

Weidner School Inquiry Focus on Learning Script

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Jen Felke

Weidner School of Inquiry Director

“We are in our eighth year in the Weidner School Inquiry, it's hard to believe it's been eight years. My name is Jennifer Felke and I am the director at the Weidner School of Inquiry at Plymouth High School. When we started the Weidner School of Inquiry we knew that we wanted to have an emphasis on science because we know that kids build a lot of skills, problem-solving skills, analytical skills in those science classes and we also know that there are a lot of jobs connected to those science courses. I want kids to get excited about science and I know some kids either love science or hate science but we try to make science fun and we try to make it hands-on engaging. All our freshmen take biology. In one semester and we combine that with bio art and that's been really awesome.”

Haley Church

PHS & WSOI Art Teacher

“I am Haley Church. I teach drawing and painting, drawing, ceramics, and bio-art. The first question I always get is what is bio-art? And it is a combination of biology, which freshmen have to take, and then intro to 2D art. Which is the first level of art that anyone can take. My partner for bio-art now is Ms. Unsicker this will be our second year teaching together.”

Laura Unsicker

Weidner School of Inquiry @ PHS Science Facilitator

“Biology is my specialty. They are going to be working on a cell membrane model so what they are doing is using their knowledge of what's in the cell membrane and then they use the different pieces of material they come up with to build an actual model of the cell membrane.”

Church: “We try to take the concepts in biology and then we find a way that art can complement that.”

Unsicker: “A lot of students learn best by doing with their hands.”

Church: “Our biggest project is Clay for Cancer. They make a project out of clay and then they get to sell it as a silent auction. All of the money that we donate to the Cancer Association of Marshall County. They are pushed to present to the community. It is always fun to see them get dressed up and invite their parents and grandparents and there is just a lot of people who look forward to it every year. The biology portion of it is that they learn about how cancer works. So for bio-art, they earn a total of three credits.”

Felke: “Kids who maybe aren't fans of biology find a new appreciation of it through art and kids that maybe consider themselves to not be the best artist learn those skills through biology. So the course integration can be really powerful. Our sophomore-level science course is chemistry which is challenging in and of itself, we combine that with food chemistry.”

Scott Michel

Weidner School of Inquiry @ PHS Facilitator

“We look at the chemical side of food and we apply those chemistry basics to our food science lessons.”

Felke: “Food science, which is an agricultural course, and that is college credit, kids can earn three credits at the end of the year for that.”

Michel: “My name is Scott Michel and I am an agriculture educator here in the Weidner School of Inquiry. John Johnson teaches chemistry and then I teach food science.”

Ethan Pike

Weidner School of Inquiry @ PHS Sophomore

“So the way they teach they are always helping you.”

Michel: “So were paired together all day for our classes.”

Olivia Newcomb

WSOI Sophomore Learner

“You do like things with chemistry but you also incorporate that into food.”

Pike: “It's a blocked class.”

Newcomb: “it's a period in a half.”

Pike: “So one of our projects was an ice cream lab.”

Michel: “We put milk in a plastic bag and then we add ice and salt around it to lower the freezing point of the water and the ice.”

Pike: “It was pretty cool, we were kind of expecting it though, based on what we were doing.”

Newcomb: “A lot of people wore gloves because it was so cold that your hands would freeze.”

Pike: “Underneath the ice, it's a bag inside of a bag basically and you have to shake it up.”

Michel: “And that causes the milk to crystallize and we add a little bit of vanilla flavoring and we essentially make vanilla ice cream.”

Newcomb: “I started project based learning when I was in sixth grade.”

Pike: “So I transferred over in third grade.”

Newcomb: “And ever since then I loved it.”

Pike: “You have more time to do projects and have to get up in front of people and present a lot.”

Newcomb: “I want to go to college and like, study science.”

Pike: “I’m thinking about majoring in something like theoretical physics.”

Felke: “Those skills they’re learning and the knowledge they’re learning in chemistry they’re going to be able to take to health careers. Everything is interconnected. And then our year three science, in here, is physics and ag tech and power and that is another course integration that is very hands-on.”

Michel: “John Johnson is the physics teacher, and I am the ag power structure technology teacher.”

Mary Kate Flynn

Plymouth High School Senior

“They are both very helpful and very good teachers.”

Felke: “If students are in the traditional side of the high school and they want to experience a project based class they can do that by coming in and taking it. Any students can come in and take our physics.”

Flynn: “I am Mary Kate Flynn I am a senior at Plymouth high school, I am on the traditional side of the high school but I do participate in some WSOI classes like the physics and ag dual credit class. We break it up with the physics part and the math concepts and the different things to be applied such as momentum. And then we go down to the ag shop and learn how to apply those skills within ag power.”

Michel: “And they build a trebuchet which is kind of like a catapult.”

Flynn: “We researched the trebuchet, which was like used along time ago to launch dead things or like things that castles.”

Michel: “And they launch a golf ball and then they have to calculate all the physics the projectile motion physics.”

Konnor Ray

WSOI Senior Learner

“And you want to find the exact angle so that when it releases you get the optimal distance you would want.”

Michel: “And then on the ag power side were looking at shop safety, woodworking, fastening, the different type of joints that they make in those woodworking projects.”

Ray: “We would do a couple of test runs and see how it flung and see how the distance and calculate exactly what angle we need to find out how far it could go.”

Michel: “And that always is a nice light bulb moment when you can see them start to connect the dots.”

Ray: “I started with project based learning back in 5th grade. It kind of gives you that real-life experience with collaboration with each other and being able to work with people you may not necessarily talk to on a daily basis, but you have to get along with to make this project work.”

Flynn: “It’s definitely cool to be able to touch things and learn at self-pace I mean sometimes it’s nice to have instruction but it is nice to be able to learn at your own pace and like apply these concepts.”

Felke: “A lot of the skills they are learning in physics they are going to be able to take to welding, they can take it to precision machining. We are just really proud of the fact that we do, encourage so many science courses and the course integration allows kids to complete projects and learn those other important workforce skills like collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving and it really helps them prepare for not only college but also going into work.”

Church: “It’s really fun to see them grow and build some confidence.”

Michel: “We try to make those lessons so that the students are seeing real-life examples and that they can look at and see and touch and feel and then they can go out and use in the real world.”

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