



Highland Magnet School at Kenwood *The Scottish Storyline Method*

The Scottish Storyline method, with origins in Scotland, is an innovative approach to curriculum integration with proven success in use worldwide. The Storyline Method is based on the theory that knowledge is complex and many-layered, that learning is guided by one's prior knowledge and experience, and that learners construct their own meaning through action and experience. Students are actively involved in their learning as tasks and incidents arise within the "story" which the students see as significant and meaningful in a real-world context. Opportunities are provided for students to meet state benchmarks through meaningful activities that provide for authentic assessment.

The essential elements of a Storyline are setting, characters, and events or incidents. The unfolding of the story in the classroom provides a structure and logical connection to the curriculum. The difference between thematic teaching using a topic web and Storyline is the presentation of key questions which move the story along. In a topic web the activities are random, while the investigations that take place during a Storyline are in a logical sequence that builds on the preceding episodes.

Carefully planned episodes engage students in actual practice of the Storyline. Up-to-date technology is used for relevant research. A process of activity and reflection generated from the Storyline not only motivates pupils to extend those skills but it also makes obvious the necessity to refine them for life after school. For example, with a Civil War Storyline, some students' characters go off to war while others stay behind on the farm and worry about loved ones in the battles of Bull Run and Gettysburg. Teaching and learning about history, literature, science, art, music, math, etc., arises from this context.

The critical elements of a Storyline are:

- *Scene or setting in a particular time and place* - students create a classroom frieze (large 2-dimensional mural) or a 3-dimensional representation of the setting
- *People and/or animals* - each student creates a character that s/he becomes throughout the Storyline. This gives students the chance to be someone else of a different age, era, culture, personality, etc.
- *A way of life to investigate* - Daily life is explored as well as rules and expectations of that particular day and age.
- *Real problems to be solved* - The teacher and students create incidents that are likely to come up in the given setting. Students then must work together or individually, in character, to solve these challenges.
- *A celebration or culminating activity* - Each Storyline ends with a way for students to share their new knowledge with others. Often this is through a presentation for parents, a field trip, or community outreach.
- *Reflection and assessment* - Students have the opportunity to reflect on their learning through creation of a topic book (portfolio of their Storyline work) and/or self-reflection activities.

The development of a Storyline is guided by the following features:

- The story is progressive and sequential
- The teacher presents key questions within each episode that the students must address
- Each episode has limitless potential as students investigate and contribute depending on their personal experiences and innovation
- Each student will reach different levels within each key question and will return to the Storyline for the next question