



# STEELERS SHOWCASE

**Our School Goal:** "Each staff member will develop an individual goal connected to MPSC that will result in a positive impact on learning in Perdue School". Each staff member chose a place to attach their dot, or learning, for the year in areas such as: relationships, assessment, relevance, math, and engagement.

Welcome back to the Steeler's Showcase. In this monthly newsletter we share the stories of our staff and students learning journey. This month we will feature the work of Mrs. Comerford and Mrs. Redden.

**Mrs. Comerford** – My goal was to educate myself on and implement trauma informed practices that build strong relationships in the classroom.

Two recurring themes to building strong relationships that have surfaced in the book I am reading, *Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom*, have been "seeing and exploring all the options" and "don't let fear drive the bus." That is where the story behind the evidence for my goal begins...

One afternoon in October 2020, the Grade 4/5 class did something amazing. They created Teepee Town outside along the tree line by our playground. This town has sparked an unbelievable journey through our Social Studies/Arts Ed/ELA curriculum with a focus on government, our love of the outdoors, and our classroom relationships.

Seeing and exploring all the options: As a teacher, I had to force myself to step back and see where this could take us. I also had to let the students show me many of the options for Teepee Town and follow their lead. This action was not always easy, but the results have been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career.

Don't let fear drive the bus: I had to not be fearful of trying so many new things! I had to not be fearful of finding more ways to incorporate outcomes into Teepee Town. I had to not be fearful of taking the time needed to help relationships continue to grow and build within the parameters of Teepee Town.

It is May 2021 right now and I can happily report that Teepee Town has flourished throughout the entire year. There are days where no one visits, there are days when devastation from vandalism took over our enthusiasm, there are days when excited students cannot wait to start a new town idea, and there are days when I am overcome with amazement at the wonderful creation we have built together.

Here are just a few captured moments from Teepee Town:



Every citizen registered as a voter.

Teepee Town citizens rebuild. Construction takes place against a tree line for extra shelter and innovative strategies are used to make the houses sturdier. Collaboration, compromise, respect, and relationships are other main foci during our construction.



Winter brought snow to Teepee Town and immediately the citizens began to use the snow as foundation and natural disaster protection.



**Mrs. Redden's goal:** My professional goal this year was to develop courses that focus on big ideas from the curriculum and to find ways to make those big ideas relevant to my students. My focus will be on History 10.

I have been away from teaching the last year and a half while on maternity leave, so coming back halfway through the year, I knew that I wanted to focus on one specific class for my school goal. As a History teacher, it is so important to have students not only learn about the past, but to also understand how the past and present are connected. I decided that I would build my goal around helping students understand the big ideas of the course while also seeing relevancy between the material and their own lives. The two units of focus this semester for History 10 were the Industrial Revolution and Imperialism. I decided to use a professional resource to help me gather ideas on relevancy. *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts* by Dr. Peter Seixas and Tom Morton identifies six historical thinking concepts:

1. Establish *historical significance*
2. Use *primary source evidence*
3. Identify *continuity and change*
4. Analyze *cause and consequence*
5. Take *historical perspectives*
6. Understand the *ethical dimension* of historical interpretations.

With these six concepts in mind, I created learning activities and assignments for students. In our unit on the Industrial Revolution, we looked at how child labor was used, particularly in factory settings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After studying the historical elements of child labor in Britain, we began a research assignment on child labor as it exists in today's world. I was blown away by the depth of knowledge the students amassed during this assignment and the level of empathy they showed in their presentations to the class. I think a lot of students were surprised to see how common child labor continues to be in modern times.

Another strategy I used to help students understand the big ideas of our Imperialism unit was to implement simulations in the classroom. So far, we have done two group simulations to help students understand the concepts of nation building, economic decision making, and international relations. These activities have been fun but have also given students the opportunity to share their understanding of the goals of imperialism.

Primary sources have also been of key importance in both units and students have been learning how to understand and analyze primary sources independently. I have noticed that students are developing an understanding of historical perspectives and are able to identify bias and belief systems of the past.

I typically give an exam at the end of each unit, but this year I decided to end the Industrial Revolution unit with a "conversation exam". I felt that the students had learned a lot, but that I'd rather have them be able to sit down and have a discussion about what they'd learn, with a particular focus on connecting their learning to the present day. I was so impressed to hear what the students had to say. They had all taken away different elements of the unit and were able to justify how the Industrial Revolution continued to impact their lives economically, politically, and socially.

Overall, I am very happy with the changes I have made to the History 10 course and the feedback I have received from students. I believe I am seeing more in depth learning and application of the past to present than I have seen in previous years. It helps that I had a great group of kids to pilot this way of teaching on!

"The invention of the combustible engine has had a significant impact on my life as without it, we would not have the vehicles we have today. I need a vehicle to get me to school and back, to all my sports, and to see my friends. . . Additionally, engines power our tractors on the farm. It would be very difficult to tend to the cattle and land because we would not have the manpower to do it ourselves. This would impact how we make a living. On the farm, we heat our houses with a diesel furnace, so rely on inventions like Otto's Engine. Lastly, our human civilization would not have been able to achieve things such as space travel because rocket engines would not have been created."

– Excerpt from a Grade 10 student's essay on the invention of the combustible engine and how it has relevance in today's world.



### Hazards

Kids often have to use very harsh pesticides, which can burn skin and affect breathing. It can also cause long term problems. Children often have to carry large loads which can damage bones and muscles. The kids can also come in contact with wild animals which can cause injury or poisoning. Because of working so young in the industry they lose their chance of a good future due to the minimal education they get when they are young.

