

Evolution of Documentation of Learning, and a Culture of Learning

For the past three years, several teachers and administrators have worked together at Westcot Elementary School to celebrate learning and to create a culture of collaboration by writing and showcasing *Learning Stories* throughout the school.

This small team of three accessed funding through West Vancouver School District Innovation Grant program in the 2017-2018 school year, and designed a documentation strategy called *Learning Stories* that used common language that aligned with the province's redesigned curriculum. One of the essential goals of the Making Learning Visible team was to develop a shared understanding of the work we do as a school. By using the expertise in our own school, we created *Learning Stories* that are visual in nature, emphasize process over product, and are available to all members of the community. Essentially, *Learning Stories* document

Westcot Learning Stories

How can highlighting classroom learning through the development of *Learning Stories* help the school community to understand student engagement with greater clarity?

by
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We are all
made of stories

our own teaching practices, allowing us to learn from each other and to engage with students and parents more deeply.

In the first year of this initiative, after creating a framework that included the essential language, three exemplars were developed and featured on the school's webpage (westvancouver.schools.ca/westcot-elementary). The team worked together to write the first two *Learning Stories* to ensure the framework would work for both upper intermediate and lower primary. The third was created with another volunteer teacher in grade 5 to reach the goal of three completed exemplars.

The following year, three more *Learning Stories* were developed by collaborating with other teachers on staff. All staff were introduced to and worked with the common language during professional development days and efforts were made to redesign the hallways of the school to reflect student learning and inquiry. Signs reinforcing the common language of Engage, Inspire, Make Meaning, and Connect were distributed to teachers for use on their bulletin boards. In addition, the hallways were transformed to display posters that showed a simplified version of the created *Learning Stories*. Using the key language and images that were selected to emphasize process over product, the message of learning is conveyed clearly to all members of the school.

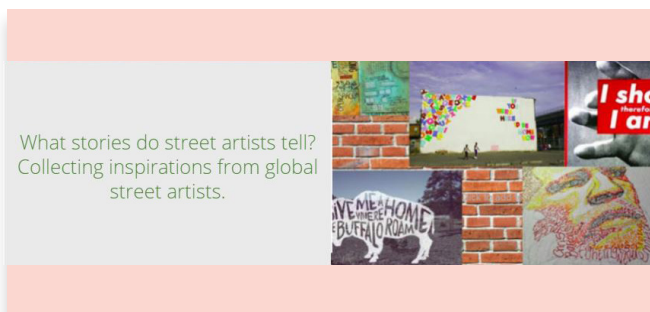


How do we transform people's beliefs through art? Creating street art.

What is a Learning Story?

A *Learning Story* is a framework that documents student learning, created to capture key aspects of learning goals and how they connect to the

BC New Curriculum. Included on our webpage are expanded *Learning Stories* that describe the context of the unit, core competency questions used, teacher and student reflections, curricular and ADST connections, and visuals highlighting the process of learning. The goal of *Learning Stories* is to show the larger picture of how learning unfolds, while honouring the provincial curriculum.



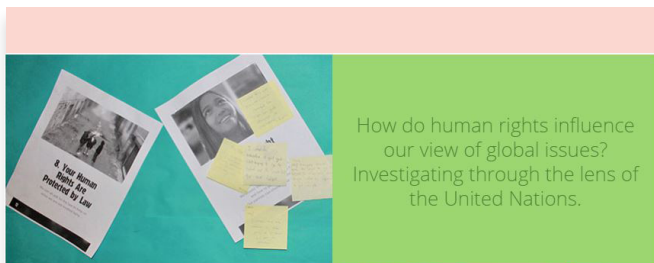
Learning Stories include images and words, allowing the reader to understand the learning from the student perspective. Student images and reflections are key to showing how the student engages in the process of learning. At the beginning stages of *Learning Story* development, teachers create units that are tied to essential questions, embed curricular competencies, and allow the development of core competencies. They then collect photographs during all stages of the unit, and capture student thinking through reflection.

Working with a Making Learning Visible team member, teachers use their planning and documentation to formulate a *Learning Story*. An essential part of this process is coming up with a meaningful title that shows the interplay of the essential learning and the content of the experience. The context and curricular connections are succinctly described, often demonstrating the transdisciplinary nature of the learning. The core competencies are articulated as questions; these show how the development of thinking, communication, and personal and social responsibility intertwine with the learning at hand and help teachers and students engage more deeply during the process.

The Practice of Collaborative Learning Groups

In our third year, our initial group of three expanded to a group of six. We collectively participated in a course offered by Harvard's Project Zero that examined group learning through Making Learning Visible Framework. Inspired by Reggio Emilia educators, we spent months reading, discussing and reflecting on how documentation leads to visible and more powerful learning for students.

After the course completion in December, we opened up the professional learning network to all teachers. From here, we continue to develop our understanding of our own teaching by getting inspired, making meaning with new ideas, engaging with others and sharing our knowledge.



Overall Impact

Part of the school's goal, as articulated in the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, is to embrace the depth of the new curriculum allowing all learners to engage deeply with their learning. Teachers have been challenged to generate learning opportunities that are concept based and competency driven. Most teachers value and engage in collaboration to plan units and create meaningful opportunities for all students. By articulating and showcasing this work that is happening so well in so many classrooms, we have been able to celebrate our school in a positive way.

1. When teachers share a Learning Story they become creators of content. Not only are they sharing their expertise, they are documenting it in meaningful ways that benefit the entire school community.

2. The shared visuals help shape the school culture of learning, benefiting all members of our school community. Teachers, students, and parents are aware of the type of learning experiences that occur in our school by modeling the process of learning and celebrating our successes.

3. For new teachers or those new to the school, both the shared common language and the framework of the Learning Stories scaffolds our school goals and models excellence.

4. By Making Learning Visible, we are transmitting a culture of learning; we are reinforcing the language and practice of inquiry, while aligning with BC New Curriculum. By having a product to share, conversation and documentation becomes more deeply engaging.