

# “Teaching for Understanding”



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## Workshops & Mini Courses - Descriptions

### 10:15 - 12:00

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#### **Assessing for Understanding**

Tina Blythe (Room 314)

One of the key questions we ask as educators is, "How will I know how well students have understood the content, concepts, and skills of the curriculum?" This workshop will explore strategies such as the documentation of student learning and the use of rubrics as tools for helping students to go beyond merely acquiring content to deepen their learning and thinking.

#### **Teaching for Understanding by: Looking Closely, Exploring Complexity and Finding Opportunity**

Andrea Croft and Nina Strelec (Room 320)

Imagine what your community of students could see, learn, and discover if you skillfully created opportunities to slow down, look closely, and dissect complex problems. How can hearing and seeing the thinking of others deepen and enrich the learning outcomes of all students in your classroom? Close looking allows students and teachers to uncover and discover complexity and find meaning within systems. When teachers deliberately create opportunities to slow down, thoughtfully take apart intricate systems, and visually document thinking, meaningful conversation and deeper understanding unfold. During this session you will be participating in a hands-on (take apart), minds-on (visible thinking strategies) experience and exploring how close looking can benefit various subject matter, across the grade levels.

#### **Create, Engage, and Reflect: Capturing Transformation in Learning**

Heidi Doucette and Erik Lindemann (Room 302)

How can we motivate and empower students to take a bigger role in their own learning? Two classroom teachers share routines to capture the behaviors and capitalize on the energy of discovery by documenting and analyzing thinking and learning. We will explore what experiences and interactions might lead us to “aha” moments. In a central task, participants create concept-supporting structures using mixed media to demonstrate a deeper understanding of a rich text.

Using our artifacts we will complete reflection protocols to trace the metacognitive dance between the abstract and concrete. The session goal is to illuminate transformation in thinking within the process and product. Teacher-student interactions during the task are modeled to maximize the benefits of mid-task engagement and assessment vs. end-of task evaluation. What learning behaviors can we name and notice? What are the implications for the story of learning in our classrooms?

## **Maker-Centered Learning as a Performance of Understanding**

Tom Forrest and Christine Forrest (Room 230)

As the maker movement spreads in both school and after school settings, many educators are left with questions: *How does making apply to my content area? What are students really learning while doing projects in a makerspace?*

In this 90-minute session, we will explore how maker-centered thinking can be applied in traditional content areas. Moreover, we will examine how the act of making can be used to reveal student thinking and understanding—How might making be used as a performance of understanding? Each participant will participate in a design challenge and have the opportunity to workshop an existing project or lesson that they teach, integrating maker-centered thinking practices.

## **Perspective-Taking to Foster Deeper Understanding**

Ryan Kelly (Room 312)

As educators we design, implement, facilitate and enact curriculum for the purpose of engaging our students in understanding. However, the challenge to facilitate deeper learning for all students is often the struggle we face as classroom teachers. Therefore, we are in the constant pursuit to locate effective resources, ideas and strategies. A specific approach for encouraging deeper understanding with our students is through the use of perspective-taking. In this session, we will explore the journey to achieve deep learning through perspective-taking. Join our eighth grade classroom where we will navigate authentic classroom examples and experience of American History.

## **Creating Engaging Learning Opportunities: Using Academic Conversation at the Elementary Level**

Dana Simile and Jenn Stewart (Room 316)

How can we use classroom conversations, language, and discussion to foster deep thinking and build understanding? How can we design dialogue and discourse that encourage authentic engagement for all students? How can we create purposeful learning environments that will engage all learners?

We will explore these questions by reflecting on our own teaching and sharing tangible practices that engage and empower students while fostering deep understanding. The workshop will explore discussion, questioning, and classroom conversation techniques that require students to engage in challenging and meaningful discourse as a way to build understanding.

## **“Making” Understanding Visible**

Jeff Evancho and Peter Wardrip (Room 315)

Project Zero research has explored two fundamental questions related to teaching for understanding: What does it mean to understand something? And what kind of curricula, learning experiences, and assessments support students in developing understanding? In this interactive session we will explore opportunities that utilize making as a platform for visualizing learner understanding. Collectively we will explore the essential question of: How is it that we know our learners are developing an understanding of the skills, content and concepts that they engage with in our classrooms? When learners make their thinking visible, the difference between knowing and understanding also becomes evident.

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## Special Interest Sessions - Descriptions

1:00 – 1:45

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### **Exploring Throughlines**

Ryan Kelly (Room 312)

In this special interest session, participants will be exposed to the concept of a throughline; overarching goals for a course of study. Collectively, we will discuss throughlines as a concept and play with ideas like, what might make for an effective throughline? Or how do throughlines support greater understanding for learners? As participants we will work collaboratively to develop individual throughlines for our respective content and the specific courses that we instruct.

### **Fostering Understanding through Questioning in Secondary Environments**

Dana Simile and Jennifer Stewart (Room 316)

How do we create high level questions that will lead to a greater understanding of content and concepts? Do our assessments match the critical thinking we expect of our students every day? Are we asking students to apply learned skills to new situations or are we testing recall of facts and knowledge?

We will explore these questions by reflecting on our use of questioning and assessment in the classroom. This session will be useful for multiple subject areas in the middle school and high school.

### **Making Thinking Visible to Promote Global Thinking**

Erik Lindemann (Room 302)

Explore a thinking routine designed to support global competence across the curriculum. Concrete classroom examples showcase learning benefits inspired by *Creating a Culture of Thinking* and *Making Thinking Visible*.

### **Depth vs. Breadth - Teaching for Understanding**

Michael Pastor (Room 325)

This course will invite participants into a discussion of instructional practices that focus on teaching for understanding within the context of rigorous curriculum. Many teachers struggle with the need to cover the breadth of the curriculum, while sometimes sacrificing opportunities for deep thinking. This course is designed to examine the relationship between depth and breadth as well as to provide a forum for instructional practices that achieve both.

### **Engage in Dialogue with Current Events**

John Doucette (Room 305)

How might we intentionally design learning experiences to facilitate student interactions and ensure that equity of learning exists within the classroom? In this session, we will engage in a mock classroom using current events as a frame for a tangible technique that fosters student engagement and dialogue.

### **Leading a Culture of Thinking**

Carol Sprinker and Aaron Rea (Room 326)

Shifting culture is a very tricky endeavor, in this session we will take a conceptual walk through the journey of shifting to a culture of thinking from the perspective of two elementary principals. We will explore creative and tangible strategies that support and grow a culture where thinking is valued, visible and actively promoted. We will explore “noticing and naming” the shift in culture that supports students and teachers thinking for deeper understanding. Additionally, we will share concrete examples of how to best support the culture shift, with strategies related to; voluntary participation, supporting early adopters, developing and building teacher leadership capacity, celebrating via social media, rethinking traditional professional development, and prioritizing opportunities to enact a culture of thinking.

**Making Thinking Visible in Math Classrooms**  
Heather Doheny and Katie Hanna (Room 315)

An elementary math teacher and a middle school math teacher collaborate to share instructional methods to leverage visible thinking with our young mathematicians. Together they infuse thinking routines and other strategies to provide opportunities for students to have their thinking valued, visible and actively promoted. They help young mathematicians collaborate with others, look closely, explore complexities and find opportunities to make their learning relevant. At a time when everything seems to be moving at a rapid pace, how do we embrace slowing down so that we can model the ability to notice and look closely for our young mathematicians? How do we create a culture where students feel like they are being heard? In this course we will explore concrete student examples inspired by *Creating Cultures of Thinking*, *Making Thinking Visible*, and the Agency by Design framework.

**Teaching for Understanding in the World Language Classroom**  
Stephanie DeLuca and Tara Surloff (Room 205)

How do we design opportunities for deeper understanding in the World Language classroom? Come prepared to share your ideas and engage in dialogue that crosses school boundaries on topics related to supporting language development. In this interactive session, we will all share strategies we've found for teaching in the World Language classroom that promote deeper understanding, consider alignment of content, and explore tools for communication within the target language.

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**Special Interest Sessions - Descriptions**  
**1:50 – 2:35**

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**Department Meetings**

