

DR. STIRLING MCDOWELL
Foundation
 FOR
 RESEARCH INTO TEACHING

UPDATE

A Lasting Gift to Primary Education from Former Teacher

A generous bequest to the McDowell Foundation has left an impressive legacy of teacher research on literacy in the primary grades.

In 2004 the estate of the late Dorothy Rutherford Clarke gave \$10,000 to the McDowell Foundation with the request that it be used to support research into reading by experienced primary teachers. The bequest not only enabled the Foundation to fund four projects at \$2,500 each, it also sparked numerous applications to the McDowell Foundation for funding to support additional research in this area. In all, the McDowell Foundation awarded \$32,373 to fund 10 primary reading research projects from 2005 to 2007.

The final reports on these projects are now available on the McDowell Foundation website. They explore topics such as guided reading, differentiated instruction, the use of reading buddies and photo-books, comprehension strategies, reading readiness and after-school reading programs.

Dorothy Rutherford Clarke grew up and was educated in Moose Jaw. She attended Normal School there and later graduated from the College of Arts and Education at the University of

Saskatchewan before doing post-graduate work in education at Northwestern and the University of California. Her teaching career included postings in Grand Coulee, Lang and William Grayson Public School in Moose Jaw. She also taught at the Normal School from 1941 to 1959, providing instruction in early childhood education in the summer and winter sessions in Moose Jaw, Saskatoon and Victoria.

Her bequest to the McDowell Foundation reflects the integral role that education and teaching played in Dorothy Rutherford Clarke's life.

Top: Primary teachers Dawn Dust and Jasmin Tiessen shared what they learned about researching reading at the 2006 Learning from Practice Exchange of Teacher Knowledge and Research.

Bottom: The legacy of research into reading is carried on in Moose Jaw in a new project just completed by Eileen Tosky-McKinnon and Elaine Oak called *A Balanced French Immersion Literacy Classroom*.



Teachers Tackle Assessment at Exchange

Connecting Research and Assessment

The 2007 Learning from Practice Exchange of Teacher Knowledge and Research recognized the time and energy that Saskatchewan schools are currently spending on assessing students. Opportunities were provided to consider research that sheds light on assessment and asks the key questions: What? How? Why?

Highlights of the Exchange included the keynote presentation by Dr. Janet McVittie and Shelly Loeffler, which explored the effect of assessment on the love of learning. Dr. Brian Noonan also provided information on the relationship between teachers' assessment/grading

strategies and student learning as part of the Understanding Research strand at the conference.

In the action research sessions, teachers from Holy Family School Division shared their experience with a variety of assessment strategies that improved student reading in the primary grades, while a team of teachers from Regina Catholic elementary schools described how goal-setting, portfolio-planning and three-way conferencing were being used to support student reading school-wide. In addition, researchers from the Saskatoon Public and Prairie Spirit School Divisions provided preliminary insights from their

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research on the relationship between the assessment process and children's and teachers' knowledge and identity in mathematics.

Ecoquest Models

Assessment without Grading

McDowell research into Ecoquest, an outdoor environmental education school for grade 8 students in Saskatoon, investigated how teachers can engage in authentic assessment with their students, particularly in areas that are hard to assess.

The Ecoquest program promises to develop students intellectually, socially and physically while also enhancing self-esteem and citizenship skills. Through on-going feedback, detailed report cards and a strong emphasis on student self-assessment, the teachers in Ecoquest have been able to meet program goals while keeping students, parents and other teachers appropriately informed about student progress.

The full report may be downloaded from the McDowell Foundation website: Janet McVittie, Arlene Lazecki, Shelly Loeffler and Scott Thompson. (2007). *Assessing the Hard to Assess: Student Learning in a Middle Years Outdoor Environmental School*. Saskatoon, SK: McDowell Foundation.

Exploring Teacher Experiences with Assessment

In addition to providing funding in response to research applications, the McDowell Foundation is experimenting with a new role as the initiator of needed research in education.

The Board of Directors has allocated \$30,000 to be used in commissioning research with teachers into assessment experiences and needs in selected Saskatchewan schools. Negotiations are currently underway to establish this research as a pilot project in 2008. If the pilot proves successful, commissioned research may become an on-going part of the Foundation's research program.



Leona Burkhart, Principal, St. Jerome School, and Michele Braun, Principal, St. Augustine Community School, are part of a team of teacher researchers in the Regina Catholic School Division who are exploring *Self-Assessment and the Student Learner*.

Acknowledgements

The success of the McDowell Foundation is directly related to the money and support. The Foundation would like to acknowledge the following:

Our Researchers

In 2007 the McDowell Foundation added the following new projects to its growing base of teacher-led research:

- Facilitating Inclusion at Monseigneur de Laval: Towards a Pedagogy of Cultural Reciprocity. Rosalie Lizée, Nathalie Gareau Gélinas, Laurie Carlson Berg and Hélène Grimard, Regina.
- Factors Affecting Student Participation in School Band Programs—Student Identified Factors Affecting Membership Retention. Perry Acorn, Prince Albert.
- The Implementation of Eight Neurodevelopmental Constructs in Saskatchewan Schools. Shelley Hosaluk, Saskatoon.
- Moving for a Change. Tammy Girolami, Rick Bowes, Louise Humbert, Jesse Reis and Darla Lee Walde, Saskatoon.
- Opportunities to Learn: Engaging Students in Conversations about Literacy. Angela Ward, Margaret Epp, Susan Bayne, Elaine Bella, Kim Beaulieu, Debbie Bidulka, Joan Falk, Don George, Cindy Krueger, Edla Landry, Terry Johanson, Deanna Koroluk, David Little, Andrea Marshall, Mike Pavloff, Cary Pepper-Martens and Jonathon Pedersen. Prairie Spirit School Division.
- The Relationship between the Assessment Process and Children's and Teachers' Knowledge and Identity in Mathematics. Karen Campbell, Cindy Clarke, Cory Cox, Florence Glanfield, Shaun Murphy, Kristi Nelson, Trish Reeve and Karen Storey. Saskatoon Public and Prairie Spirit School Divisions.
- The Role of the Laptop on Teaching in a High School Setting. Rob Kraft, Saskatoon.
- Transitioning At-Risk Students to High School. Jamie White, Melissa Bergstrom, Karla Gardiner and Suzanne Zwarych, Humboldt.

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McDowell Foundation President Designate

When Gwen Dueck becomes the new General Secretary of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation on April 1, 2008, she will also become the fourth President of the McDowell Foundation. She succeeds retiring President, Lyle Vinish, who has steered the Foundation over the past five years. Our deepest thanks to Lyle, and welcome to Gwen in her new role!



2007 McDowell Foundation Award

In November, President Lyle Vinish presented Don Black with the 2007 McDowell Foundation Award for Outstanding Contributions to Educational Research. As the chair and former CEO of Greystone Managed Investments, Black provided invaluable support to the McDowell Foundation in its formative years, both as a board member and a supporter of the Major Gifts campaign. His influential behind-the-scenes contributions were recognized with gratitude by teachers at the 2007 Learning from Practice Exchange.

Northern Teachers Learning from Practice

Contributing enthusiastically to the 2007 Learning from Practice Exchange of Teacher Knowledge and Research was a group of teachers from Northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba who are enrolled in graduate studies in education through NORTEP and the University of Regina. All will be doing community-based action research projects as part of their program, and they made good use of the opportunity to network with other teacher researchers from across the province.



Saskatchewan Experience with Immigrant Education Shared Nationally

In 2007 McDowell researcher Koreen Geres shared her findings in a presentation on "Building Attachment: Refugee Students' Reflections on English as a Second Language Integration" at the Metropolis Conference in Toronto. Koreen is an ESL teacher at Walter Murray Collegiate, Saskatoon.

Teacher Appointments to the Foundation

In the fall of 2007 four teacher appointments were made to maintain a strong teacher voice on McDowell Foundation Board and committees.

Brent Okrainetz and Deborah Mann of Saskatoon joined the Board of Directors. Brent is a teacher librarian at E.D. Feehan High School, while Deborah teaches at North Park Wilson School.

Duane Johnson, a high school teacher in Clavet, and Darlene Revering, special education teacher at Bishop Lloyd Middle School in Lloydminster, were appointed to the Advisory Committee.

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