

Enhancing Historical Thinking Through Discipline-based Inquiry

A DIGITAL RESOURCE GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

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ENHANCING HISTORICAL THINKING THROUGH DISCIPLINE-BASED INQUIRY



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University Of Calgary

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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This teacher's guide seeks to provide insight into how the eight principles of the [Galileo Educational Network's Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies](#) can enhance the conceptual framework of [historical thinking](#) articulated by Dr. Peter Seixas and colleagues at [The Historical Thinking Project](#). To show what this could look like in practice, I recently collaborated with Jody Pereverrzoﬀ and Chris Dittmann of [Connect Charter School](#) in Calgary to create and document a grade 7 historical inquiry into pre-Confederation Canadian history. As can be seen, throughout this resource I have imbedded links to web pages, articles, and videos that will help the reader gain a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the ideas and insights explored in each of the five chapters.

In **chapter 1**, to better appreciate the fundamental shift involved in engaging young people in discipline-based inquiry, I begin by exploring core assumptions that underpin traditional approaches to education. In **chapter 2** I then discuss in general terms how discipline-based inquiry departs from these core assumptions and offers a fundamentally new vision for education. To supplement this discussion, I have imbedded a PowerPoint presentation outlining key themes discussed in the first two chapters.

In **chapter 3** I highlight the nature of historical thinking as developed by Dr. Peter Seixas and colleagues at the Historical Thinking Project. To aid me in this process, I draw in particular on a recent publication by Dr. Seixas and Tom Morton: [The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts](#) (2013) which offers the most recent articulation of how teachers can take up historical thinking with their students.

For those unfamiliar with the historical thinking concepts, I have imbedded links to [video resources](#) created by [TC2: The Critical Thinking Consortium](#) that explains each of the six concepts.

In **chapter 4**, seeking to demonstrate how historical thinking could be enhanced by insights into the nature of inquiry formulated by the Galileo Educational Network, I unpack the eight principles of their Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies. To help introduce newcomers to this conceptual framework, I have augmented this discussion with a video presentation by Amy Park on how her 2010 Governor General Award winning grade 2 inquiry into the Inuit aligns with these eight principles.

In **chapter 5** I begin by outlining a historical inquiry into pre-Confederation Canadian history recently undertaken by Jody Pereverrzoﬀ and Chris Dittmann with their one hundred grade 7 students at Connect Charter School. To help explain the project I have included a short video outlining the various stages of this historical inquiry. I then subsequently explore how this historical inquiry helps students appreciate the nature of historical thinking, and further, aligns with the eight principles of the Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies. Noting that inquiry involves, among other things, providing students with developmentally appropriate tasks reflecting the ways professionals in a field create knowledge in their field, during this discussion I briefly elaborate on the historical thinking concept of historical significance that guided this specific historical inquiry.

CHAPTER 1

Examining traditional approaches to education



Before beginning a discussion on the nature of discipline-based inquiry, it is first helpful to explore key assumptions about learning that underpin traditional approaches to education. As we will see, these assumptions stretch back to the beginning of the 20th century and draw inspiration from the factory room floor.

When universal schooling first began in North America in the beginning of the 20th century, in order to help young people take their place in industrial enterprises or within highly stratified bureaucratic organizations, elites of this era created an education system that emphasized following prescribed sets of rules and memorizing content. Underlying this model of education is a series of assumptions about the nature of knowledge and knowing, the purpose of education, the role of the teacher in the classroom, as well as how academic success should be determined. Sawyer (2006) summarizes these assumptions as follows:

- Knowledge is a collection of facts about the world and procedures for how to solve problems.
- The goal of schooling is to get these facts and procedures into the student's head.
- Teachers know these facts and procedures and their job is to transmit them to students.
- Simpler facts and procedures should be learned first.
- The way to determine the success of schooling is to test the students to see how many facts and procedures they have acquired. (p. 1)

Within this framework, learning is understood to be a linear process of either getting a pre-given body of content into the students' minds or breaking down any complex task into its basic parts and sequencing these in a way that can be easily assimilated into the mind of the learner. David Perkins, author of [Making Learning Whole: How Seven Principles of Teaching Can Transform Education](#) (2009) calls these two assumptions about how best to learn any subject, from mathematics to history, *elementis* and *aboutis*. To explain these con-

cepts Perkins uses the game of baseball as an example. In an *elementis* approach to learning baseball, students encounter the game by learning elements of it (i.e., throwing the ball or fielding grounders) in sequence and in isolation from each other. However, they are never given the chance to put all these pieces together to play the game as a whole.

Taken to the classroom, within this approach students learn the elements of a discipline in fragmented pieces, usually in the form of a prescribed set of rules and operations. Inspired by the factory room floor, curriculum is thus conceptualized as a mass assembly line delivering "those not-further-divisible bits" (Friesen & Jardine, 2009, p. 12) out of which any discipline or field of study is comprised. For instance, as Perkins (2009) argues, in learning math students are often presented with procedural problems that have only one right solution and have limited, if any, connection with how this particular mathematical procedure lives in the world. Similarly, students study grammar with the "idea that the knowledge will later coalesce into comprehensive, compelling, and of course correct written and oral communications" (p. 4). However, students are often deprived of

the opportunity to produce powerful pieces of writing for a real audience.

Whereas *elementis* tends to dominate how the subject of Math is taught in particular, Perkins argues that history and science are most often taught using *aboutis*. While in *elementis* students are exposed to parts of the game, within an *aboutis* approach to learning students do not even get the chance to take to the field. Rather, to again use the game of baseball as an example, students learn about the sport in the form of being lectured on the history of the game and its rules.

Sadly, this approach to learning is all too common in schools where students learn about a topic or concept rather than learn how to take part in the process that created that knowledge. In the case of the discipline of history for instance, students are most often presented “an account – unquestionably framed as *the* true story of the events – which students learn by absorbing the relevant factual details laid out in their textbook” (Denos & Case, 2005, p. 2). However, students are rarely given an opportunity to do actual historical inquiry reflecting how historians construct and verify knowledge about the past. This phenome-

non also occurs in science where students learn about, for instance, the steps involved in mitosis, but are rarely invited to undertake genuine scientific research that does not involve a pre-packaged lab.

The problems with these two assumptions about how learning should occur in schools have been well documented in the educational literature. However, a few points are worthy of repetition. Within an *elementis* approach to education, students gain an incomplete and fragmented understanding of a discipline as it is actually practiced by professionals in a field. As such, areas of study such as math or writing, become divorced from the way they live in the world. Similarly, when students learn concepts through *aboutis*, Perkins (2009) notes that a large body of research “demonstrates that learners show very limited understanding, bedeviled by a range of misconceptions about what the ideas really mean” (p. 6). In both cases, students leave high school often unable to perform the kind of work undertaken in a discipline in which they have completed twelve years of study.

Elementis and *aboutis* are so deeply ingrained in how we think about education

that ongoing attempts at educational reform often fail to question the efficacy of organizing education around these approaches to learning. This can be seen, for example, in the [flipped classroom](#) movement that is often held up as a paradigm shift that will reinvent education. First popularized by [Salmon Khan](#), in the flipped classroom students do not spend class time passively listening to a teacher lecture, as this part of instruction is assigned for homework through a video posted on-line (e.g., on YouTube). This could take the form of a lecture around a particular historical event or a scientific concept, or alternatively how to complete a particular mathematical procedure. Students then spend class time applying and practicing what they learned at home within an environment where they can ask questions and receive one-on-one feedback from the teacher. Although this model of education may be preferable to many current educational practices where students spend a great deal of their time in school listening to teachers talk, it is important to note that the flipped classroom approach continues to leave intact the core assumptions of *elementis* and *aboutis* that underpin traditional models of education.

What is Discipline-based Inquiry?



Whereas within traditional approaches to education knowledge is understood as a collection of facts, a body of content, or a list of procedures to master, for those that create knowledge within a discipline, knowledge is understood as “organized in living, developing fields, changing and adapting in the presence of new circumstances, new evidence and new discoveries” (Western and Northern Canadian Protocol, 2011, p. 3).

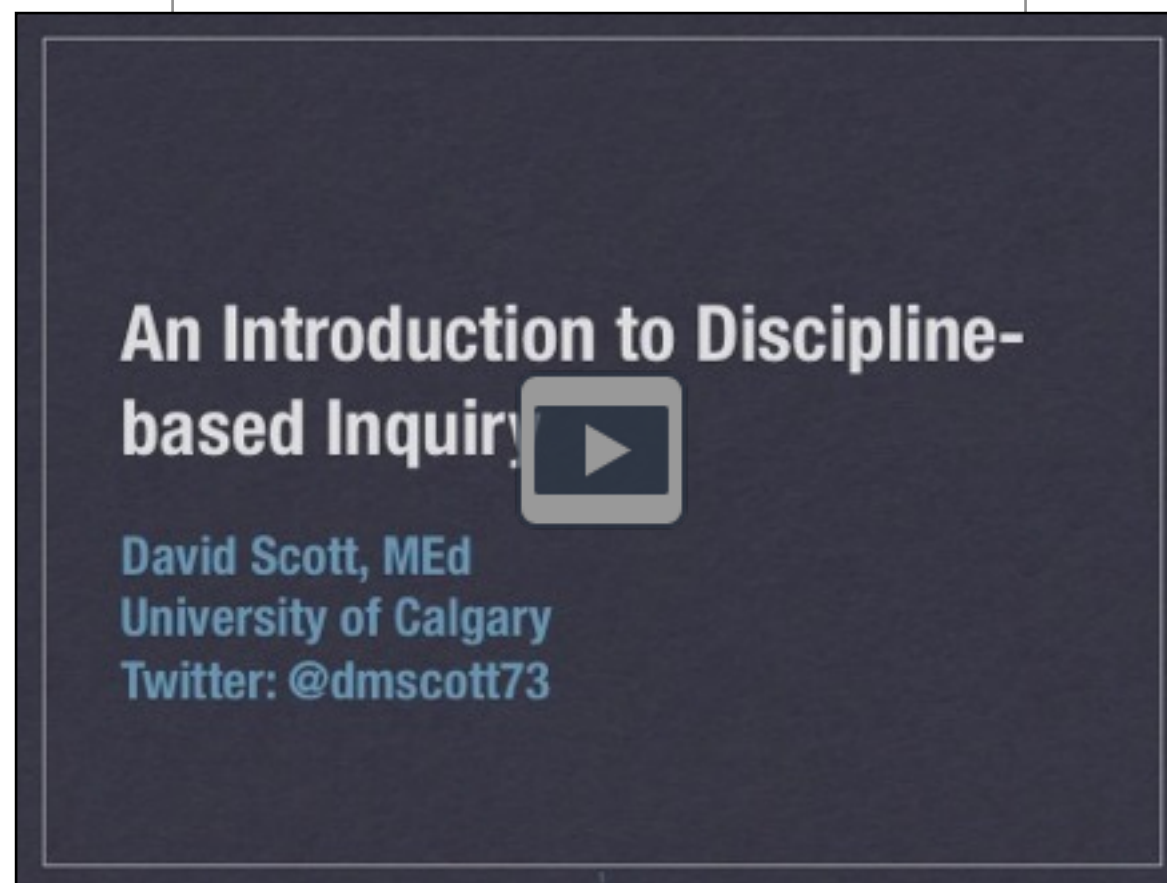
Making the shift from traditional approaches to education towards discipline-based inquiry first begins with a new formulation of the nature of knowledge.

Whereas within traditional approaches to education knowledge is understood as a collection of facts, a body of content, or a list of processes or procedures to master, for those that create knowledge within a discipline, knowledge is understood as “organized in living, developing fields, changing and adapting in the presence of new circumstances, new evidence and new discoveries” (WNCP, 2011, p. 3). In this way, knowledge cannot be understood as something that is dead or inert. Instead, knowledge must be understood as existing within a discipline of study that is a living field.

Those who understand knowledge as situated in a dynamic always-evolving living field argue that students should not study facts or procedures outside the field that created them. Specifically, each discipline (e.g., science, mathematics, history) has its own particu-

lar ways of generating knowledge, verifying what counts as quality work, and communicating to others within their field of study. This disciplinary understanding of knowledge suggests that students learn

An Introduction to Discipline-based Inquiry



This Keynote presentation outlines the nature of discipline-based inquiry and how it differs from traditional approaches to education.

best if they are given learning opportunities that have “an authenticity, [and a sense] that the work being done in classrooms is ‘real work’ that reflects the living

realities of the discipline being taught” (WNCP, 2011, p. 3).

The job of educators thus becomes designing experiences where students can learn their way around a discipline by engaging in authentic intellectual tasks that provide opportunities for genuine knowledge creation. In this way discipline-based inquiry involves giving students the opportunity to, as Perkins (2009) frames it, “play the whole game” (p. 25) where they are offered developmentally appropriate junior versions of the ways professionals in a field create and verify knowledge in their discipline.

This understanding of knowledge and purpose of education calls for a redefinition of commonly used terms in educational discourse. For instance, demands in education for increased rigor often translate into calls to expose students to more information or more complex procedures. However, for Larry Rosenstock, principal of [High Tech High](#) — a school devoted to authentic discipline-based inquiry – rigor involves “being in

the company of a passionate adult who is rigorously pursuing inquiry in the area of their subject matter and is inviting students along as peers in that discourse” (2011). This re-conceptualized of a teachers’ relationship to the subject area they teach, consequently shifts pedagogy in the classroom where the ideal is to have students “behaving like an actress, scientist, documentary filmmaker, like a journalist. Not just studying it, but being like it” (Rosenstock, 2011). Here, Rosenstock flags a key distinction, similarly made by Perkins (2009), necessary to understand the nature of discipline-based inquiry. That is, the difference between learning about a field of inquiry and actually taking on, and participating in, the ways of knowing and doing unique to a particular discipline or field of study.

When teachers pose guiding questions, problems, or tasks that professionals in the field think is important, students can work towards responses and performances of learning that are meaningful, sophisticated, and powerful. For instance, within a language arts classroom, as seen in this [Grade 8 Magazine Project](#), I asked my students to use the tools of professional graphic artists to take on the role of inde-

pendent writers in order to create and publish their own magazine. Similarly, in a grade 4 inquiry into wheels, levers, and devices that move, as seen in this [How To Build an Awesome Car \(Engineering Thinking in Grade 4\)](#) example, drawing inspiration from the discipline of engineering stu-

“I want kids behaving like an actress, scientist, documentary filmmaker, like a journalist. Not just studying it, but being like it.”

-Larry Rosenstock

dents have been invited to build and test their own mouse trap cars. As can be seen by the work students produced in these projects, we can judge student success by evaluating the sophistication of their final products and culminating work.

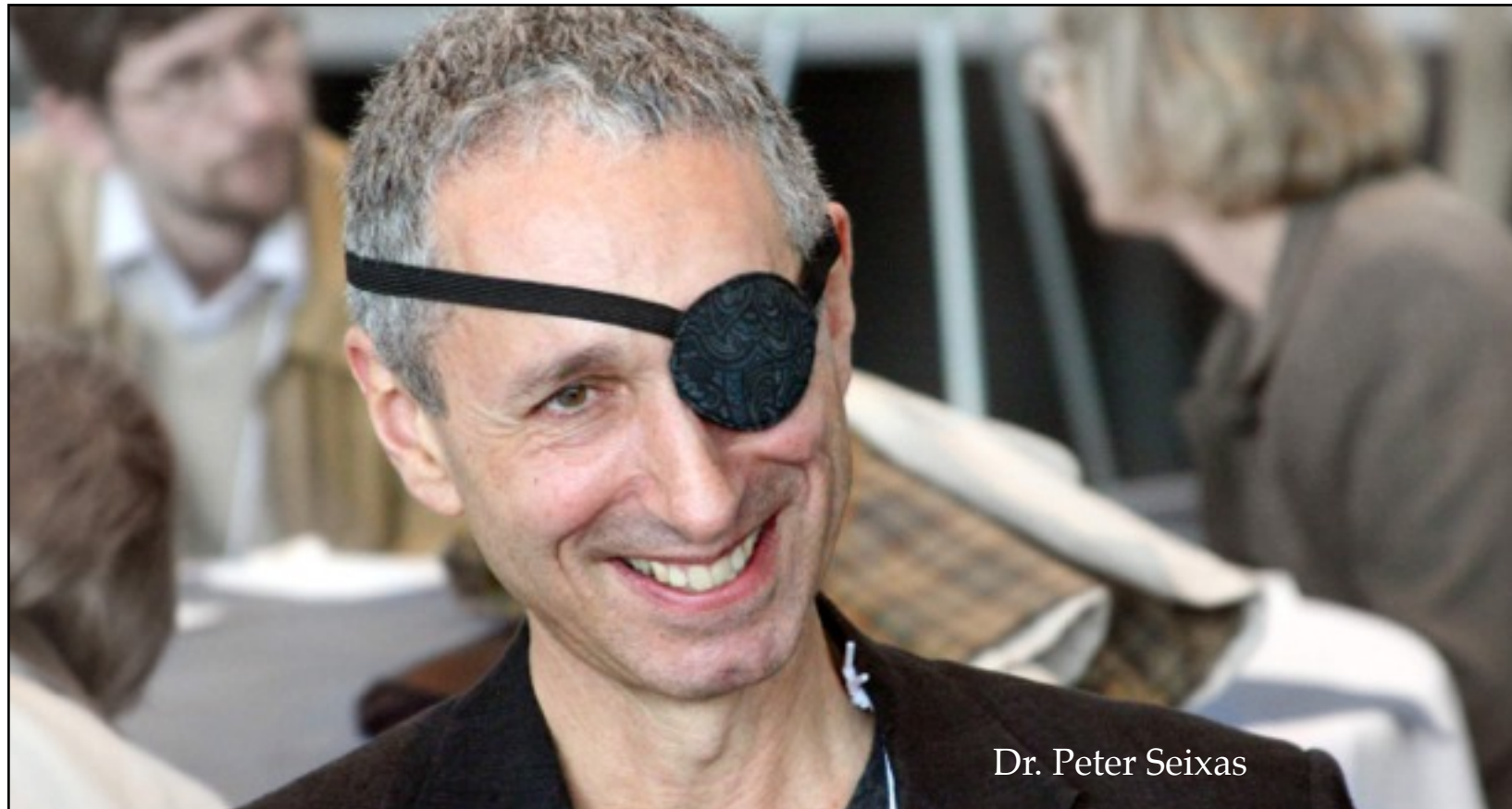
Asking students to do projects like this, however, does not involve a disorganized free-for-all where students are left to work largely on their own. Research has shown (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008, p. 16-18) that deeper understanding of engineer-

ing principles, for instance, does not come simply from asking students to build a bridge or design and test their own rocket. Specific instructional supports must be in place for students to have success taking part in a particular discipline or field of study.

First and foremost among these needed instructional supports is a particular focus on assessment. To help students create quality products and work that professionals in the field would recognize as reflecting work undertaken in their discipline, students need to be given the opportunity to learn from professional exemplars created within a particular field of study. As part of this process, teachers need to develop approaches to assessment that emphasize co-constructing assessment rubrics with their students that reflect the criteria for quality work within the particular discipline they are working within. In using this criteria, teachers can then provide ongoing formative assessment loops in the form of descriptive written and oral feedback, so that students can refine and improve their work as the inquiry unfolds.

CHAPTER 3

An Introduction to Historical Thinking



Dr. Peter Seixas

In their book *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts* (2013), Dr. Seixas and Tom Morton argue that history, or better put, histories are the stories we tell about the past. Historical thinking, on the other hand, involves the ways historians have developed for making sense of the past that provide a response to such fundamental questions as: How do we know what we know about the past?

One of the challenges of asking educators to engage their students in history as a discipline-based form of inquiry involving the methods and mentalities of historians, is that few teachers have experienced learning history in this way. When most people encounter history in schools, they are generally only exposed to the end product of a historian's work — a particular historical narrative — which often comes in the form of a largely celebratory nation-building narrative recounting the formation of the country. Within this traditional approach to history education, historical facts and knowledge are presented as an authoritative, authorless, and seemingly objective account of events as they happened.

This treatment of history in turn almost inevitably leads to cognitively unchallenging forms of pedagogy that promote memorization and regurgitation of pre-given historical 'facts' in the form of a long list of historical names, dates, and developments. In describing the way the teaching of history most often occurs in schools, Seixas and Morton (2013) use the metaphor of a play where students too often see only the performance, but are never brought into the

process of how the script was created, the ways actors learn and practice their lines, or "how the ropes and pulleys work that make the play possible" (p. 3). A great deal of research suggests that traditional transmission based approaches to the study of history continues to dominate in most school settings.

However, it does not have to be this way. To help re-imagine what history education could alternatively look like if taught as a discipline, it is helpful to begin by outlining the difference between the past and history. As Seixas and Morton (2013) outline, the past can be understood as comprised of everything that has ever happened over all time, while, in contrast, "histories are the stories we tell about the past" (p. 1). In using the plural histories, rather than the singular history, Seixas and Morton help us to appreciate that history is not a simple retelling of the past 'as it was.' This is because, as they explain, the past does not present itself as an already fully formed singular story just waiting to be discovered by a historian (p. 2). Rather, "a gap exists between the present we live in and the infinite, unorganized, and unknowable everything that ever happened" (p. 1).

This gap between an infinite and unorganized past and the historian in the present, subsequently gives rise to a number of fundamental questions that historians as a disciplinary community have sought to provide responses. These questions include:



- How do we know what we know about the past?
- How can we represent the knowledge of something that is no longer here (i.e., the past)?
- What are the relationships between us, today, and those who lived in the past?
- What do we believe when two accounts of the same event conflict with each other? (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 2)

To find viable responses to these key historical questions, historians have developed a generally accepted set of methods and principles, which allow them to interpret the evidence of the past (i.e., journals, newspapers, and artifacts such as pottery) to generate the stories of history (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 2).

Over the last two decades, Peter Seixas and colleagues at the [Historical Thinking Project](#) have worked to make the principles that make historical inquiry different from other modes of thought and research accessible to teachers. In doing so they have created the conceptual framework of [historical thinking](#) that provides students with the opportunity to gain an increasingly

deeper understanding into the ways historians transform the past into historical accounts and how students can begin to construct histories for themselves (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 3). Historical thinking thus provides students insight into “not only what happened in the past, but also how what happened was constructed” (Fallace & Neem, 2005, p. 332).

By engaging students in history as a discipline, they are given insight into “not only what happened in the past, but also how what happened in the past was constructed.”

-Fallace and Neem

To achieve this end, Peter Seixas and his colleagues have identified six structural historical thinking concepts that can be employed to help students take part in the discipline of history. Through engaging in historical thinking students are apprenticed into how to: 1) establish **historical significance**, 2) use **evidence**, 3) identify **continuity and change**, 4) analyze **cause and consequence**, 5) take on **historical perspectives**,

and 6) understand the **ethical dimension** of history (pp. 3-9).

Recently, [TC2-The Critical Thinking Consortium](#) has created a series of six videos that outline, explain, and provide classroom examples for their interpretation of these six historical thinking concepts: [evidence and interpretation](#), [historical perspective](#), [continuity and change](#), [ethical judgment](#), [cause and consequence](#), and [historical significance](#).

For the most up to date and refined articulation of historical thinking, that includes a rich array of classroom examples, please see [The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts](#) by Peter Seixas and Thomas Morton, referenced throughout this chapter. To find primary source materials, books, articles, and lesson plans at various grade levels to further help engage students in historical thinking visit the [Historical Thinking Project website](#), as well as the [History Education Network website](#). Finally, to gain a better understanding of how to assess student understanding of the six historical thinking concepts see this article by Peter Seixas entitled [Teacher Notes: Benchmarks of Historical Thinking A Framework for Assessment in Canada](#).

CHAPTER 4

An Introduction to the Galileo Education Network's Discipline-based Inquiry Rubric



To help teachers interested in taking up inquiry in the ways outlined in chapter 2, the Galileo Educational Network has developed eight principles articulated in their Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies that can be interwoven into the planning process.

While historical thinking provides a cognitively challenging and purposeful curricular orientation to engaging students in history, in what follows I want to explore how this approach could be further enhanced by the [Galileo Educational Network's Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies](#). These two modes of inquiry complement one another because as Sharon Friesen (2012) — one of the founders of the Galileo Educational Network — notes, inquiry involves a spirit of investigation always linked to a particular topic or field of study. In this way Friesen argues that inquiry involves:

“a dynamic process of coming to know and understand the world in genuine and authentic ways that take their cue from how knowledge actually lives in the world. It encompasses the processes of posing questions, problems or issues, gathering information, thinking creatively about possibilities, learning the ways of challenging, building upon, and improving knowledge of the topic or field of study” (2012, p. 1).

Within this formulation, inquiry moves away from a purely teacher or student centered approach, to a mode of learning that

takes its cue from what the topic or field of study requires of those coming to know it. Following the philosophy for inquiry outlined in chapter 2 of this resource, teachers are thus afforded opportunities to pose guiding questions, problems, or tasks that professionals in the field would recognize as important and relevant.

In order to facilitate this process, the Galileo Educational Network has created a disciplined-based inquiry rubric comprised of eight core principles that can be interwoven into the planning process. Although not exhaustive, this conceptual framework includes the following characteristics:

- **Authenticity:** The inquiry study originates with a question, problem, issue, or

exploration that is significant to the discipline and provides opportunities to create or produce something that contributes to the world's knowledge.



- **Academic rigor:** Students have opportunities to build deep understanding and create or produce high quality products and performances that mirror the disciplines.

- **Assessment:** Ongoing assessment is woven into the design of the study and guides students' learning and teachers' instructional planning.

- **Elaborated communication:** Students have opportunities to choose forms of expression appropriate to the task, and communicate what they are learning with a variety of audiences.

- **Beyond the school:** Students are encouraged to explore issues or problems with a focus on competencies expected in high performance work organizations, such as teamwork, organization, problem solving, communication, decision-making, and project management.

• **Connecting with expertise:** Students are given opportunities to observe and interact with exemplars as well as adults with relevant expertise and experience in a variety of situations.

• **Active exploration:** Students are engaged in real (authentic) investigations using a variety of media, methods, and sources.

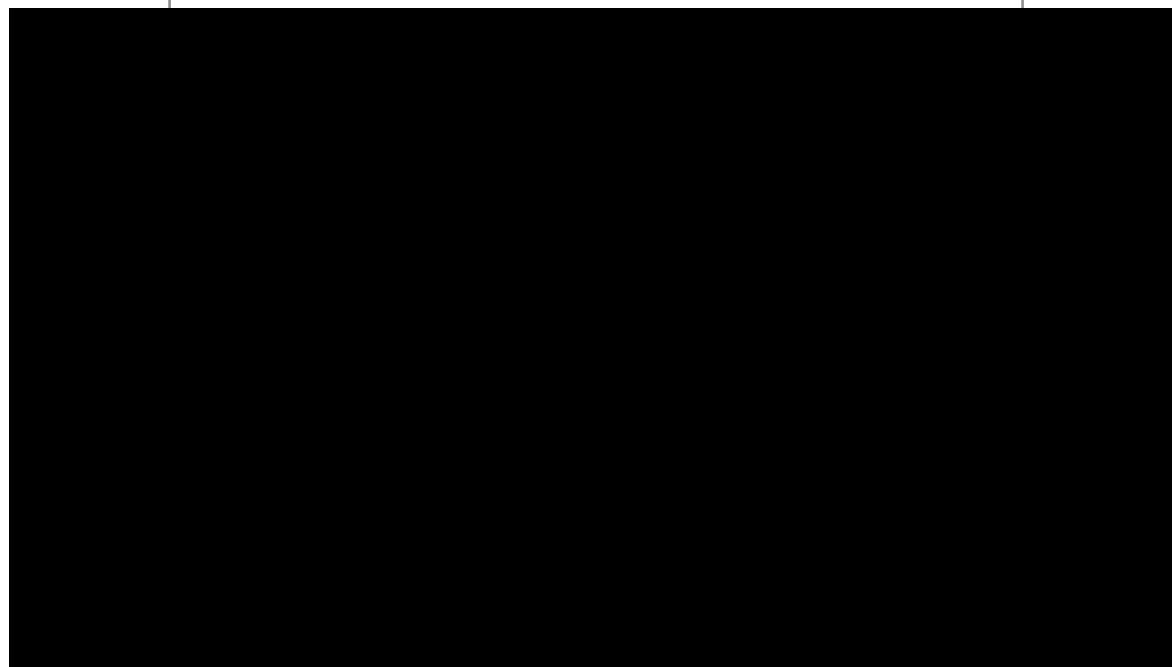
• **Appropriate use of technology:** Technology is used in a purposeful manner that demonstrates an appreciation of new ways of thinking and doing. (Galileo Educational Network, 2013)

For a more extended articulation of each of these eight principles, please see the [Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies](#). To further aid those unfamiliar with this conceptual framework, I have created a video with Amy Park explaining how her Governor General Award winning grade 2 inquiry into the Inuit aligns with these eight principles.

The argument that educators need to move away from an emphasis on memorization and the application of isolated procedures

towards a vision of education where young people engage in meaningful projects that are connected to the world and reflect work in particular disciplines, is well supported by research. For example, a study conducted by Newman and his colleagues

An Introduction to the Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies



In this video Amy Park explains how her Governor General Award winning grade 2 inquiry into the Inuit aligns with the 8 principles of the Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies.

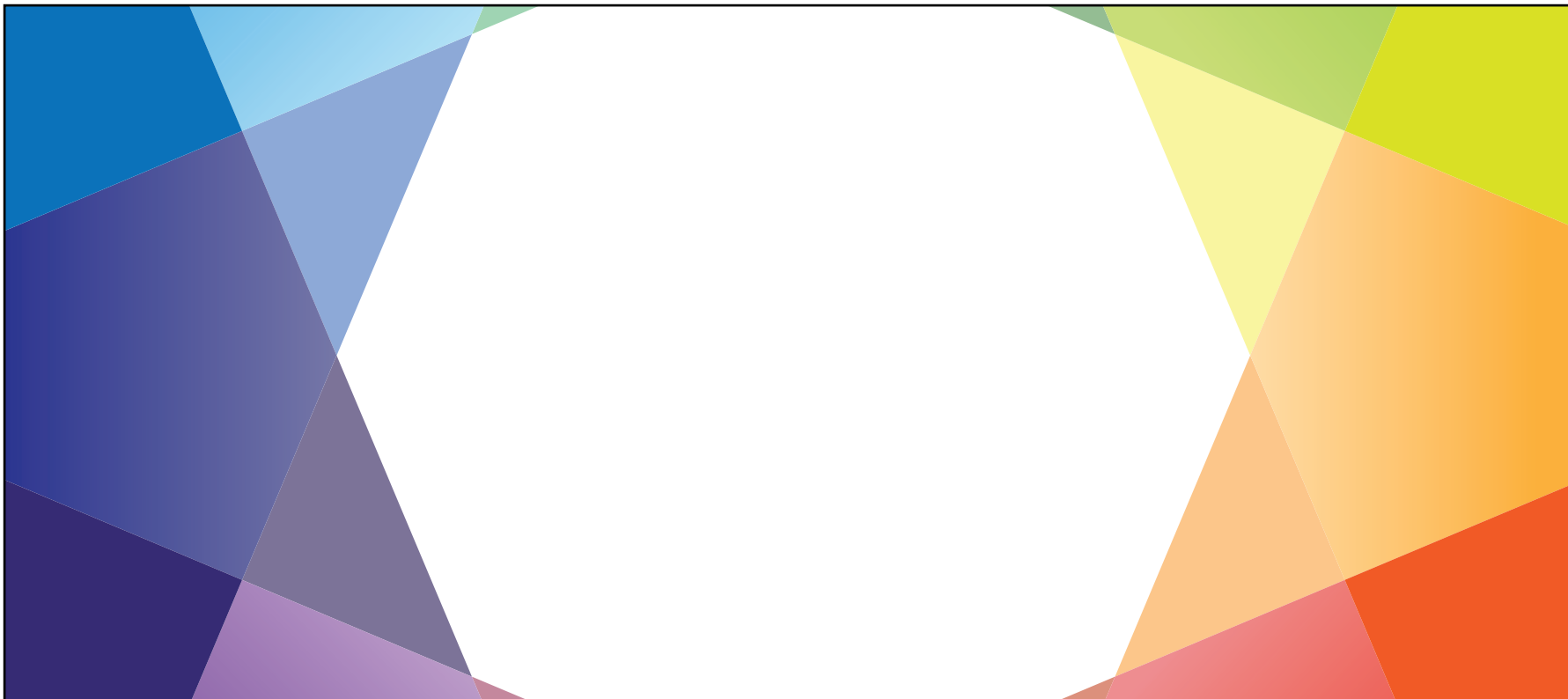
(2001) examined 2,128 students in twenty-three schools in Chicago. In this study they found that instruction in mathematics and writing organized around more “authentic work” that demanded the “construction of

knowledge, through the use of disciplined inquiry, to produce discourse, products, or performances that have value beyond school” (pp. 14-15), led students to produce more intellectually complex work and make higher than normal gains on standardized tests.

Additionally, a study by Friesen (2010) designed and implemented in 26 elementary and secondary schools with 12,800 students in Alberta found that engaging students in disciplinary-based inquiry had a significant impact on student achievement on standardized provincial examinations. Specifically, the aggregate achievement scores of students in schools designated as “high inquiry schools,” significantly exceeded provincial norms on Provincial Achievement examinations. These findings make a strong argument that not only is disciplinary-based inquiry possible in contemporary spaces of education; engaging students in this kind of work, additionally increases achievement on traditional forms of standardized assessment.

CHAPTER 5

Discipline-based Historical Inquiry at Connect Charter School



To guide teaching and learning at Connect Charter School in Calgary teachers use the Galileo Education Network's Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies. As seen in this chapter along with the myriad of examples from their Connect! Blog, this inquiry framework allows teachers to consistently design rich, discipline-based learning experiences for their students.

To show how historical thinking can be enriched by the eight principles of the [Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies](#), we will now explore an example of a grade 7 historical inquiry into pre-Confederation Canadian history undertaken by Jody Pereverzoff and Chris Dittmann at [Connect Charter School](#). As outlined in this video, Jody and Chris were interested in inquiring into the overarching question: *How can we help people learn more about historically significant events in Canada's past in a way that will be both interesting and also show the relevance of history to people's lives?*

To explore this question, the unit began with students reading [an article](#) that suggests Canadians – although proud of being Canadian – know very little about their history. As a way to test this assertion, Jody and Chris asked their students to take [The Dominion Institute Canada Quiz](#) to see how much they knew about Canadian history. After also asking their parents to take the quiz, students real-

ized that it was true. Many Canadians have difficulty answering even the most basic historical facts about Canadian history. This led to a discussion on whether study-

Inquiring into pre-Confederation Canadian History



In this video Jody Pereverzoff from Connect Charter Schools describes a recent historical inquiry she undertook with her grade 7 students.

ing Canadian history is important and why we should learn about Canada's past.

To connect back to the inquiry question, Jody and Chris then introduced students to the historical thinking concept of historical

significance that is used by historians to decide which events are historically more important than others. As outlined in this video on [historical significance](#), historians rely on three primary criteria or questions to decide whether an event should be considered historically significant:

- Was the event recognized as being important at it was happening?
- How widespread and lasting were the consequences after the event?
- Has the event become symbolic or representative of key historical issues or trends? (The Critical Thinking Consortium, 2011).

As a way to help students to better appreciate how historians decide and substantiate which events should be deemed historically significant, Jody and Chris modeled this process in a debate. To do this they each chose, along with Joanne Eloho, one event in Calgary's past including the establishment of Fort Calgary, the Calgary Stampede, or the great flood of 2013. Based on their chosen event, using criteria for historical significance, it was

they each had the job of making a compelling case that their event was the most historically significant. During the debate students used the live stream program [Todays Meet](#) to post comments about the arguments and evidence being used.

Once Jody and Chris had modeled the process of using criteria for historical significance to make reasoned judgments about the past, students were asked to choose one event in Canada's pre-Confederation past and then argue for its inclusion as one of the top five most significant events in Canadian history. As part of this process, Jody and Chris discussed the elements that make for a powerful argument as modeled in their teacher debate. On day one of the debate, students made their argument in groups of 5 and then voted on which two events seemed the least historically significant. On the next day, the three winners from each group went on to the next round in order to determine the five most significant events in Canadian history.

As a way to help students further respond to the overarching inquiry question, in the next phase of the unit groups of five students in each class were presented with the task of creating a [Common Craft](#) video on

the historical importance of one of the five events chosen during the debate process. Before creating their presentation Jody and Chris generated criteria for a powerful Common Craft presentation with the students. Additionally, as a class they analyzed and critiqued different examples of this medium.

As a culminating activity, in a symposium and showcase at Mount Royal University, led by two professional historians, students began by discussing a series of issues related to the importance and relevance of learning history including the difference between the past and history and how determining which events are historically significant can vary from group to group.

After this discussion, a group of judges, including grade 9 students, then went around and assessed which five Common Craft presentations, among the twenty, deserved to be included in an on-line [Canadian History Museum](#). After creating this on-line space, in the final phase of this inquiry unit, Chris, Jody, and I drew on social networking platforms such as Twitter to encourage Canadians and people around the world to visit the site and vote

on which event they felt was the most historically significant.

To map out the stages of this historical inquiry, Jody and Chris used the [Discipline-based Rubric for Inquiry Studies](#) to guide their planning. In doing this, the first element they sought to address was authenticity. In this instance, they chose to expose their students to the disciplinary problem of determining which events are historically significant. In addition, they also wanted students to use this knowledge to educate the broader public about historically significant moments in Canada's past through a medium that would be interesting and accessible.

For teachers similarly looking for contemporary issues that allow students to engage in the discipline of history there are a myriad of options. For example, recently the Stephen Harper led Conservative Government has decided that the Museum of Civilization should be renamed to focus on Canadian history. As outlined in [this article](#), this has brought up many issues around whose, and what history will be showcased at one of Canada's most popular museums. This accordingly, for instance, gives rise to the question: "Will the sweater worn

by Maurice Richard in the 1959 Stanley Cup final be presented as a sacred icon for a hockey-mad Canada – or for a politically awakened Quebec?” (Taylor, 2012, p. 1).

Beyond authenticity, this grade 7 inquiry into pre-Confederation Canadian history included elements of academic rigor. In exposing students to the criteria historians use to decide which events are more historically significant than others, students were not simply asked to recount a historical event. Rather, by justifying their decisions using criteria, evidence, and extended lines of argumentation within a public space, students had the opportunity to grapple with the complexity of making historical judgments about the past. Similarly, within the domain of assessment Jody and Chris co-constructed assessment criteria with their students, provided examples of work that could then be evaluated based on these criteria, and moreover provided extended formative feedback loops at each stage of the inquiry process. In this way students were able to observe and interact with exemplars and expertise drawn from the disciplinary fields and mediums used in this study.

Likewise in the area of elaborated communication students had the opportunity to communicate their ideas in a variety of ways including with their peers in a debate, digitally through a Common Craft presentation. Additionally, through engaging in a symposium led by professional historians and then presenting their work in a public showcase, students were able to take their learning beyond the school and engage in active exploration. By taking part in the phases of this inquiry, students, moreover, developed competencies such as teamwork and project management. The various stages of this project also integrated technological elements in a purposeful manner. Specifically, students used Google docs to

write their scripts, which allowed them to work cooperatively to build a unified piece of writing, while also giving the teachers a space to provide formative feedback and check in with their progress. Students also used Todays Meet to offer feedback on the teacher’s debate, as well as iMovie to create their Common Craft presentations.

As can be seen this, kind of discipline-based inquiry can be done. However, it takes high levels of collaboration, support from administrators who have a clear vision for education, access to technology, and a great deal of hard work and dedication on the part of the teachers. Since its inception, Connect Charter School has had these conditions in place, which has allowed it to become a key site for innovation in education. To view a myriad of other examples of rich, discipline-based inquiries in a range of subject areas visit the Connect Charter School blog: [Connect!](#).

While following the eight principles of inquiry that draws on disciplinary insights from the historical thinking framework can never guarantee that an inquiry will lead to deep disciplinary understanding and high levels of student engagement, we know what will never lead to this happening. That is, lecture and textbook-based coverage of historical ‘facts’ to be reproduced on an end of unit exam.



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