



TOP SECRET

Scaredy School Teacher's Great Adventure

by Christine Quong

I needed to reflect on the process of promoting inquiry-based instruction this week. The Scaredy Squirrel inspired story below shares my perspective on how we are trying to nudge staff to take steps toward inquiry based learning in my school district. We work with the willing (Mr. Innovative) teachers and try to shine a little light on what is happening in their classes. Word starts to spread and other teachers start to ask questions.

Scaredy School Teacher never strays from his tried and true instructional strategies.

He'd rather stay in his safe and familiar classroom than risk venturing out into the unknown. The unknown can be a scary place for a school teacher.

There are a few things Scaredy School Teacher is afraid of:

- new school initiatives like Inquiry Based Learning
- standardized tests scores dropping
- students not succeeding
- even more time spent planning and assessing
- parents breathing down his neck

He sees the advantages of never leaving the familiar classroom:

- more time for me
- I can use my plans over again
- I know what to do
- most of my students will be successful
- no parents questioning my teaching methods
- safe place

He doesn't see the disadvantages of never leaving the familiar classroom:

- same old lessons
- same old activities
- same old class

Scaredy School Teacher's daily routine:

In Scaredy School Teacher's classroom, every day is the same. Everything is predictable. All is under control.

- go to school
- tell students some stuff
- assign some reading
- assign some writing
- give a test
- have some lunch
- tell students some stuff
- assign some reading
- assign some writing
- give a test
- dismiss students
- get ready repeat it all the next day

BUT, let's say, just for example, that his school administrators mandated that all teachers must plan an inquiry based unit this school year. You can rest assured that this School Teacher is prepared.

A few items are included in Scaredy squirrel's emergency kit:

- pencil & paper
- multiple choice test
- call display
- last year's plan book

continued on page 26