



PITA

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Provincial Intermediate Teachers Association



As the weather slowly changes, and plants start poking their green leaves up above the dirt, it is time for us to also shake off winter and do a little spring cleaning. While the prospect of that may seem overwhelming, a few small steps done every day can allow us to clean some of the dust off and brighten up our classrooms. Less clutter, more sunshine!



Get your students to take everything out of their desks, bags, and any other place where their work is stored. Help them discern between papers that can be recycled, things that need to go home, and papers that need to stay at school. At the end of each term, students should empty their duotangs and binders of old work that does not need to be saved for future reference.

Take five minutes each day this week to clean one area of the classroom. Be ruthless! Throw out, give away, or recycle anything that you have not used in the past year or two.

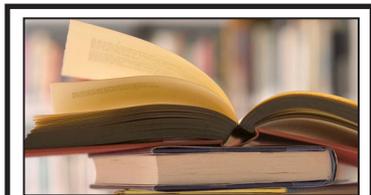


If you have students who are easily distracted, try to place any visual displays or elements out of their sightline. In general, try not to have cluttered displays on the walls - only that which is necessary for the students' learning.

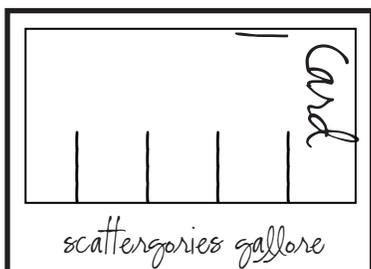
Don't forget about those drawers! So many teachers have little odds and ends floating around in there. Get a set of small containers from home or the dollar store and organize all of your drawer contents into the containers. Ask yourself - do I really need this item? If an item does not have a home, out it goes. It will be so much easier to work with a set of clean, well-organized drawers.



in this ISSUE



a literature circle to love



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PRESIDENT'S note

It's campaign season again. We have finished the municipal elections, we are in the latter parts of the FSA campaign and we are heading into the Provincial Election.

What should be the emphasis of BCTF efforts to support teachers?

Your Federation has mobilized a tremendous amount of money and human energy into these campaigns. What do you think about this? One school of thought is that the only way to change things is through political activism: 'Pressure or change the government and things will be better.'

The executive has spent in excess of eight million dollars on campaigns in the last five years or so. A significant amount of the Federation staff have been mobilized into this effort. It all doesn't show up in dollars, because these staff activities are often inter-related with other activities. However there is an 'opportunity cost' as the staff does not have the opportunity to do other work.

In addition much staff time at the local level is also expended on these campaigns. In Burnaby where I teach, there are now three full time officers on staff because of the need to deal with all the work at the local level.

What have been the results?

After the last election, the numbers of NDP seats rose dramatically and the executive claimed victory.

After the strike, we gained tremendous public support, especially for the class composition issue. The executive claimed victory.

Last month, after the LRB ruling, the executive recently claimed victory in the FSA campaign because of the increased awareness in the public of the FSA issue, and because of the offer by the Minister to 'look at the FSA'.

On the other hand, for seven years the BCTF had not received a single grant from the Campbell government until PITA received its Year of Professional Support Grant this past April. One might claim that was due to 'an adversarial relationship' between the Ministry and the BCTF.

Other BCTF leaders, such as Kit Kreiger (Past BCTF President), claim that instead, the Federation should do things such as professional development to provide more direct support for teachers: providing things like Program for Quality Teach, the Year of Professional Support for early career teachers, and other programs through Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs) and Locals. What might \$8 million, plus the staff time, do in these or other areas?

This has been labeled as the political/professional tension.

I mention this because the PSA Council, made up of the PSA presidents including myself, has just had a Task Force to investigate ways of addressing the challenges for PSAs within the BCTF, and the AGM.

The task force report is going to the executive now, so I cannot yet comment on the report, but in my opinion, the political/professional tension is one of the two key issues have led to the formation of this task force.

What do you think?

What do you think about the BCTF campaigns?

Do you support their tone and think they are effective?

Should we spend more on campaigns?

Should we continue them?

Do you think that the professional programs should receive more emphasis?

I have created a wiki so that we can respond to these questions and more.

To share your opinion, go to:

<http://psaissueswiki.wikispaces.com/>



a literature Circle

In my intermediate class (grades 4/5, 5/6, or 6/7), students meet in literature circle groups every week from the end of September until the end of June. I use a format that looks, sounds, and feels like an adult book club. My students love it!

I stopped using the common system of roles (connector, director, illustrator, etc.) in order to put the emphasis on reading and discussing rather than writing and reporting. I have also tried using the method where students read at their own pace and say anything that interests them but my students and I prefer the following format in which everyone reads the same section and can make predictions.

I join the group (or have a student teacher or volunteer with the group) in order to ensure that the group discusses the meaty ideas in the book. It also gives me a fabulous chance for meaningful conversations with kids, especially those who are less visible in a large group.



How do you create your literature circles?

I gather multiple copies of 5-7 different novels, usually gathered around a theme. The novels represent a variety in levels and styles. I give short book talks for all of the books, then I give students a little time to look through them and try reading a few pages. Students fill out a request form, listing their top 4 preferences. This system allows the teacher to organize balanced groups and assign books that are suitable for students' reading levels. I typically put kids into groups of the 5 most popular novels and put the unselected titles away for another time.

What are the reading requirements for the week?

Students read an agreed upon section for each week's meeting - usually about 60 pages which is 1/3 or 1/4 of the book. An average reader reading a grade level book will read a page in 2 minutes or less. Therefore 60 pages per week will take most kids about 2 hours of reading at home. Easier novels usually have less than 180 pages, making it easy to give less capable readers fewer pages to read each week.

Are there any hard and fast rules?

Students are not allowed to read ahead of the week's assigned section so the entire group has the fun of guessing what will happen next.

to Love

by Elaine Faltema

What do you do with those fast readers who really want to read ahead?

Keen readers often join 2 or even 3 groups. I put some of these “bright lights” into an easy book for their second book in order to raise the caliber of discussion for the easiest novel. That also means it isn’t obvious which is the “easy read” for the less skilled readers.

What is expected from students to prepare for their weekly meeting?

Students have a routine assignment: write down 2 fat, juicy questions and a connection about the week’s reading, look up 3 unfamiliar words in the dictionary and write down their meanings. Fat questions are ones that have no right answer so they can elicit different responses and discussion. As the year progresses, I begin to give an additional weekly assignment which could be writing a reflection or completing a task related to the theme (see next page for examples).

How often do book groups meet?

Meetings are scheduled once a week. If I have a volunteer or student teacher, I can schedule two meetings to occur simultaneously. When I do this, I have to work out the meeting schedule before assigning groups to make sure I don’t put my keen readers into groups that are meeting at the same time.

How do you ensure that students are reading the assigned sections?

I start each meeting by asking students “skinny” comprehension questions just to check that they have read and understood the week’s section. Those who can’t answer the questions at any meeting will have to write a test at the end of the book in order to get credit for the book. Those who are obviously reading with understanding are spared the need for a test. If I have trouble scheduling a time for me to meet with each group, I give the kids the additional assignment to write 2 skinny questions so they can check each other’s comprehension, rather than my having to do so.

What happens next?

Then the kids take over the meeting with me as an observer who sometimes chimes in if there is something I want to say. Children take turns asking their fat, juicy questions. When each child asks a question, classmates raise their hands to give their answer.

Answers can't be simple "yes" or "no"; they need to explain their thinking. Students repeat an idea that has already been said. When everyone who wants to speak has been heard, the questioner answers his/her own question. They go around the circle asking first questions, then second questions, then giving personal connections.

How long does a meeting usually last?

Meetings last half an hour. During the meetings, other students do silent reading or other quiet work. Most often, the discussion of questions and reporting of connections uses the whole half hour and I simply glance at the students' other written work to give them a mark. If the group is small, there may be time for them to share some of their other written work.

How do you assess students' learning during the meeting?

During the meeting, I am openly marking their preparation and participation. They tend to take care of each other by making sure that everyone gets a chance to give enough answers to get "5" for oral participation. They get 3 marks for having read and understood the section and another 2 marks for completing the written work.

- For a list of over 150 novels,
- including complete book summaries,
- author information, reading levels,
- suggested literature circle questions
- and answers, assessment grids and
- written response ideas, log on to
- **<http://www.pita.ca/resources/index.html>**
- User name: **pita**
- Password: **bread**
- New books are being added to the
- list on a regular basis!



SCATTERGORIES

galore

Scattergories is a vocabulary game - one that students always enjoy and find challenging. To play, simply randomly draw a letter. Students write the letter in the top line of one of the columns. In 90 seconds, students need to think of a word for each of the categories given that starts with the chosen letter. For example, if the letter is "F," a boy's name could be Fred, a flower could be fuschia, an insect would be a fly, etc. The goal is to come up with a fitting and original word. After 90 seconds, put students into groups and have them go through their words. If a word has been written down by more than one player in the group, that word is crossed out. If no one else in the group has written down the same word, the word is circled and the student gets a point. Repeat the card with a different letter. Students should strive for a personal best point score by thinking of original and creative words.

Card 1

	_____	_____
Boy's Name	_____	_____
Flower	_____	_____
Insect	_____	_____
Store	_____	_____
Country	_____	_____
Restaurant	_____	_____
Colour	_____	_____
School Supply	_____	_____

Card 2

	_____	_____
Girl's Name	_____	_____
Holiday	_____	_____
Vehicle	_____	_____
City	_____	_____
Animal	_____	_____
Tree	_____	_____
Cereal	_____	_____
Hobby	_____	_____

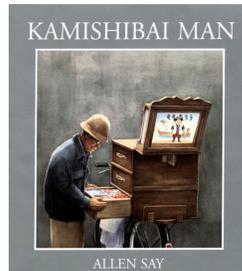
CRUCHLEY'S COLLECTION



Diana Cruchley is an award-winning educator and author, who has taught at elementary and secondary levels. Her workshops are practical, include detailed handouts, and are always enthusiastically received. (H. Diana Cruchley 2006, 604-464-7058, dcruchley@shaw.ca.)

KAMISHIBAI MAN

The retired Kamishibai man misses his old days as an itinerant story teller and goes to the city recalling in the story how he was once popular but now the kamishibai are out of date. Surprisingly the adults who remember him as part of their past, gather to adore his story telling and he resolves to go to the city again tomorrow.



KAMISHIBAI HISTORY

The back page of this picture book describes how Kamishibai came to thrive in the worldwide depression of the 30's and then again in the hardships during and after the second world war. In fact, television was first referred to as "electric kamishibai". Nice for cultural literacy when studying Japan in the context of the experiences of other countries at the same time.

STREET ENTERTAINMENT

This is a good time to discuss entertainers that come to you or entertain on the streets:

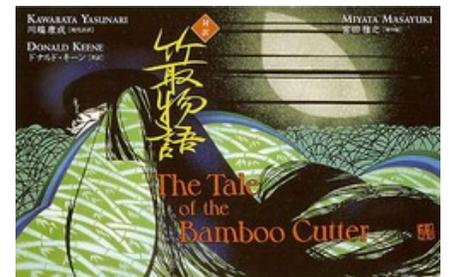
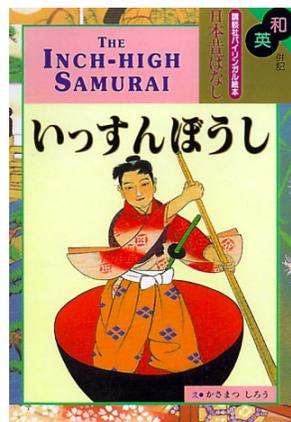
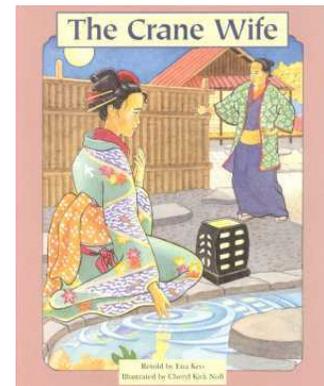
1. Street musicians and jugglers
2. Silver bells at Christmas
3. Travelling carnivals
4. Ice-cream truck
5. Organ grinder (long out of vogue)
6. Children's party entertainers

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE TALES

The book mentions 4 traditional Japanese folktales which the kamishibai might have told:

- Bamboo Princess
- The Old Man Who Made Cherry Trees Bloom
- Inch Boy
- Peach Boy

Students could tell these stories as kamishibai or simply as a part of oral skills development and cultural knowledge.



WRITING IDEAS

Some ideas for journaling or other kinds of writing are:

- My favourite television shows and why I like them.
- Memories of my favourite stories or being read to in childhood.
- Things in my lifetime that are new inventions: internet, e-mail, cell phones, Wii, i-pod or MP3 and the impact they have on my life.
- Activities that were once part of a child's life: skipping, marbles, games such as ante-I-over, kick-the-can, Chinese skip rope, hop scotch, nursery rhymes, counting rhymes, autograph books, etc. Are any part of my life? In what way?

MAKE YOUR OWN KAMISHIBAI

Students can work in teams to design a story in 12 - 16 frames that acts as a kamishibai tale - either one they have created themselves, or one of the traditional Japanese tales. If you don't have class time for illustration, used picture books telling the story can be mounted on card. If the theatre is raised, the English version the students have written can be printed on the back and then told in the style of an Illustrated Reader's Theatre.

(See www.kamishibai.com for more information.)



KAMISHIBAI AND SILENT FILM

INVENTION OF THE SILENT FILM

In Paris, 1895, Georges Lumiere showed the first silent film. The audience was accustomed to magic slide presentations accompanied by narration. The audience first thought it was another of those, and then suddenly, it moved. Their jaws dropped and they knew that they had seen something that would change entertainment forever.

Between there and 1913, silent film exploded all around the world. At first silent films were part of a vaudeville act or available at a nikolodeon where exhibitors rented space and showed films for a nickel, or where you had a kiosk you leaned over and dropped a nickel in to see a show (these can be seen at Disneyland today.)

JAPANESE SILENT FILM

Japan produced silent film for its own market and out-produced all countries around the world, even the USA.

BENSHI: SILENT FILM STORYTELLERS

Accompanying the film were the benshi. Usually, they stood on one side of the film and provided the commentary and the voices. In Japan, however, this was elevated to an art form so much appreciated that exhibitors showing the film were more likely to advertise the benshi than the actors. The benshi in the West were also accompanied by music, but in Japan they were accompanied by traditional Japanese instruments. This meant that when sound was introduced in the late 1920's it caught on more slowly in Japan than the rest.

of the world. Nevertheless, eventually sound film triumphed and some of the benshi during the depression became kamishibai street entertainers selling candy and telling stories.

AFTER THE KAMISHIBAI

During the depression you could eke out a living as a kamishibai street storyteller, and during the war the shows were popular because they could be performed in bomb shelters. In the 1950's Japan's poor kamishibai were still so popular that when TV was introduced it was called "electric kamishibai."

ANIME

What do you do when there is no work as a kamishibai man? You become a manga (comic strip) artist, or a produce anime (Japanese animation) both of which have had a huge influence in the international art world.



WHISTLER CONFERENCE

Friday, April 24 9:00am - 3:00pm

Supporting **struggling students**

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR LITERACY AND MATH

Understanding and Helping the Disorganized Child

with

Mary Moody

Disorganized children can often receive a tremendous amount of negative attention from frustrated school staff and parents who feel that they could do so much better if they could "just get organized!" But the problems run deeper than a messy desk and missing assignments. Leave this workshop highly sensitized to how disorganization significantly affects success in school and life, and learn practical strategies to help all children become more organized.

Accommodating the Way Boys and Girls Learn Differently

with

Greg Sharpe

At Abbotsford Middle School, Greg Sharpe created same-gender classrooms for adolescent learners in specific subject areas including Language Arts and Math. By adapting some of practices with gender in mind, student achievement increased and the classroom cultures changed for the better. Find out how boys and girls learn differently and how these differences can be appreciated and accommodated in schools.

Strengthening Students Struggling in Math

with

Liz Barrett

Teachers cope with large, diverse classes and serious time constraints, and often may not be comfortable with their ability to teach mathematics to struggling students. In this workshop, learn new ways to: identify student needs, monitor progress by assessing current levels of knowledge and barriers to progress, acknowledge the role of "math anxiety", and much more. Get introduced to JUMP math!

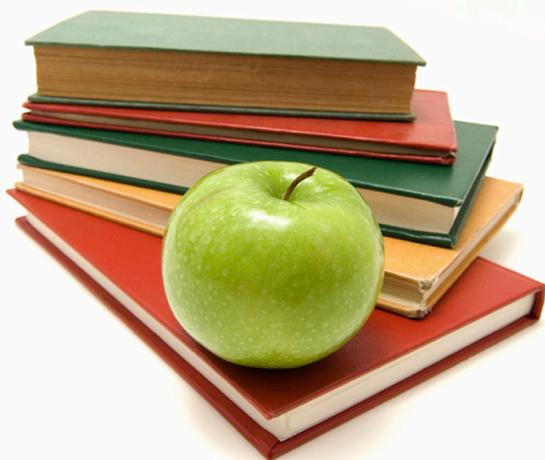
Supporting Learners with English as an Additional Language

with

Vera Duckworth

This interactive session will aim to demystify assessment and instruction of English as an Additional Language (EAL) students. Explore cultural identity and how it impacts learning, followed by appropriate and equitable assessment that facilitates instruction to meet the needs of this diverse group.

Sign up for one full-day workshop session
Register at www.pita.ca



Special hotel rates are available until March 29.

To book, contact
Delta Whistler Village Suites
1-888-299-3987

Friday, April 24, 2009
9:00am-3:00pm
Telus Whistler
Conference Centre

Conference Cost

	Until February 20	After February 20
Individual Rate	\$95	\$125
Group Rate (3+)	\$85 per person	\$105 per person
EA, TOC, Student Teacher	\$65	\$65

Registration closes April 22, 2009.

There will be an hour and a half break for lunch.

online
registration
at
www.pita.ca

other **upcoming** *events*

Build Up Your Physical Education Program

Glenn Young

Saturday, April 4, 9:00am-3:00pm

Kelowna

Learn the ABCs of movement and what to do if there is no room in the gym from the Physical Education and Athletics Coordinator of Surrey School District.

Cost \$35 (\$55 for Private Schools)

Lunch included.

Check out www.pita.ca/workshops/index.html for more information. Register at www.ereg.sd23.bc.ca

Starting Up a Readers Workshop

Lorraine Minosky

Saturday, April 4, 9:00am-3:00pm

Burnaby

Discover how to foster a love of reading within your students while differentiating instruction to accommodate the learning needs of everyone in the class.

Cost \$35 (\$55 for Private Schools)

Lunch included.

More information and registration available at www.pita.ca/workshops/index.html

PITA Kelowna Workshop

Barbara Johnson, Elaine Jaltema, Ray Myrtle

Friday, May 8, 9:00am-3:00pm

Kelowna

Join us for a full day of practical, ready to use strategies, and learning to help all students in your classroom.

Early Bird Fee: \$65 (Lunch included)

Full details on all sessions will be coming shortly on www.pita.ca Sign up to receive notice of full details www.pita.ca/workshops/index.html

Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Association

Fall Conference



October 23-24
Surrey

register at www.pita.ca for details



get a free gift
with membership

Renew or sign up for PITA membership online and receive a free copy of the useful teacher book *Voices of Experience: Practical Ideas to Wrap Up the Year*. You will also continue to receive newsletters and information about upcoming PITA events and workshops.

**Provincial Intermediate
Teachers' Association**

PITA

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