



Manitoba Association of Multi-age Educators

Executive Members:

Co-Chairs	Kathy Klenk
Secretary	Daena Gibbons
Treasurer	Darcy Gibbons
Editor	Breccan Wilson
Membership	Bailey Englot
Registration	Daena Gibbons
SAGE Conference	Bailey Englot (Chair) Lynn White, Charlene Sacher, Michelle Adolph, Cindy Pellerin
PD Co-Chairs	Kathy Cullen, Christine Clark
PD Funding	Charlene Sacher (chair), Cindy Pellerin, Kathy Cullen, Bailey Englot, Kathy Klenk
SAGE Council Rep.	Michelle Adolph
Library	Charlene Sacher
Web-minder	Michelle Adolph
Members at Large	Derek Marvin, Lara Klassen, Heather Deneka, Linda Norquay, Natalie Hlady, Jenny Hughes

Inside this issue:

Special Projects Grant Provides Opportunities for Multi-age Collaboration	1
Responsive Classroom II Training	2
Math: Teaching the Tough Topics—A Professional Development Session with Greg Tang	3
Library Corner	4
A Day in the Life of a First Year Multi-age Teacher—Part II	5
Why I Abandoned Genius Hour	6

In affiliation with



The Manitoba Teachers' Society

Volume 8, Issue 2

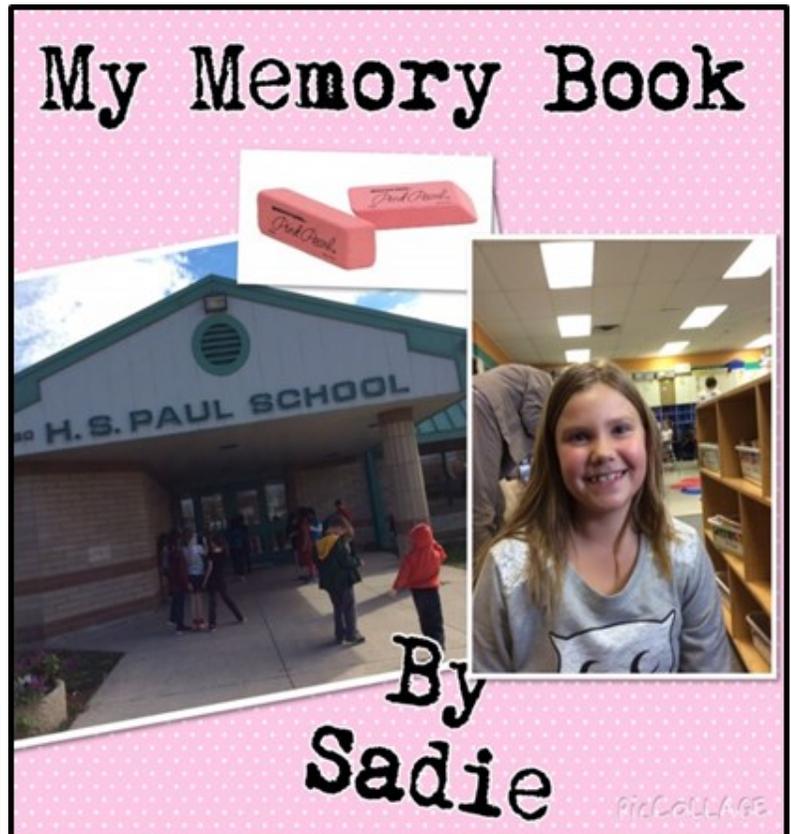
Winter 2015 Newsletter

Special Projects Grant Provides Opportunities for Multi-age Collaboration

By Kathy Klenk and Kathy Cullen

H.S. Paul School

As a Grade 1/2 teacher and a Grade 3/4 teacher in our respective classrooms within the same school, we wanted to bring our students together and provide them with more opportunities to engage with peers of different age-levels while enhancing their technology skills in the creation of a year-long memory book. We requested enough funds from MAME's Special Projects Grant to purchase two iPad minis to share between our two classrooms. These two iPads made a great addition to the set of 3 iPads our school had previously provided to our classrooms.



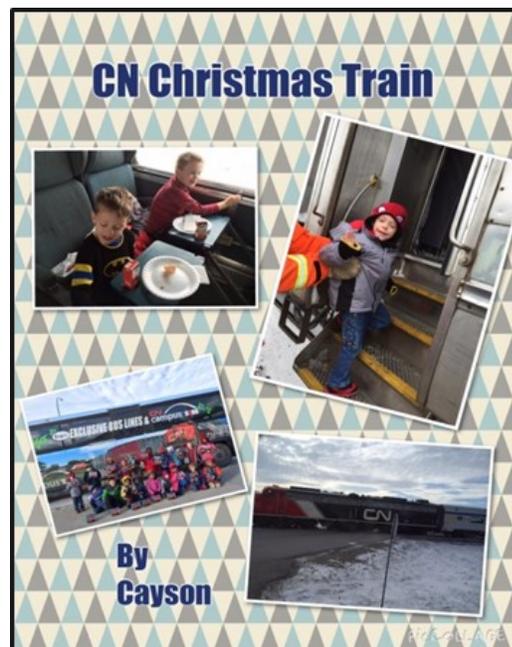
Pic Collage example

RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM II TRAINING

We decided to use the free app called Pic Collage to have students put together a group of pictures about a particular special activity, learning task or field trip. Each student created a page for one of these special activities that related to their classroom. In completing this task with a “buddy”, younger students were supported by an older partner who guided them through the task of putting their collage together, including titles and picture captions. Older students were offered leadership opportunities and the chance to hone their skills by teaching what they had learned to someone else.



Pic Collage examples



Each term, a set of completed Pic Collages (3 – 5 pages) are printed off for each student so that they can see how their memory book of the year’s events is progressing. These memory books will make a great year-end keepsake where students have had the opportunity to collaborate with peers of different ages as well as participate in a year-long project-based learning activity infusing technology. Not to mention, great mentoring and collaboration that happens between colleagues on a weekly basis!

Responsive Classroom II Training

By Charlene Sacher

Darwin School

I had the privilege of being able to go for my *Responsive Classroom II* training in Seattle, WA thanks to the support of the Multiage Association. It was being offered at the start of July and it was an informative and invigorating full four days. The Responsive Classroom approach to teaching and learning fosters safe, challenging and joyful classrooms and schools. This is not a program, rather it is a way of thinking to foster children in all areas. It is based on the belief that all children want to learn and can learn and that social and academic learning go hand in hand.

Responsive Classroom I focused on Developmental Curriculum (from *Yardsticks* by Chip Wood), creating rules with children, logical consequences, and morning meeting. Once these rules are in place and students begin to understand logical consequences, teachers can move on to other aspects of the Responsive Classroom approach, such as Academic Choice, which gives students more flexibility in their learning. This is where *Responsive Classroom II* came into play. The topics included: Guided Discovery, Academic Choice, Classroom Organization, Collaborative Problem-solving, and More on Responding to Misbehavior.

"MATH—TEACHING THE TOUGH TOPICS"

Academic Choice could start with allowing younger students to choose how they want to explain a story - with words, pictures, or another medium - rather than just assigning them to write about it. Students also might be given the freedom to select their own research topics. In spelling it might look like them all doing the same activity with their own words or it could be all student using their own words but practicing them in different ways.

There were so many gems in this 4-day professional development but I feel like the piece that I took home and have used the most is the "Could it be..." questions that are used in Collaborative Problem Solving. We looked at some common behaviour problems and listed some examples of what the teacher and the student might notice along with some possible "Could it be..." questions to help solve the problem. For example for a student who continually tattles the "Could it be..." suggestions include "that you are worried that children aren't taking good care of our rules?", "that you feel you need my help to solve conflicts?", "that you want to show me you know our rules?"

It was a great conference and I am still able to keep in touch with the other teachers that attended and we are able to carry our own learning past the four days in class. ■

"Math—Teaching the Tough Topics" A Professional Development Session With Greg Tang

By Darcy Gibbons

Bernie Wolfe Community School

On October 2, 2014 I was fortunate enough to attend Manitoba ASCD's professional development session with Greg Tang entitled, "Math: Teaching the Tough Topics." Throughout the day, Greg Tang enriched us with his profound knowledge of how to support students in building

upon their mental math strategies. He also emphasized the importance of working on problem solving each and every day. He provided



From www.GregTangMath.com

insight into teaching these essential skills throughout the jam packed day.

Greg Tang has also developed additional supports for teachers by creating a student and

teacher-friendly math website, www.GregTangMath.com. Here you will find electronic versions of his math picture books including "The Best of Times" which I have found to be a great way of teaching students their multiplication facts in a fun-filled way. You will also find math games for practicing many concepts such as fractions, place value and even order of operations.

The most exciting tool for my students has been his mental math game, Kakooma, which allows students to practice addition, multiplication, fractions and negative numbers. I have created individual accounts for each student where they can log in and have friendly competitions against one another or play online against other students around the world. Students can also challenge a computer generated character who adjusts the intensity based on the students' abilities. This allows students with exceptional mental math skills to still be challenged. Many of my students have downloaded the Kakooma app which is now free!

This year the confidence of my students in math has taken great strides. I believe that Greg Tang has expanded my teaching in math and I would recommend any teacher to attend any professional development session of his. ■

LIBRARY CORNER

Library Corner

The MAME LIBRARY

MAME has been accumulating resources that are relevant to multi-age educators. These materials are available for loan to our members. If you would like to see more titles go to our website, www.multiagemanitoba.org and click on the Bookshelf tab. To borrow these or other MAME resources, please contact Charlene Sacher at: charlene.sacher@gmail.com

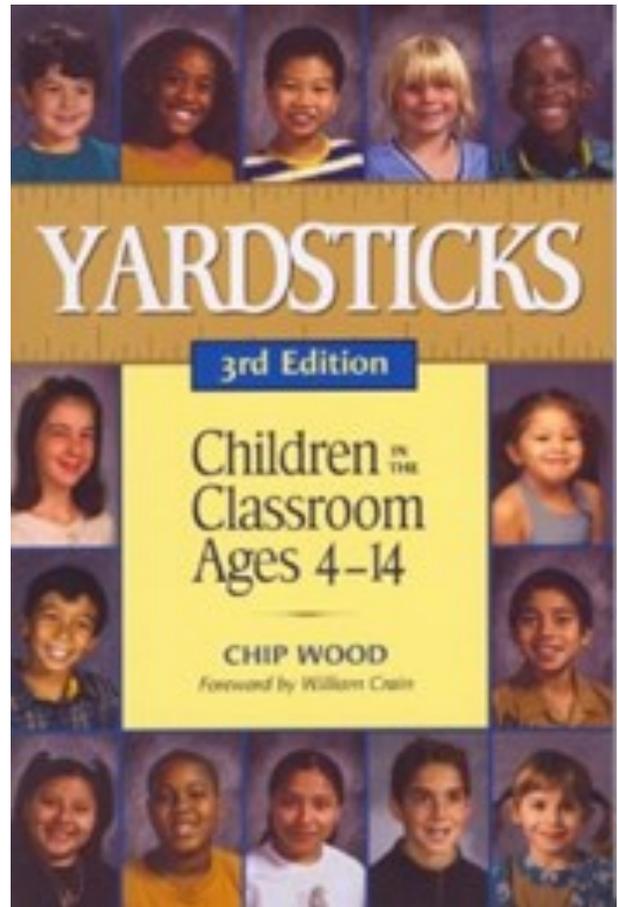
Book Review

'Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14'

By Chip Wood

Reviewed by Charlene Sacher

As a Student Service Teacher there are so many books that come across my desk as “great resources” and as all teachers know, very few actually live up to that recommendation. For myself though a great resource that I use again and again is the Chip Wood *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14* book. This book offers age-by-age narratives and charts that clearly show children’s typical developmental characteristics. For each age it examines what the child looks like, both in the classroom and at home. The areas that *Yardsticks* looks at are cognitive/academic, physical, social-emotional, language, vision, fine and gross motor skills. It is very helpful in discovering if the child is on-track developmentally and how we can understand their growth and development. It is a practical book that helps parents and teachers support children’s social and academic learning and ensure that the expectations meet the developmental needs. It is an easy to navigate book that is full of information at your fingertips. ■



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FIRST YEAR MULTIAGE TEACHER**A Day in the Life of a First Year Multiage Teacher—Part Two**

By Kristin Rahn

École Beausejour Early Years School

As a first year multiage teacher, with just over nineteen weeks of experience in my classroom, I continue to learn a plethora of new things. While what I learn can be overwhelming at times, I have found that the best practice is to take it all in, reflect on it, and use it in the best way I know how.

I work with a one-two multiage classroom of twenty (ten of each grade) enthusiastic and energetic learners. The make-up of my classroom has allowed me to utilize the veteran-rookie philosophy, giving both grades a sense of pride in the large part that they play in their learning. In working with these students for the past nineteen weeks, and in working with the staff in the building, I have learned some very general but equally important points that will be practices I use for the rest of my career. The themes present in much of these points this term focus on balance and striving to improve each day.

Management and Balance

It is important not only for new teachers to the profession but for all teachers to remember to strive to maintain balance in both their work and home lives. I find that I am constantly trying to ensure that the amount of time and energy that I spend at school is close if not equal to the amount of time and energy that I spend at home. If I am true to myself, I know that sometimes the amount of time and energy I spend at school exceeds that which I spend at home. I absolutely adore my job, so this extra time spent at school is in no way a waste of my time or energy. However, I have been ill three times in the last six weeks, and this “not taking the extra time to rest” could be a factor. I

know that when I am sick I stay home, and I know that I need to do this guilt free because if I don't take care of me, I cannot take care of my students. As long as I continue to do my best to manage my health and maintain balance in the amount of time I spend both at home and at work, I know that not only will I be more rested, but I will be a better educator for my students.

Curricular Expectations and Teachable Moments

In keeping with the balance theme, I have also had first-hand experience with maintaining a balance between predetermined subject matter set out by my province, division, and school as well as the subject matter that might happen to pop up from one of my curious learners. While I understand the importance of structure in order to keep me and my students on track, I also see the importance of balancing this structure with some flexibility. If a student were to come in with a question or a problem that has not been set out to be covered in our lesson plans, I do my very best to address these things in a way that still works within the predetermined structure of our day. After all, learning is never just teacher or student-centered, it can and should be both.

Feedback and Reflection

I have learned the value in not only listening to positive and constructive (which can arguably be positive as well) feedback, but in reflecting on it and letting it inform my instruction. Since pedagogically I find being a teacher to be the second most important profession next to being a parent, I set high expectations and goals for myself and want to do my best to hold true to these goals and expectations. However, I know that I am not perfect, and I know some “slippage” can and will occur. That being said, I know I need to work on listening and digesting constructive criticism, as this is a skill that can be very difficult

WHY I ABANDONED GENIUS HOUR

to master.

I was fortunate enough to receive some difficult-to-hear constructive criticism that helped inform my instruction in a way that saw immediate, drastic and positive changes in my students' behaviour. It is constructive criticism that I remind myself of each morning and reflect on each evening, and it is in these reminders and reflections where I feel that I have really grown to become a better educator than I was just a few weeks ago.

One Day at a Time

My first-year-multiage-teacher motto is, "You can't get it all done in one day". As teachers all know, there is always work to do, and it will always be there for you the next teaching day. I need to remember to stop what I am doing at a predetermined time, and to rest so that I am ready to tackle whatever it is that I need to the following day. ■

Why I Abandoned Genius Hour

By Kristin Wideen

Eastwood Public School, Windsor Ontario

Genius hour is an amazing concept that children respond to because they get to learn about any topic they choose. I had a few rounds of Genius Hour last year and the kids thought it was awesome. On Fridays, the question was always, "Are we doing Genius Hour today?"

With a grade 1/2 classroom last year, it got difficult to keep up with Genius Hour for a few reasons.

1. My students were very young, so they still needed a lot of teacher direction and guidance.
2. The range of projects was huge! There were students learning to knit, creating paper mache animals, learning magic, painting on canvas, making wedding cakes and cooking pizza to just name a few.

3. We asked my principal for a small budget to cover the costs of all of these projects. My principal was very supportive and agreed. (In reality, how many times do you ask for money for Genius Hour?)



The Knitting Group

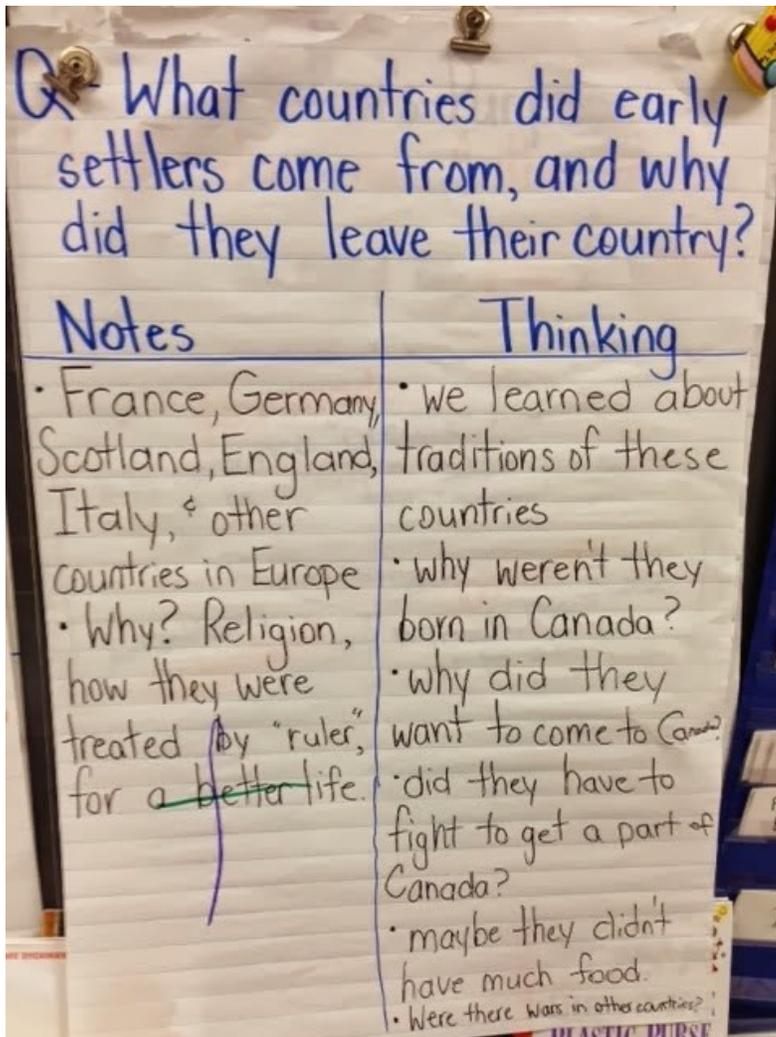
These were all minor issues, my major issue was that my students did not know how to properly research and I as their teacher did not effectively model this. I let my students basically do whatever they wanted and helped as much as I could to direct them to resources in the library and online. My students craved Genius Hour and I dreaded it. It was me running around like a chicken with its head cut off. Think of 40 students, 2 teachers and as many people that I could rope into to help out during that hour and a half of time. There was glue, paint, flour, sugar, yarn, knitting needles, magic wands and pizza dough flying around the classroom. (And you think your classroom looks like a circus on some days!)

I needed a better plan, I needed to be better prepared and I needed my students to have the skills needed to research an idea or topic, produce not only a product but also be able to share the information they learned from researching the topic.

WHY I ABANDONED GENIUS HOUR

This year, Genius Hour turned into Wonder Workshop.

This year I began the year teaching the skills needed for an inquiry based classroom. I modeled my own inquiry and taught and retaught the skills needed for my students to be successful researchers and wonderers.



From a modeled lesson on "Reading with a question in mind."

My students completed curriculum based Inquiry projects on Early Settlers where they created the question that they answered. They also did an Inquiry on a creature of their choice.

My students learned different ways to show their

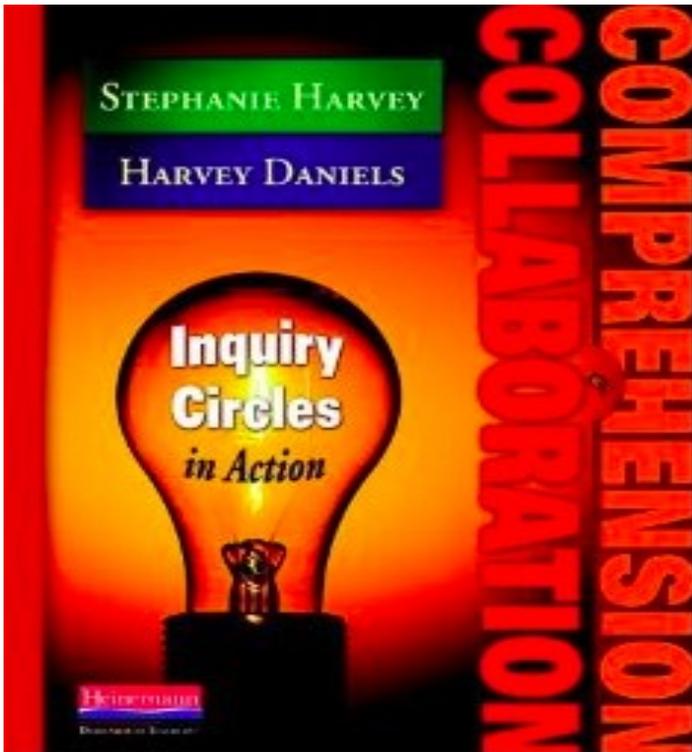
learning. That it didn't have to be a book created on the iPad. That it could be a poster, an artifact, a presentation or a video. When my students chose to create an artifact they knew that there would be questions from their peers on the topic that they would need to know before presenting their artifact to others.

When my students had gone through the inquiry process, with how to create a deeper question, how to effectively take notes, how to collaborate with others, this is when I introduced open inquiries.

Open inquiries is a form of Genius Hour. EVERYDAY we have Wonder Workshop. Students come into the classroom at 8:30 and from 8:30-9:00 each day they can work on their open inquiries. They can work alone, with a partner or with a group. I have students that are working on commercials to bring more students to the school, I have students that are creating non fiction books on the iPads about a topic they wanted to research. I had a student share their paper book on healthy eating this morning.

Because, I took the time to explicitly teach and reteach the tools my students needed, Wonder Workshop goes much more smoothly. Yes, I still have the child that has been creating the same book for the past 3 months and yes I do have children that have changed their question more frequently than they brush their teeth. I have to keep reminding myself that this is a process and that the process is more important than the product.

My students still have that excitement like they did last year on every Friday. Now they are excited everyday because they get to start their morning learning about something they have chosen to learn about. They are just as excited to share their learning with their peers and families.

WHY I ABANDONED GENIUS HOUR

If you too have abandoned Genius Hour, don't give up, a great place to start is to read *Inquiry Circles in Action*. It has changed the way I teach and has fantastic lessons to get you on your way to a wonderful Wonder Workshop. ■

This article was originally published on *Mrs. Wideen's Blog* at www.Mrswideen.com on June 16, 2014

From the Professional Development Committee

Remember that your MAME group has Professional Development funds available for you, our members to use. You can go onto our website and apply under PD funding. You are entitled to \$250 to attend professional development. If there is a special project that your school is interested in participating in, there are also special grants available for up to \$1000.

This year our members had the opportunity to travel all over North America to attend a variety of professional development conferences on topics such as math, literacy, technology, and developing social skills.

Have You Visited Our Website?

The MAME website is packed with resources, PD funding opportunities, our lending library listings and much more.

Check it out today!

www.multiagemanitoba.org