II

Room 111 “No I Don’t Want to Work With Him!” An Inquiry into Helping Second Grade Students Develop Empathy When Working Collaboratively

Megan Brown
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2nd Grade
Corl Street Elementary School
Mentor: Laura Henderson

When the students in my second grade classroom were given a task that required problem solving in small groups one might see frustration, anger, and sadness expressed by some students. Collaborative working is a skill needed well beyond the four walls of a classroom and sitting, watching sadness develop in some of my students’ eyes during group work was not an option. I began to wonder: *how can I help my students see and think from someone else’s shoes when working together?* Through mindfulness, perspective taking, and community building we began our journey into learning to work collaboratively.

Room 112 Give Me a Break: A Look at Student Engagement Through Brain Breaks, Focused Attention Practices, and Individual Student Interventions.

Alixandra Collins
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2nd Grade
Lemont Elementary School
Mentor: Wendy Wilson

At the age of seven and eight years old, children need opportunities for mental breaks throughout the day. With today’s demanding curriculum there is limited time to give this opportunity to students. I wondered how engagement might improve if students were provided brain breaks throughout the day. Some students also have individual struggles staying focused and engaged throughout lessons. I chose to focus my inquiry on increasing student engagement through the implementation of brain breaks, focused attention practices, and individual interventions. Through different methods of data collection, I have documented changes in student engagement during instructional time throughout the day.

Room 113 Growth Mindset & Goals: Learning How to Stretch Our Brain to Reach Our Goals

Amanda Chobany
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4th Grade
Gray's Woods Elementary
Mentor: Cathy Klein

Having the skill to set goals and implement a growth mindset to reach those goals is an important life skill. I was noticing that my students needed little bits of motivation along the way to get to an end result. I wondered how a growth mindset would increase their engagement and motivation in the classroom. What if they were motivated to reach weekly goals by using a growth mindset? Together, we learned how to have a growth mindset, why it is important, and how we can use it in our daily lives to reach our goals.

Room 114 “It’s Not What Happened to You, But How You React That Matters”: Teaching Positive Interaction

Brooke Talalai
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4th Grade
Mount Nittany Elementary School
Mentor: Linda Margusity

Observing the interactions my students were having with one another, I noticed multiple times that they struggled to interact positively. This led me to wonder what activities could help my students to react differently. How might they control their reactions to one another when they are upset? I find it important for students to learn the life skills they need to be empathetic toward others, especially their own classmates. Through a series of lessons and activities, I have helped my students positively interact with one another.

Room 115 *Do You Have a Dog? Me Too!* Building a Community, One Question at a Time.

Kristine Logan
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Kindergarten
Radio Park Elementary School
Mentor: Marianne Garlicki

Entering my internship year, I was very excited to meet my 24 Kindergartners and get to know them. The students quickly became friends, but due to our morning special schedule, the students didn't have time to really get know each other and *I wasn't really getting time to know them* either. I wondered: Would implementing a morning question and a daily Show and Tell time help us get to know each other better? Come to see how our class responded, what we learned about each other and how we grew as a classroom community!

Room 116 Improving Students’ Critical Thinking Through the Use of the Claims Evidence Reasoning (CER) Framework

Kati Caldana
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2nd Grade
Park Forest Elementary School
Mentor: Elizabeth Hopkins

As information becomes more readily available in our society, students must become critical thinkers and evaluators of information. Before students are able to evaluate the claims, evidence, and reasoning of others, students must first be taught how to create their own responses using the CER framework. My inquiry focused on integrating the CER framework across subject areas in order to promote consistency and a clear expectation for my students. As students became more familiar with making claims using evidence and providing reasoning, their critical thinking skills improved as they began justifying their thinking and evaluating the reasoning of others.

Room 117 “Do We *HAVE* to Do This?” The Relationship Between Motivation and Language Development

Gregory Bricker
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9th – 12th Grade
Bellefonte Area High School
Mentor: Victoria Butch

This project predicts that motivation to learn and participate in activities has a positive impact on their language development overall. The students’ motivation is measured specifically by feedback on various types of activities utilizing technology and/or games, and their surroundings in the classroom to apply their skills to speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Their language development is measured by their summative assessment scores and compared to their scores from before my lessons with them in order to analyze a relationship between their progress and their motivation to complete the lessons that I have created for them.

Room 118 Questioning for Connection: Discussions in the Social Studies

Kelly McGill
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9th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Darla Hart

In two 9th grade advanced world history classes, a questioning style developed in which students took ownership of the conversations about content. Students discovered that the process of listening, reflecting metacognitively, and expanding on others’ ideas through personal connections is more important than a right answer to issues in social studies.

Room 119 Opportunities that Promote Leadership for all Second Graders

Christopher Lutz
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2nd Grade
Gray's Woods Elementary School
Mentor: Tara Kauffman

What does leadership look like in 2nd grade? How do you develop leaders in 2nd grade? I believe each student is capable of being a leader in his or her own particular way to match their personality. By highlighting 5 traits common to all leaders - grit, teamwork, discipline, curiosity, and reflection - our class learned how to self-identify as leaders in their own lives. By providing a range of opportunities for each student to lead a group, they were able to identify how these traits can be found in the everyday tasks they do inside and outside of school.

Room 120 Reflection and Collaboration Among Second Grade Students: Advocating Discussion and Shared Learning Through Technology

Hannah Parylak
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2nd Grade
Ferguson Township Elementary School
Mentors: Sherri Rose & Margaret Sutherland

Reflection and collaboration are two essential building blocks for students' learning. With current technological advancements and my second grade students' interest in technology, I decided to create a strategy using Seesaw as a tool to further my students' discussions during reading instruction. My goal was to catalyze a change in classroom reading workshop routines by providing moments of active reflection and a space where student learning can be made visible. This session will focus on how virtual collaboration has affected my students' discussion participation and has built academic partnerships among my students.

Room 212 Hands Up!

Amelia Sisko
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3rd Grade
Radio Park Elementary School
Mentor: Corey Zupon

Third graders are very excited to share and participate within the classroom and whole group discussion. However, due to this excitement, sometimes I have noticed that my students have had a difficult time remembering to raise their hands to answer a question or ask a question. What strategies could I use to encourage my students to raise their hand to share their ideas? Throughout my inquiry, I investigated ways in which the students are all able to participate in the discussion, while being respectful to their fellow classmates.

Room 214 Promoting a Growth Mindset in the Classroom!

Lucy Ruzzini
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1st Grade
Gray's Woods Elementary School
Mentor: Colleen Sheehan

A growth mindset can be utilized throughout children's entire lives! Would first grade students be up for a growth mindset? It was my hope that my children could use this mindset in our classroom and in their futures. Some lessons discussed the importance of perseverance through difficult tasks, knowing that these struggles are a normal part of daily life. I wanted my students to be armed with the capacity to take on challenges, have determination, and believe in themselves and others. Different interventions throughout my inquiry process facilitated the journey of adopting a growth mindset in my first grade classroom.

Room 216 'Ice Cold Lemonade... Only 75 Cents!': Math Coming Alive Through Project Based Learning

Kelly Hurry
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3rd Grade
Ferguson Township Elementary School
Mentor: Julie Bechtel

Each day my third grade students followed a familiar math workshop routine. I was noticing my eager and passionate math thinkers becoming unmotivated and disengaged during this time. As their classroom teacher, I asked myself, "How can I spice up our math workshop and captivate my students' interests?" Through the implementation of project based learning, my students regained their math spark while planning and developing their own lemonade stand. Students stepped out of our usual math routine while making pivotal business decisions and utilizing critical thinking and reasoning math skills.

Room 222 Classroom Rewards Systems...Why Bother?!

Zachary Bracken
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7th, 8th, 9th Grades
Mount Nittany Middle School &
State College Area High School
Mentor: Brogan Goeller

During my student teaching experience at Mount Nittany Middle School and State High, I modified my mentor teacher's pre-existing reward system to be more competitive and more integrated with every single class period. Now, I use a class points system that runs on a biweekly competition, putting classes, grade levels, and buildings against each other. Is all of the extra work on the teacher's end worth it?

Room 224 Think, Create, SHARE: The Creative Process as a Model for Empathy

Hayley Frerichs
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9th and 10th Grades
State College High School
Mentors: Sarah Rito and Georgina Motter

The creative process triangle-- think, create, share-- guided the design of creative activities and writing in my classroom. Beyond thinking of ideas and expressing them in creative tasks, the act of students sharing their work revealed possibilities for them to connect and potentially share the feelings of others.

Room 226 How Do I Push My “Good” Writers to Become Even Better Writers?

Anntoinette Bonitz
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9th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Jeffrey King

“I consider myself a good writer, Ms. Bonitz.” In my classroom, I wanted to explore how do I push my “good” writers to become even better writers. Giving feedback on their papers was something I found myself doing constantly. Since every teacher gives feedback differently, I was curious if there was a way to give feedback in a more efficient manner, and which style do my students prefer.

9:45 – 10:10 a.m. Session III

Room 112 Accepting the Challenge: Helping Students Reach Their Full Potential in Math

Amy Doheny
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2nd Grade
Lemont Elementary School
Mentor: Elizabeth Mamolen

All students entering second grade are supposed to know how to count to 120. So, this is what teachers can expect of incoming second graders - right? My wondering stemmed from observations that there was a broad range in students’ mathematical skills. Realizing that students’ needs were widespread, I decided to research the best ways to challenge students and implemented strategies for differentiation through small groups using various resources. I found that students’ achievement depends on diverse factors, including prior experiences, motivation, perseverance, and intellect; however, there are ways to accommodate for these differences to give every student the challenge he or she needs.

Room 113 Assessments: Finding the Balance Between Practical and Pleasurable

Dani Lewis
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1st Grade
Mount Nittany Elementary School
Mentor: Jen Tranell

Assessment is becoming increasingly prevalent and essential in schools across the world. It is critical for furthering instruction and perceiving student understanding along the way. As soon as the year started I began to question how I might implement engaging assessments in the classroom that serve as evidence for each child's individual conceptual understanding. Across subjects, I have explored various forms and mediums of assessments in order to maintain on-going awareness of student understanding.

Room 114 Write On! How to get 4th Graders Engaged During Writing Time

Katelyn Bognatz
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4th Grade
Mount Nittany Elementary School
Mentor: Sarah Dwyer

During writing time, many of my students were distracted, off task, and *not* writing. After observing these behaviors, it led me to my wondering; how can I get my 4th grade students engaged during writing time? Through goal setting conferences, grouping students with similar goals, and conferring with individual students, I wanted to see how my students would improve on their skills along with their love of writing.

Room 115 "I do too!" Building Community by Making Connections with Each Other

Brittany Miller
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Kindergarten
Radio Park Elementary School
Mentor: Cheryl Isola

With 24 eager-to-learn, egocentric five-year-olds and a 9:00 a.m. special, my students were missing the valuable beginning-of-the-day community building time typical of a Kindergarten classroom. I very quickly observed how this negatively impacted my students: they played alone or *only* with their "besties". I began to wonder how implementing purposeful community building and partnering activities would affect student interactions and learning in the classroom. Would students begin to reach out to other students, form new friendships and work cooperatively with new peers in the classroom? After implementing these activities for several weeks, the impact was evident.

Room 116 Differentiating Reader's Workshop to Meet the Needs of 1st Grade Readers

Katelyn Chambers
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1st Grade
Park Forest Elementary School
Mentor: Becky Brigman

How do I address the wide range of student needs in my classroom? This is something I found myself wondering each day. More specifically, I wondered how I could meet my students' needs during Reading Workshop time. Using the goals of three diverse readers to drive my inquiry, I explored ways to schedule my hour-long Reading Workshop time, as well as specific reading strategies to implement in the whole group and small group setting.

Room 117 Can Class Participation Be Increased with a Diminishing Point System?

Erin Slater
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10th and 11th Grades
Bellwood-Antis High School
Mentor: Erin Elliott-Smith

As a teacher, I struggle with getting my students in some class periods to participate in class. I have two class periods in particular that are less interested in participating willingly: my first period Spanish 3 class and my 3rd period Spanish 2 class. Learning happens when students are doing something, so participation would benefit student learning. I want to help my students be more successful and be more involved in class. During my presentation, I will discuss how I tried using a diminishing point system to increase students' participation in class.

Room 118 Deliberating Geographies: Preparing Students for Democratic Citizenship

Nicole Gargiulo
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11th and 12th Grades
State College Area High School
Mentor: Robert Furmanek

Encouraging deliberation within our classrooms can provide students the tools needed to become thoughtful members of society. Through deliberative activities in Geography, students deepened their capacity to collaborate, self-reflect, and maintain an open-mind. Students can then take these skills from the classroom and apply them to situations they will soon face as global citizens in an ever-changing world.

Room 119 Learning to “Rock” at Being Buddies

MaryJean Murray
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1st Grade
Easterly Parkway Elementary School
Mentor: Matt Burns

In my classroom, we hope to build a community of learners. Throughout the day there are many opportunities for the students to work collaboratively in partners and in groups. I noticed that some students were being exclusive when picking partners and did not see the value in working with a variety of students. This inquiry explores how Rock Buddies, alongside other activities, affect students' attitudes towards working with classmates.

Room 120 Empathy from Room 15 to Malawi, Africa

Ericka Sinicrope
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Kindergarten
Ferguson Township Elementary School
Mentor: Mary Macalus

In the beginning of the school year, I noticed great kindness and a willingness to give within my classroom. From my noticings, I developed the wondering, “How can Kindergarten students develop empathy towards other individuals inside and outside of the classroom? In what ways can a service learning project, specifically the African Library Project, help them develop that empathy?” By combining their love for helping others together with my own passion for service learning, I encouraged my students to show more empathy towards each other and toward others from a different country.

Room 212 How Do You Spell It?: Incorporating Skills and Replacing Autocorrect

Chloe Harding
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3rd Grade
Radio Park Elementary
Mentor: Kelly Mark

Growing up in a world that relies on autocorrect, spelling instruction seems to be an unnecessary skill learned in early years. I began noticing that some of my students come to a standstill during writing because they lacked the skills necessary to spell correctly. On the other hand, some students appeared to have zero motivation to spell correctly. Observing these struggles, I began to wonder how delivering spelling instruction could promote my student's confidence while writing. By incorporating word study instruction into our daily routine, my third graders are learning the value of accurate spelling.

Room 214 Can't Stop the Feeling: Exploring Emotions in a Kindergarten Classroom

Mary Kearney
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Kindergarten
Gray's Woods Elementary School
Mentor: Lynn Fritz

Do kindergarten students understand their emotions? I wondered the same thing each day when I worked with my kindergarteners. Together, we took a journey to understand our emotions and how to regulate them. Through various activities my students spent time focusing on five emotions: happy, worried, angry, sad and silly. Part of their learning centered around what to do when they are feeling too much of an emotion. Throughout our journey, my students kept an emotions book where their learning was recorded.

Room 216 Increasing Empathy: One Action at a Time

Shannon Wright
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2nd Grade
Easterly Parkway Elementary School
Mentor: Andrea deCarle

Can students *learn* to be more empathetic? Will students *choose* kindness? This inquiry stemmed from my interest in helping students to put themselves in someone else's shoes before making a decision. Through reading stories with a theme of kindness and empathy, I was interested in seeing how *acting out* those stories could help students better understand the feelings and experiences of the characters they read about. Throughout my inquiry, I wanted to see if using reader's theatre as a springboard for learning about empathy could have an impact on students' understanding and transfer of showing kindness in the classroom.

Room 222 "Homework - to Do or Not to Do?": Does Homework Play a Vital Role in the Language Classroom?

Justine Seiler
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Grades 9-12, French I - III
Bellefonte Area High School
Mentor: Brittany McCamley

Teachers may have a myriad of rationales to why they should or should not assign homework to their students. I have been particularly interested in understanding the role of homework since my mentor had previously assigned very little or no homework. In my research, I collected data from three French classes on student's participation grades before and after assigning homework, conducted surveys, and documented the types of homework assigned to gain some insight to homework's role in the classroom.

Room 224 Responding to Student Responses: How to Facilitate Deeper Thinking through Conversation

Sean O'Neill
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11th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Mary Nasatka

Discussion is widely considered an important tool utilized in classrooms in order for students to better engage with texts and their own ideas. This presentation will explore how teacher responses and follow-up questions asked can help create deeper thinking by creating a conversation instead of “quizzing.”

Room 226 Using Personal Experiences and Self-Reflections as a Means to Enhance Student Academic Writing and Learning

Terah Ramsey
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12th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Beth Hartman

What are the affordances of using self-reflection in academic writing? When asking students to put themselves in someone else’s shoes to make a pivotal choice, the results proved to be a bridge between personal and academic writing. Their personal self-reflection writing illustrated deeper interpretations and the ability to evaluate actions, both key components they transferred to academic writing about literature.

10:15-10:55

Posters and Pastries

Please help yourself to a snack in the cafeteria while you interact with our interns, teachers, and teacher educators who are sharing posters that highlight their inquiries. You are welcome to move flexibly from poster to poster. Enjoy the opportunity to interact with as many presenters and visitors as possible! The titles of the posters and presenters are displayed below.

Posters and Pastries: Celebrating Inquiries of Veteran Educators

*(*denotes former PDS intern)*

- Poster 1** **What Might Year-Long Inquiry Look Like in Two 4th grade Classrooms?**
Ali Davenport* & Jodi Kamin (SCASD)
- Poster 2** **“Reading” Art and Student Engagement (Using Art for Student-Centered Analytical Discussion and Critical Thinking)**
Kelly Berg* (Canon-McMillan School District)
- Poster 3** **STEAM Power in Kindergarten: How can STEAM activities be integrated into the Kindergarten day?**
Cheryl Isola & Marianne Garlicki (SCASD)
- Poster 4** **Second Grade Book Clubs**
Andrea DeCarle* & Colleen McCracken*(SCASD)
- Poster 5** **Is Mindfulness More than a Buzzword?**
Meghan McGinty* (SCASD)
- Poster 6** **Don’t Get Overbooked - Analyzing Student Preferences Toward Reading Mediums**
Diane Cascioli (SCASD High School Intern)
- Poster 7** **Is This English or History?: Using Liberatory Praxis and Historiography to teach about the Underground Railroad as a Form of Civic Education and Critical Race Theory**
Donna King* (Penn State University)
- Poster 8** **What Tensions in Our Beliefs Are Important To Our Teaching**
Jamie Myers (Penn State University)
- Poster 9** **Learning and Teaching in Bogota, Colombia**
Katelyn Bognatz, Alixandra Collins, Amy Doheny, and Monika Santini (Current PDS Interns)

Poster 10 Big Ideas Bringing Lit Fest to Life
Dustin Brackbill (Librarian – SCASD)

Poster 11 Exploring Our Work Through AutoEthnography
Kate Hallinger* and Gail Romig* (SCASD)

Poster 12 20th Anniversary Posters and Pastries
Bill Benson and Christine McDonald (PDAs)

11:00-11:25 a.m.

Session IV

**Room 111 All by Myself: How Technology Can Be Used to Help
Kindergarteners Become More Independent**

Jenna Donnelly
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Kindergarten
Easterly Parkway Elementary School
Mentor: Lisa Spock

Technology is one of the few mediums in my classroom that engages every student. One of the goals that I have for my kindergarteners is to help them become more independent citizens. I wondered if I could use the iPad, projector, document camera, and online educational resources that could spark their interest and help them improve or develop their level of independence. Therefore, the purpose of my inquiry was to collect and analyze data in order to determine the relationship between technology and independence.

**Room 112 Friendship is Golden, but Can be Tarnished by Unfavorable Words
and Actions: The Impact of Friendship Strategies in a Second Grade
Classroom**

Ingrid Boarts
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2nd Grade
Easterly Parkway Elementary School
Mentor: Colleen McCracken

A classroom community full of diversity is bound to have its challenges. When observing my second grade classroom during student interactions such as recess, transition times, and group work, I noticed some common patterns of behavior. By exposing students to tools including a tattle telephone, warm fuzzy collection, and other friendship strategies, I wondered how will they impact friendships in my classroom community?

Room 113 You've Got a Friend in Me: Helping Kindergarteners Learn about Friendship

Ashley Ray
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Kindergarten
Mount Nittany Elementary School
Mentor: Sabrina Upcraft

My inquiry began because of behaviors I was seeing in my kindergarten classroom. I wondered if using stickers and purposeful read-alouds would help my students to be kinder friends to one another. Would talking with students as a group and having them share when friends were kind, improve the way they acted towards each other?

Room 114 "Can I go to the bathroom?" Extending Student Motivation and Focus

Katie Faillace
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1st Grade
Park Forest Elementary School
Mentor: Brenda Hartman

Finding motivation as a first grader can sometimes be challenging. During this semester, I looked at strategies to help a struggling student be more engaged and focused on her work. After collecting some baseline data about my student's interests, I was able to analyze this data and intervene with different strategies, including a reward system, to help motivate her to complete her work and stay on task. After working with this student, I learned new strategies that I will be able to use with future students.

Room 115 Sole Power: Second Graders Learn to Walk in Someone Else's Shoes

Victoria Naumann
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2nd Grade
Park Forest Elementary School
Mentor: Kim Wilson

Bullying, fights, and tears - oh my! Second grade can be *tough*. After observing several incidents of unkindness and apathy in my second grade classroom, I felt called to action to help my students make thoughtful changes to the ways they interacted with their peers. I wondered, in what ways could I teach my students about empathy that encouraged them to take a walk in someone else's shoes and empowered them make more compassionate choices? This inquiry explores the behavioral and emotional effects of empathy lessons on a classroom of twenty-two second graders.

Room 116 Own Your Learning! Enhancing Student Motivation Through Creativity

Jocelyn Parry
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3rd Grade
Park Forest Elementary School
Mentor: Brenda Khayat

How can we use student creativity to motivate our students? I have always been intrigued by the creative mind and how to best support my students' creativity and originality. After noticing a lack of motivation in some of my students as they completed their school work, I could not help but wonder if more opportunities for originality when completing assignments might motivate my students. This inquiry takes the multiple intelligences and integrates them into the classroom curriculum to motivate learners to put their personal best into their school work.

Room 117 Off-Task Behavior and How Certain Activities Can Help Keep the Interest of Students

Anita Rao
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9th Grade
Altoona Area High School and
Junior High School
Mentor: Jessica Patton

In any class, it is possible for students to zone out and lose focus on the activity they are supposed to be doing. There are many reasons why a student may not be paying attention and doing their work. It could be as simple as they did not get enough sleep the night before, or it is right before they go to lunch. However, another reason could be that they are simply bored. During my presentation, I will discuss some of the outside factors that may cause students to lose focus, and I will discuss what activities seemed to bore my students. Along with those activities, I will also discuss what activities kept them interested.

Room 118 “The Student Didn’t Do the Work Again, I Guess They’re a Lost Cause”: An Exploration into Teachers’ Implicit Biases in the Classroom

Meghan McMahon
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9th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Danielle Ambrosia

Whether we like to admit it or not, we all have implicit biases we bring with us every time we step through our classroom door. Our expectations and assumptions about student ability shape our teaching and the learning our students accomplish. What can we gain as educators by understanding that our expectations and assumptions on students' ability to shape their overall learning? How we choose to address these biases will impact our students' learning positively or negatively; it's up to us to decide.

Room 119 Unconventional Kindness: Tolerance in 4th Grade

Victoria Sobota
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4th Grade
Easterly Parkway Elementary School
Mentor: Jaime Pugh

As our classroom started to build a strong community, I began to notice a few students who were being unkind to one another. I wanted all of my students to show positive consideration and tolerance for one another, but some were not treating each other with the kindness or respect I wanted to see. Through my inquiry, I hoped to find ways to help all my students become intrinsically motivated to treat others with kindness and show tolerance for individual differences. This presentation focuses on the unconventional methods I researched and implemented to promote kindness and tolerance in my classroom.

Room 120 Flipping the Page: Analyzing Student Preferences Toward Differing Reading Modalities

Diane Cascioli
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Advanced English 11
State College Area High School
Mentor: Allison Becker

Ever wonder why your students are still not reading outside of class? Throughout this academic year, I provided multiple formats for my students to engage in classroom texts (paperback, audiobooks, eBooks, and any combination of these) to inquire into what method of reading they most preferred. I was able to discover the rationale behind these student preferences, as well as accumulate a plethora of resources to access these alternative forms of common educational texts.

Room 212 *Why Do Octopuses Have Suckers?* Creating an Enthusiastic and Productive Writing Environment Through Student Inquiry

Jacqueline DePue
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4th & 1st Grades
Radio Park Elementary School
Mentors: Emily McAleer & Kristin Miller

Have you ever asked a “Why” or “How” question? Congratulations! You’ve completed the first step to becoming an expert on a topic. As the year progressed, I wondered if I could give my students the opportunity to research and write about their own interests or topics they were most curious about. I also wanted to learn how to better differentiate for my very diverse group of students in both fourth and first grade. Could I accomplish both of these goals through student inquiry? Join me in seeing how both my fourth graders and first graders challenged themselves with inquiry!

Room 214 “Now What?”: Helping Students Understand the Power of Productive Discussions

Kelsey Crum
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4th Grade
Ferguson Township Elementary School
Mentor: Kelly Kaminski

Don't we all find it a bit challenging to stay fully engaged in every single conversation? It is important for students to have an extensive repertoire of conversational skills. My fourth grade students are constantly given opportunities to interact and converse with one another. While listening in on these students' conversations, I began to notice the lack of elaboration and stamina. I wondered how I could hold my students accountable for meaningful discussions, as conversation skills play such a large role in education and allowing students to begin thinking on their own.

Room 216 Let's Get Reading: An Inquiry into Student Engagement and Behavior During Shared Reading Experiences

Emily Schmid
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1st Grade
Easterly Parkway Elementary School
Mentor: Jaymie Ramey

In first grade, students burgeon into young readers through many reading experiences. As a student teacher, I began to notice that during our essential shared reading experiences, like group reading and partner reading, my first grade students were more inclined to chat and laugh about their recess plans instead of reading. I started to wonder: what interventions could I implement that may impact student engagement and behavior during shared reading? Throughout my inquiry process, I investigated several reading interventions, such as Reader's Theater and twin stories, and their impact on my students' engagement and behavior during shared reading.

Room 222 “How Many Points Do I Need?”: Searching for the Motivation to Participate

Sarah Pfaff
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Spanish 2
State College Area High School
Mentor: Danielle Gibbs

Assigning a participation grade can easily be a burden in any classroom. In a language classroom that tracks any and all participation, I began to wonder how I could get *every* student involved to receive a full participation grade for the marking period. I identified students who earned less than 80% of their participation grade and explored different interventions that could motivate them to participate more in class.

Room 224 From Talk to Paper: Utilizing Classroom Discussion as a Vehicle for Creating Convincing Warrants in Student Writing

Stephen Fishler
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9th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Heather Dinsmore

Ninth grade students are inherently competitive. They want to be correct and they want to prove themselves correct. Using classroom discussion as a means for this competitiveness to come to life helps students create convincing warrants that translate into their own writing. Addressing both the scaffolding and teacher prompting involved in student discussion, we focus on the transfer of oral to written warrants and how to best create a convincing, argumentative and persuasive warrant in student writing.

Room 226 Teaching Empathy: How to Avoid “The Danger of the Single Story” in Classrooms

Samantha Corza
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English 10, Advanced English 10
State College Area High School
Mentor: Rebecca Thorsen

As educators, how can we create an environment in our classroom that allows for students to engage in meaningful discourse that builds global perspectives and empathy? As teachers, we have to understand this as a process and recognize that for some, we are simply setting the framework for them to question their own beliefs and begin the process of understanding.

11:30 a.m. – 11:55 p.m. Session V

Room 111 “I Like to Move it, Move it”: Incorporating More Physical Activity into Content to Increase Student Engagement

Madison Mulhern
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3rd Grade
Corl Street Elementary School
Mentors: Kelly Essick and Maria Hayes

Almost all elementary students love gym, recess, and getting the chance to move, but during instruction, students may not be given this opportunity. A common form of instruction in classrooms is gathering the class on the carpet and teaching a lesson to the whole group. Many of the students in my third-grade classrooms would lose focus and interest in a lesson like this in just minutes. Throughout my inquiry, I worked to change this by exploring a variety of ways to increase physical activity during a content-based lesson and get students more involved and engaged with the content being learned.

Room 112 Mindfulness Practices of Meditation and Self Reflection

Harli Weitz
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4th Grade
Easterly Parkway Elementary School
Mentor: Kathleen “Dee” Finley

Although school endeavors to be a place where all students feel welcomed, in control, and competent, that may not always be the case. As teachers, we try to equip students with the tools to be learners, friends, and citizens, but more is needed. Students must learn to be mindful, through self-reflective practices and meditation to gain confidence and coping mechanisms. My fourth grade students have gone on a journey of mindfulness, reaffirming my beliefs in the practice. The trials and tribulations of not only learning about mindfulness, but infusing the practice into everyday life has been transformative.

Room 113 The Creative Inspiration Station: Increasing Positive Views Towards Writing

Shelby Wright
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3rd Grade
Gray’s Woods Elementary School
Mentor: Shari Dillon

Have you ever sat down to write and ended up with only a few words on the page? What would it take to help you write more? This inquiry stemmed from observing the stress and anxiety my students experienced from writing. By providing them with frequent periods of time to explore different creative writing activities, I hoped to increase more positive feelings about writing and improve writing confidence in the classroom. The idea was that providing students with choice, purpose, and a mode of creative expression, would help even the struggling writers to develop an appreciation for writing.

Room 114 Using Choice and Genre Exploration to Create “Great Writing” by Reluctant Students

Alexis Aumiller
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11th & 12th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Melissa Wager

Encouraging reluctant writers to take an interest in their own writing proves to be a challenging task. Thus, at the beginning of every class, my students embarked on writing challenges, choosing from many genres to create writing personal to themselves. The results? Great writing.

Room 115 “Can You Hear Me Now?": Coaching First Grade Students to Become Effective Public Speakers

Monika Santini
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1st Grade
Radio Park Elementary School
Mentor: Tiffany Brushwood

Have you ever felt a little nervous or scared to speak in front of a crowd? It is common for adults to feel timid when speaking, and so do students. During the multitude of opportunities to speak to the whole class in the school day, I observed many of my students eager to share their thoughts but timid when doing so. Similarly, I noticed a need for skills and support that would help the students become effective public speakers. After acquiring basic skills, could their audience hear their message? Could 1st graders become great speakers? Join me and find out!

Room 116 Ending the Homework Hassle: Moving Students from Opposition to Completion

Jane Truffer
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9th -12th Grades
Bellefonte Area High School
Mentor: Emily Zimdahl-McManus

Over the course of the semester, I realized that my students were much less than enthralled by the homework assignments I presented. Their completion and effort was lackluster and they were missing critical practice opportunities outside of the classroom. In world language classrooms, I believe homework is highly valuable because most students have no other means of exposure to the target language outside of class. My presentation will discuss the results of a homework reward system monitored by both myself and the students.

Room 117 Writing, Reading, or Racing? How Does Our Choice of Activities Affect Student Participation?

Paul Landázuri
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9th Grade
Altoona Area Junior High School
Mentor: Patricia Leonard

“How can I get my students to volunteer more in class?” At some point in time, all aspiring educators ask themselves this question. Through my teaching experience, I noticed varying levels of participation day to day, something that prompted me to focus on enhancing participation. My inquiry focuses on students participating and volunteering during in-class activities and how that relates to the kinds of activities each day. During my presentation, I will talk about the correlation I found between the activities taking place in my class and the level of participation.

Room 118 Break on Through to the Other Side: An Up-Close Look at Summary and Analysis in the Writing Process

Caitlin McGeary
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9th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Meredith Henderson

Everyone has an opinion, but not everyone has the ability to support it. In a world where people make constant claims, let's ask students to stand out. Why should a person believe your argument if you are unable to support your belief? I ask 9th grade students this question almost daily, and while we agree that this skill is important, it is also undeniably difficult to develop. How can educators encourage students to shift from summarization to interpretation and analysis to help create a stronger argument?

Room 119 Igniting Engagement: Exploring Strategies During Writing

Amanda Wajert
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2nd Grade
Radio Park Elementary School
Mentor: Mary Robert

In my second grade classroom this year, many of my students were becoming quite proficient at writing. I began to notice, however, that a few students were having trouble getting started right away, working the entire allotted time, and improving their independence while writing. In my inquiry, I explored several strategies focused on improving student engagement for the entire class. Some were quite successful and others - not so much. My presentation will highlight various interventions I tried in my classroom and I will share my intriguing and somewhat surprising results.

Room 120 *Lord of the Flies* or *The Hunger Games*? Why Do We Still Teach “The Classics” and How Can We Keep the Lessons Modern?

Zoë Crissinger
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10th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Mary Lou Manhart

How would you feel if you were fifteen years old and your teacher told you that you'd be reading and analyzing classic Western Canon novels like *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre*? The critical reason for teaching the “classic” novels in our modern classrooms is that these stories never finish saying what they have to say. This session will explore the enduring impacts such well-respected texts have had on our contemporary student population from the perspective of one 10th-grade classroom.

Room 212 Teeter-Tottering with Seesaw

Stephanie Martin
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4th Grade
Radio Park Elementary School
Mentor: Julie Jobe

In this technologically advanced world, I wanted to begin integrating technology into my teaching practice in a creative and student-friendly way. Therefore, I chose to implement Seesaw, the online learning journal, into my classroom. Throughout my inquiry, I explored the various functions Seesaw offers through science lessons and weekly reflection posts as a way to enhance and transform student activities.

Room 214 The Technological World of Today: Does the Use of Technology Impact Student Learning?

Alexandra Duca
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2nd Grade
Easterly Parkway Elementary School
Mentor: Alix Crosswell

The world we live in today is characterized by a prominent usage of technology that is more visible in our education system now than ever before. Due to the fact that my classroom is fortunate enough to have 1:1 tablet accessibility, I wondered how the use of that resource, specifically through the Seesaw app, would impact my group of second graders. Throughout my study, I introduced the app across different content areas, specifically through Word Study, Social Studies and Mathematics to collect information about my wondering.

Room 216 Books Lead to Talking: Peer-Led Literature Discussions in the Classroom

Rebecca Febbo
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3rd Grade
Ferguson Township Elementary School
Mentor: Tara Pollick

Reading can open doors to an entirely new world, allowing students to experience and understand various concepts. In my third grade classroom, reading is a major focus as students choose "good fit" books and think about what they're reading. As I conferred with students and had group read aloud discussions, I saw they had great thoughts and questions about their books but were hesitant to share these thoughts and questions with others. With this in mind, I decided to implement peer-led literature discussions for students to develop more meaningful, deep and thoughtful conversations about the literature they are reading.

Room 222 “Do I Get a Gallo for That?”—How Do Reward Systems Impact Student Participation?

Selin Saka
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9th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Nick Gallo

“Gallos” are a reward system of money used in my classroom to track participation. Students need to turn in 20 Gallos at the beginning of each month to receive full credit. I am interested in how the use of Gallos impact students’ participation and motivation in the classroom. While some students are always willing to participate in class, some hardly ever raise their hand. Through my inquiry, I will track participation in one class using checkmarks instead of Gallos; thus comparing and contrasting the effects of both.

Room 224 Why Does History Matter? Constructing a Deeper Understanding of Historical Topics by Focusing on Significance

Courtney White
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10th Grade
State College Area High School
Mentor: Justine Kononov

One problem students have with history is that they find it to be pointless memorization. Asking students to analyze the significance of historical events supports critical thinking about their causes and effects.

We are deeply grateful to all of the following individuals for their ongoing support of the inquiry process and the planning of this inquiry conference.

PDS Associates and Mentors

K-4 Professional Development Associates

Bernard Badiali, Bill Benson, Sue Feldman, Mary Higgins, MJ Kitt, Gwen Lloyd, Courtney Lynch, Colleen McCracken, Christine McDonald, Erin Morgart, Amy Morton, Laurie Pagnotto, Nicholas Reitz, Jane Steff, Deana Washell, Rachel Wolkenhauer, Carla Zembal-Saul

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Jaime Pugh, Jaymie Ramey, Mary Robert, Sherri Rose, Katie Roth, Colleen Sheehan, Katie Shoemaker, Lisa Spock, Kristy Stroschein, Marge Sutherland, Jen Tranell, Sabrina Upcraft, Deana Washell, Kim Wilson, Wendy Wilson, Mary Yahner, Corey Zupon

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