Over the past 11 weeks, our schools have shut down, and we have moved our classrooms online. This was a huge change and a difficult time for families, students and teachers, as we tried to settle into our new normal and get acquainted with all the technology that was available to help us teach and learn from home.

For inquiry educators and learners, this has been a time for growth, independence, resilience and adaptability. While online learning can be an amazing growth opportunity for independence, it definitely challenges the collaborative classroom.

My collaborative classroom is something I spend time nurturing the whole year long. We are a team. We work together, fail together, succeed together and learn together. Most importantly, we are there for each other. This is supported by the Mantle of the Expert approach to education, that fosters strong and collaborative relationships between peers and students and teachers.

Mantle is a mode in which children can explore the curriculum through the safety of the make-believe. Children are inducted into the learning with a provocation and then together, we co-create our learning adventures, such as working for NASA, visiting the ancient Aztecs or taking an apprenticeship with the Fairy Godmother - our imagination is the limit!

We spend time talking, discussing topics of concern, working through stories with drama conventions. We record our work, we peer edit, we conference our work, we do all of this together, supporting each other, being each other’s cheerleaders, learning from each other and being a team.

Then with schools forced to close, the way in which we learned together changed overnight. We now had the opportunity to explore some technology that would support us to keep a little of our Mantle spirit glowing. It was also an opportunity to highlight the importance of make-believe as a weapon in the war against the difficult reality that most of our students were facing being in lockdown (McCormick, 2020). Mantle would allow our students to explore the foothills of the Kuril mountains with their imagination and it allowed them to have a sense of freedom and an element of control in their immediate world where everything else had been turned upside down.
This is what Mantle looks like on our Year 4 DLP. (I have no affiliation with any of the apps or sites mentioned, they are only the tools we chose to use.)

1. **Google Sites**: Our school chose for each class to have their own website on Google Sites. This has worked in our favour, as we could strategically build our story and have it flow in a manner that allows the students to easily access the information and give it a flow of a narrated story. Example [here](#). The photo below is a screenshot from our Entry Point for our unit Active Planet.

We used Google Sites to host a **virtual museum** to celebrate the end of the unit They Made a Difference. This was a collaborative piece of work, created by teachers, students, and even **spouses**! Having access to building our own website, gave us the ability to explore collaborative work in another way than what we were used to.

2. **Drama Conventions**: We are in role all the time. We have created a character who inducted the children into the story and caught their curiosity. We have used Inshot to make and edit short videos that help move the story along with the help of our character, Victor who represents the Council for National Crisis Management. He was our induction into the story and we created a video with Victor as our provocation or Entry Point. We used Drama Convention 1 from *Notes on Signs and Portents* frequently (Heathcote and Whiteclaw, 1985).

2ii. Use of filters from different media (Instagram and Snapchat) helped to create the characters (use of sign). Our main character Victor and his identity became tightly linked to his quirky moustache. With many children assuming his burly moustache was there because he was living on site in the Kuril mountains. This was a sign for the children that Victor didn’t have access to immediate home comforts and provoked their lines of inquiry to what they would need to survive on the Kuril mountains with Victor.
2.iii Although we use teacher-in-role frequently, other conventions such as letters/emails are also used to deliver information and to help move the story forward.

3. Live Sessions: We use live sessions to get feedback from the students on what is happening in the story. We use Google Meet to meet as a community and discuss where our story might go.

4. Google Forms: This has been an amazing tool to gather the students' opinions asynchronously, as well as, vote on our team name and choose the direction for our story to move in. Results of the forms are published on the class site, so there is transparency in the process. Example of results shared from a Google Form, when we needed to choose a team name.

5. Flipgrid: This has allowed our team to discuss matters from our stories asynchronously. We post a short video on a topic, and the children can reply and post their own views and opinions on the topic also. This is great as an interactive tool, and allows the students to have some of the collaboration and team discussion that they would find in the classroom.
Overall, switching to emergency online learning has reconsolidated for me, the need for flexibility and agency in learning, as well as, once again highlighting the importance of imagination in the classroom. As Einstein says “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.” This has been true for our online experience with Mantle, as well as, our in class experiences in the past. When the students become agents of their own learning with the added dimension of drama for inquiry, there really is no limit to what the students can achieve and succeed at.

References: