

INNOVATIVE INKLINGS

Comox Valley School District Newsletter for Innovation

October 23, 2015



Innovation Grants

On Thursday the Ministry put out a [call for applications](#) for K-12 Innovation Grants with the focus on “practices which integrate and promote personalized learning in the classroom, school and school community.”

What are Adaptive Schools?

Adaptive Schools are collaborative places where adults care about one another, share common goals and values, and have the skills and knowledge to plan together, solve problems together, and fight passionately but gracefully for ideas to improve instruction. This is not a fad that passes this way and is quickly gone: this is how we could choose to do our work.

Because of flexibility, adaptive systems are able to adjust as conditions around them change.

I wonder, what can we learn from [Kodak?](#)

Three Key School Questions

Who are we?

Why are we doing this?

Why are we doing this this way? Or, put another way, Who benefits from the current system?

“The new sciences reveal to us that we live not in a world of *either/or* but in the dawning of a world of *both/and*. Chaos and order are part of the same system; they exist simultaneously.”

- [Garmston and Wellman](#)



Around the District

Innovative events and efforts from around our district

Adaptive Schools Seminar

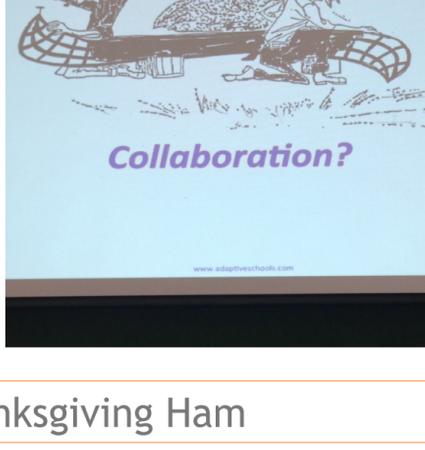
This week we are hosting the first two days of a four day seminar series lead by [Arden Elementary Vice-Principal, Lucinda Wolters](#) and [Adaptive Schools Training Associate John Clarke](#) from Calgary. This seminar is very timely as it is designed to help participants navigate change and develop strategies that support a collaborative learning culture in their schools.

We know that the many challenges/opportunities we face are best worked on as part of a professional group. Kaser and Halbert cite research that has quantified that ‘promoting and participating in professional learning and development’ has a significantly positive impact on student learning ([page 64](#)), and this is further enhanced when we do it together ([page 65](#)). Our district-wide PLC structure gives us an excellent opportunity to work together to improve student learning. Mother Teresa said “I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.” This genuine belief is at the core of adaptive schools.

Last week we benefited from guided learning by Tom Rudmik and his team from [Imaginal Learning](#) as we worked on strengthening our approach of the [new curricular framework](#) which is designed to improve the “future readiness” of our students. This work will necessarily be collaborative. The Adaptive Schools Seminars are set up to support this work by helping us to develop skills that will improve and strengthen the work we do together.

On the first day, participants were introduced to a number of group skill building strategies while beginning to work with the core content. The skilled facilitators modelled many structures and techniques to help maximize the effectiveness of groups including setting norms for safe participation, focusing mental energy in the room, connecting individuals with the group, and creating an environment of open conversation that contained expressions of hopes, fears, values thinking and feelings. The conversations were authentic, rich, focused, and the learning was valuable.

Part of the work on the first day was to understand the difference between “adapted systems” and “adaptive systems.” Adapted entities have evolved over the years through specialization to fit specific conditions within tightly defined boundaries: if the environmental situation changes the adapted entities are vulnerable and often die. Adaptive entities are able to change and adjust to environmental shifts: they are able to change form while clarifying identity. In order to meet the needs of our students, we need to be adaptive and prepare them to be adaptive as well. How do we do this? The only way to do this is together by developing our networked intelligence and benefiting from the richness of strengths we have in our Learning Community. The Adaptive Schools Seminar series is helping us to increase our skills so that we can be more effective supporting the growth and future readiness of our students.



Thanksgiving Ham

A young girl sees her father cooking a ham for Thanksgiving and notices that her father, as always, cuts both ends of the ham off before putting the large ham in the pan. So, the young girl asks, “Daddy, how come you always cut off both ends of the ham before you cook it?”

The father thinks about it for a moment and, with a perplexed look on his face, says, “You know, Honey, I don’t know for sure. My mother taught me to do this. Grandma is in the other room, why don’t you go and ask her.”

So the young girl goes into the next room where her grandmother is talking with the other guests. She tugs on her grandmother’s arm and says, “Grandma, can I ask you something?”

“You just did, dear,” the grandmother replies with a little chuckle.

“Grandma, you know what I mean,” says the girl with a slightly exasperated sigh and look.

“What is it dear?” the grandmother smiles gently.

“Daddy is making a ham and he is cutting both ends of the ham off. I asked him why he does that and he told me he only does that because you showed him to. Why did you teach him to cut both ends of the ham off, Grandma?”

The girl’s grandmother sits in silence, thinking. After a few moments she replies, smiling gently, “You know what, honey, I don’t know why I did that except that my mother did it that way and she taught me to do it that way also. Great Grandma is sitting right over there. Why don’t you go and ask her?”

So, the little girl, not satisfied, walks over to her great grandmother and, a little nervously, asks, “Nanny, may I please ask you a question?”

“Absolutely, my sweet darling. What is it?”

“Daddy is in the kitchen cooking our ham and I noticed that he cuts off both ends before he cooks it. I asked him why, but he did not know why other than that is what Grandma taught him. I then asked Grandma why she taught him this, and she said that it was because she had always done it that way after seeing you do it. So, Nanny, I am curious, why do you always cut both ends of the ham off before you cook it?”

Nanny smiles, hugs her great granddaughter and thanks her for asking. Nanny says, no one, not even her daughter or grandson had ever thought to ask that before. Then she giggles a little and says, “Sweetheart, the reason I always cut both ends of the ham off before cooking it was because I didn’t have a pan big enough to contain the entire ham!”



Thank you for taking the time to read this and please direct any suggestions, questions, or inquiries to me directly: Gerald.Fussell@sd71.bc.ca