

Gordon Crook

Principal

Tech Voc High School

Winnipeg School Division



For the past fifteen years, teacher-librarians have observed Gordon's unfailing commitment to teaching and learning, in which the school library plays an integral role, central to academic pursuits of students and staff.

We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act but a habit. (Aristotle, 332 BC)

According to colleagues, Gordon Crook exemplifies such excellence, for he inspires, encourages and models the best of teaching and learning with all students and staff alike. Under his leadership, Tec-Voc has become a school where all learners are honoured and opportunities for success abound, where staff and students flourish in a culture that is inclusive and rooted in best practice, and where all who enter are accepted as learners and valued voices in all things education.

As Tec-Voc has flourished, so has the Margaret Crawford Memorial Library building from Gordon's passion for literacy and vision for a 21st century Learning Commons Centre of Excellence. Back in 1999, this library was devoid of any technologies save a single workstation that housed the OPAC, a time replete with study carrels and desks that only promoted isolation and exclusion, a time of silence and unease, inescapable and pervasive. Staff knew that change was necessary but wondered where to begin.

Gordon's teacher librarian knew there were many things wrong, but the task was overwhelming and daunting. Some effective thinking, collaboration and coaching were definitely needed at this point. By seeking Gordon's assistance, staff soon realized how knowledgeable and resourceful he was. Gordon introduced his staff to a strategic planning process which would include all voices whether they were student, staff or parent. During the intensive planning phase, Gordon's door was always open. After much consultation with students and staff, using surveys and interviews, it was decided that new technologies would be the first priority. Gordon was not only generous with extra funding, but was a wealth of information when it came to other avenues of income support. Gordon's expertise and breadth of knowledge were pivotal in the beginning success of the library program at Tec-Voc. With Gordon's ongoing assistance and advice, the library grew to be a centre of learning and student engagement. Over the next six years, innovation and a high standard of librarianship became evident and continued on with new staff as well. Despite staffing changes in the library, Gordon has been steadfast in honouring the integral role of the school library for learning and teaching. His passion for literacy and commitment to student learning has guaranteed the library would continue to prosper and grow. Even with new staffing, Gordon continues to collaborate and support the myriad of programming and technology initiatives that have been implemented.

Gordon sees the value of a well funded and well staffed library. In both the academics and vocational studies, the library works to support and improve student success and retention with innovative student programming, centralized media and technology distribution and staff professional development. Through previous teacher librarians and Gordon's vision, the library has become the centre for learning in a large multi-dimensional, multi-ethnic campus.

Gordon's passion for literacy and his understanding of the demands of students moving into university, college and straight into work are evident. He has supported the development of whole school initiatives such as digital signage, improved technology access with mobile netbook carts and teacher presentation hardware. He has an incredible ability to find extra funding and to use funding with one maxim, "How will this improve student learning?" He sees the library as the natural centre for these advancements to be managed. Besides his interest in technology, Gordon is an avid reader and often donates books and materials to our general collection and teacher resource section.

Gordon has an incredible ability to ask the right questions that help guide teachers to find the answer within. When students were interested in Anime, Gordon worked with his teacher librarian to start a Japanese language program through the library. With student and parent support, a language teacher was hired. This later culminated into a student trip to Japan. This is just one example of the support, guidance and vision that Gordon brings to the library program.

Teacher librarians find themselves fortunate to have a "builder" principal. Gordon sees the bigger picture and supports his professional team by giving them the freedom to create programs that fit the students they teach. He has proven to be innovative and resourceful with the library program. By

extension, literacy as whole has blossomed under his leadership. As can be seen by the numerous examples and experiences identified, Gordon is truly an administrator who believes in and supports school libraries!