A simple innovation that can transform schooling...

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My LiD in Action!
Education should include both **breadth** and **depth** of knowledge

By **breadth** we mean:
- knowledge of the world around us
- how it got this way
- utilitarian (practical or useful) knowledge
- exposure to the arts

Criteria of Education
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By **breadth** we mean:
- knowledge of the world around one
- how it got this way
- utilitarian knowledge
- exposure to the arts

By **depth** we mean:
- learn about the nature of knowledge
- distinguish knowledge from opinion
- gain expertise

Currently education aims for **breadth, depth for hardly any**.

I asked myself if I was really allowing students to get the depth as well as the breadth... I found we focused on content and skills, but not the depth of knowledge. I was also tired of students not remembering what they did last year or last month in class.
“If one is master of one thing and understands one thing well, one has, at the same time, insight into and understanding of many things.”

(Vincent Van Gogh)
Quick Overview:

What the original Theory on LiD was about...

LiD is an ongoing learning process that engages a child from their first day of school to their last

• The first day of school in Kindergarten each student is assigned a topic they will learn about throughout their school years

• Over the years students create a portfolio about their topic; they do this in addition to their regular curriculum. The portfolio is ungraded

• Students work in collaboration with teachers, parents, peers, older students, and possibly experts, both during, and more often, after school

• Students have the opportunity to demonstrate their growing knowledge at school presentations

• Each student graduates in Grade 12 with true expertise and depth of knowledge on their topic.
Yea Right...

So how did I tweak LiD to work for me in Secondary?

I first asked my Gr. 11 and 12 students what they thought of the idea. Here are some of their responses (from 2012)

“Why can’t the kids pick their own topic? Why would any kid want a topic like ‘rubber’?”

“Are you trying to get them to become specialized so it becomes their career? Like apple farmers? Or geographers? Are there careers for edible roots?!”

“What if I didn't’ t like it? Could I quit? 12 years is a LONG time…”

“If I had to study the circus for 12 years, I may end up joining…”

“How would I be marked on it? What would I have to do? Would it count for graduation?”

“Isn't that what university does? Teach you something important in depth?”

“It would make sense…but isn't that what we do in math? We learn that for 12 years.”
My Start Up Questions

• How do I start at LiD Program? What will the difficulties be? Resistances? What Grade?

• What materials will I need? When will LiD be done? Time? Support?

• What questions will the Administrators, colleagues, and parents have?

• What do we give the students? What questions will they have?

• What questions will I have for the students to get started?

• How do I spark their interest in a topic now that they are in high school? Do I create or pick the topics? (what grade 8 boy wants apples??)

• Do I let them choose their topic? Or just limit their options at this age? Do they work alone or in partners?
My Socials 8 Pilot Project

* One year social studies 8 Pilot Project

* Topics correlate to curriculum (I picked curriculum related topics to work with)

* Final Year-End presentation and poster/display on their topics and what they have learned

* Year long formative assessment and progress checks. Topic “check ins”.

* LiD Days –research and connections to course. Inquiry based learning and research skills.
A Word About Topics

Criteria

Topics need to be:
• complex
• varied
• multi-dimensional

Things to consider:

• sufficient breadth, sufficient depth
• multi-dimensional richness: cultural ties as well as emotional and imaginative ties
• not concerned with material that will lead to depression or violence
• not too technical
• not too general nor particular - (animals/Bengal tigers--> cats)
• adequate local materials available
## Some Possible Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANCIENT RUINS</th>
<th>BIRDS</th>
<th>SPICES</th>
<th>WRITING SYSTEMS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEES</td>
<td>PAINTS</td>
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<td>COOKING</td>
<td>GRASS</td>
<td>MUSIC</td>
<td>SHIPS</td>
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Socials 8 Topics

RIVERS
SHIPS
TOOLS
NAVIGATION
FLAGS & HERALDRY
CASTLES
ROADS
ANCIENT RUINS
PIRATES
WOOL
INVENTORS
WATER TRANSPORT
FARM ANIMALS
GOLD
IRRIGATION
THE PRINTING PRESS
SPICES

THE SOLAR SYSTEM
SILK
RODENTS
MAPS
MYTHS & FOLKTALES
SACRED BUILDINGS
SEEDS
RITUALS
BARTER, TRADE & COMMERCE
WEAVING
MONUMENTS
LiD Kits

- LiD Kits are now available to help get you started too.

www.ierg.ca

$50.00 for the kit
IERG has introduced the Learning in Depth concept over the past few years through presentations, forums, and classroom discussions.

Teachers, school administrators, students, and parents have provided us with many comments, objections, and questions.

Here are some of them...
Obj. “Students will get bored.”
Obj. “Students will get bored.”

A. Boredom is a product of ignorance, not knowledge.

When students become engaged with their topic and make it their own, they start to have fun and are motivated to learn more.
Obj. “Students should be given some choice.”
Obj. “Students should be given some choice.”

A. Everything is “wonderful” if you know enough about it!

Each topic is chosen so that it will engage a child, a teen, a young adult. A topic a child may find captivating may not be curriculum related and harder to fit into your material.
Obj. “Why would you force a student to learn so much about a limited and possibly useless topic for years?”
Obj. “Why would you force a student to learn so much about a limited and possibly useless topic for years?”

A. To learn the pleasure of learning.

Only by learning in depth can one come to understand the greatest pleasures of learning. And it’s hardly “forcing”. Students routinely say that LiD is their favourite activity in school.
Objections, Comments, Answers and Responses

Obj. “This would not be suitable for students requiring special education.”
Objections, Comments, Answers and Responses

Obj. “This would not be suitable for students requiring special education.”

A. Building their own knowledge and their own portfolios, with no pressures, or tests, or assumed norms to which they should reach or conform, provides a very comfortable context for learning.

Special education students will likely need more help starting their portfolios.
Obj. “It’s too complicated to organize.”
Obj. “It’s too complicated to organize.”

A. With a limited number of topics, and help from older students, librarians, and parents, it can be done.

There are unquestionably complications in introducing this—but its educational value merits dealing with the difficulties. None of these complications is compellingly difficult.
Obj. “It is impossible to grade.”
Obj. “It is impossible to grade.”

A. It won’t be graded.

Teachers will help students engage with a topic in an inquiring, imaginative, and enjoyable way, without stress and anxiety.

*** In my pilot project I did actually grade it and had ongoing assessment throughout the year.
Obj. “It won’t get teacher buy in.”
Obj. “It won’t get teacher buy in.”

A. Some teachers say “It’s what I got into teaching for!”

Many teachers have responded with enthusiasm to the opportunity for teaching in a more imaginative and creative way.

Some are more wary of this innovation.
Obj. “It won’t get administrators to buy in.”
Obj. “It won’t get administrators to buy in.”

A. Many administrators say “It’s a natural for teachers and community involvement.”

Many administrators see this as an opportunity to motivate teachers, involve parents and get their support, and build community.

Some are more wary.
The benefits of LiD

For Students:

- Provides opportunity to acquire expert knowledge of a topic
- Teaches learning skills applicable to all knowledge areas
- Engages students’ imaginations and emotions in learning
- Removes the vulnerability of ignorance
- Builds confidence
- Encourages life-long learning
- Opportunity to share knowledge and to learn from a variety of people in a variety of ways
The benefits of LiD

For Teachers:

• Encourages discovery along with the student

• Removes the pressure of grading (if you decide not to assess)

• Provides the pleasure of working with enthusiastic learner

• Enriches learning of the regular curriculum

For Schools:

• Provides for exchange and cooperation between students in different grades

• Enriches the culture of the school

• Provides a community focus of interest
What do we do next?

Depends on who “we” are...

• a Teacher
• a Parent
• a Faculty Member
• an Administrator
• the Ministry
• the Emperor of the Educational Galaxy
Further Information

For more information:

To get one of our publications, to sign up for a workshop, or to share your ideas about the LiD approach to education go to www.ierg.ca or contact us at ierg-ed@sfu.ca.


"This is a fascinating, provocative, utterly visionary and courageously speculative imagining of an educational future that is simultaneously elite and egalitarian, deeply intellectual yet utterly connected to passion and identity. A most audacious proposal from one of education's most audacious thinkers . . . an inspiring challenge to those who aspire to deep understanding for their students."

Lee S. Shulman, President Emeritus, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.