

Explore the *First Peoples Principles of Learning*

Melissa Salter is an intermediate teacher in Surrey. Reach her at melissasalter.ca and on Instagram at @cre8tolearn.

Teaching about Indigenous peoples, which includes First Nations, Metis, and Inuit, should be a year-long exploration. This is how I unpacked the *First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL)* with my class in this hands-on and cross-curricular lesson.

The Lesson

Materials

- Copies of the *FPPL* fnesc.ca/first-peoples-principles-of-learning
- Each Principle individually cut out and glued on 11"x17" paper for the rotation activity
- Two picture books: one written by a Indigenous author, the other written by a non-indigenous writer, about Indigenous people or an appropriated story
- Lined paper for T-chart reflections

Part 1: Model Explode the Sentence

- Read the Principles as a class
- Using a finger scale, from 1–5, with one being “not at all” and five being “completely” ask, “How well do you feel you understand the *FPPL*?”
- Set the intention that you will be unpacking the Principles as a class.
- Read a Principle that is written in the centre of the board.
- Using the explode the sentence strategy, work together to explore words, ideas, and thinking about the Principle. This took my class about fifteen minutes.
- Using the finger scale method again ask, “How well do you understand this specific Principle?”



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FAVOURITE THINGS

In November, we asked on Facebook @mypitaBC and on Instagram and Twitter @bcpita for members to share their favourite and most indispensable classroom items and are sharing what they said throughout this issue.

Part 2: Unpacking the Principles through Random Group Rotation

Before the class starts, put up a number of sheets of paper with a single Principle written how to explore the sentence, and number them off. Give the students about five-minutes per station, depending on their level of engagement. At the end of rotations, the students will have unpacked or explored six different Principles. After each stop, students rotated to the next Principle and did the following:

1. Explode the sentence
2. Read what the previous group did, then add additional ideas to it.
3. Read what the previous groups wrote and summarize the Principle for the whole class.
4. Read what the previous groups wrote and think about why this Principle is important to learn/use.
5. Read what the previous groups wrote and think about activities we have done in our class so far that support the Principle. Share ideas with the entire class.

Part 3: A Lens for Literature

Next, each group uses a T-chart with the titles ‘Good’ and ‘Problematic’ at the top. Then read the two picture books and ask the kids to listen and look for examples of the *FPPL* being broken or supported. Ask them to also pay attention for examples of racism.

Part 4: Written Reflection

After unpacking the Principles and reading the books, your students can complete a written reflection. Two possible questions are:

1. Talk about one of the books. What made it a good example of *FPPL*? Give examples of how the book supported or did not support the *FPPL*? Did it portray racism and stereotypes? What surprised you the most about this book?
2. Which *FPPL* is the most important in your life right now and why?

What did my students notice?

- The *FPPL* make sense when we take the time to understand them.
- People who are not Indigenous should not try to tell Indigenous stories.
- Racism can be accidental, but it doesn’t make it okay.
- Learning takes patience and time, and we will take all the time we need this year to keep building towards truth and reconciliation.

My Personal Reflection

I found this lesson powerful. I watched my students demonstrate deeper understanding and respect for the Principles. I made a mistake though. Initially, I chose to read two books that were sold and promoted as Indigenous legends, even though neither was written by an Indigenous authors. Neither book, when it was published, was trying to be ‘bad’. In fact, one of them won awards for Canadian literature. Unfortunately, both stories perpetuated stereotypes and demonstrated why stories should only be shared with permission.

The initial decision of which texts to choose was a conscious one. I attempted to create a fair comparison so that my kids could explore how outsiders get things wrong, even when they are trying to get them right. I am an outsider, and I got this wrong. I amplified the wrong voice, and missed an opportunity. I wish one of the books I used had been written by a Indigenous author, and in the future it

will be. This would have allowed me to make strong comparisons and talk about the #OwnVoice movement. *It was a powerful lesson for me as an educator.*

A Note About Resources

For the book you choose to use for a book that does not exemplify *FPPL*, please don’t purchase it if it is covering Indigenous themes. Buying it continues to let publishers know that you think the book is okay. Talk to your librarian about books they might have discarded that you can use, or just use a (generally older) Indigenous fairy tale, myth, or book, written by a non-indigenous person.

A few examples of Indigenous picture book authors

- Sara and Robert Davidson
- David Robertson
- Monique Gray Smith
- Richard Van Camp

Other resources

Evaluating Indigenous Education Resources for Classroom Use. Sara Davidson. BCTF Teacher Magazine. May/June 2020 pg. 22-23. For more information about selecting resources indigenoustorybooks.ca/files/Davidson_2020_May_Teacher_magazine_p22-23.pdf

FNESC’s Authentic First Peoples Resources www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/PUBLICATION-61460-FNESC-Authentic-Resources-Guide-2016-08-26.pdf

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**DYNAMIC
MATH**




United Library Services
Learning A-Z
Vancouver International Children’s Fest

Powerful Relationships

Regan Rankin is the Vice President of the Teachers of Inclusive Education of BC and a Learning Support Teacher in SD44 North Vancouver. For more information and many, many tips and tricks of how to support students in our own classes and in those of our colleagues, attend *The Strategy is YOU! - Empowering Approaches for Challenging Behaviours* and *Building a Kinder Class* at the Spring Conference in Whistler on May 20. Register at spring.ourconference.ca.

As a teacher candidate studying at UBC, I remember having a single lecture, lasting no more than three hours, on the topic of “special education”. After graduating, as a TTOC, I accepted a job entitled “Elementary Life Skills.” It was a one day position that would change my life in the best way possible, as it would spark an interest and love inside me that continues to this day, 20+ years later. I had never even considered a teaching role with students who had such complex needs, perhaps because it had never been presented as an option! That one day gig turned into a week, then a month, and then – despite my minimal seniority – a full-time continuing contract. I was the **ONLY** person interested in the position, and I found myself wondering how and why this could possibly be true. The class could be challenging, for sure, but the fact that no other candidates applied seemed unbelievable. The students were non-verbal, and as such, teaching communication was vital but not without its challenges. In the process of acquiring language and communication skills, most of the students used challenging behaviour to obtain a want or to communicate a need, but we were making progress. Was I missing something?

The responses I received, when informing people that I had ecstatically accepted the position, were telling. “Are you sure you can do that?” “Isn’t that the class with the hitters and the biters?” “Have you had any training with those kids?” That was when my initial spark of enjoyment ignited a full-on fire inside me. I had just spent weeks with this class of amazing, funny, inspiring, creative, loving human beings. It soon became my passion to work towards demystifying, educating, and ultimately, meaningfully including my incredible students in their school communities.

If there are two things that will make your life easier as a teacher, especially with your more challenging-to-reach students, it is the following:

#1 Build relationships with your students.

Connection comes first. You aren’t going to get them successfully operating in the classroom without the trust that comes with those connections. The easiest way to start this process is to find out about & discuss their interests. This may mean Googling information about types of Pokémon, how Dungeons and Dragons works, how Redstone is used in Minecraft, or the newest trends in nail-art. This will give you a starting point, showing that you know which things are important to them, and allowing you to ask questions that will encourage them to share with you.

#2 Consistency and routine

In schools, it can be surprisingly hard to maintain a consistent schedule. There is always a missing TTOC, or a special event, or a gym closure making it hard to keep things predictable. That Shape of the Day on the board can be a huge support for our struggling students. It gives them a guide for managing expectations, and can be a starting point for discussions when things inevitably change. That structure can help them feel safe, feel that they know what is coming, and allow them the time and space to prepare.



Thinking Like a Scientist

The PEOE strategy uses the following steps to help students slow down and make their thinking visible.

- Predict** Students predict what will happen in the demonstration/activity/video.
Explain Students explain how they arrived at their prediction, based on their current understanding of the concepts.
Observe The teacher conducts the demonstration, or students conduct the activity.
Explain Students revise their explanations, if necessary, to account for their observations.

Karen Ibbott has over 25 years of experience teaching middle school and secondary Science. She will present *Inquiry Design with Smarter Science* at the Spring Conference in Whistler on May 20. Register at spring.ourconference.ca. This article is a teaser of what you will learn in her session.

The PEOE strategy promotes active learning that will have your students “thinking like a scientist” while engaging in scientific exploration. This framework can also help you determine students’ prior knowledge and reasoning skills. It can... help you identify any misconceptions they might have prior to beginning an inquiry.

Teachers are encouraged to use the PEOE strategy multiple times in order to have it become a thinking routine within the classroom. PEOE is best used for teacher demos and student-led activities that yield noticeable results in a short time span.

Try these three demonstrations and inquiry questions:

One

- Big Idea** Energy can be transformed
Demo Use an electrostatically charged balloon to move a pop can
Inquiry What other objects can be charged to move a pop can?

Two

- Big Idea** Everyday materials are often mixtures
Demo Carefully dip a spoonful of cocoa powder into and out of water without it falling off the spoon.
Inquiry Which mixtures repel water?

Three

- Big Idea** Newton’s three laws of motion describe the relationship between motion and force.
Demo Place a small, light object like a hex nut into a transparent balloon. Inflate the balloon. Then move the balloon in a quick rolling motion so that the hex nut is rolling along the inside surface of the balloon. Stop moving the balloon. Caution: Wear safety glasses in case balloon pops.
Inquiry How will the hex nut’s motion change if a balloon is filled with water?

PEOE can also be used to make predictions and observations during a nature walk or watching a video. There are also possibilities to use this strategy in a cross-curricular manner, strengthening students’ ability to make connections across subject areas.

For more information on the PEOE strategy and the Smarter Science framework, visit: youthscience.ca/for-educators/#resources

More Than Money

JA British Columbia’s (JABC) *More Than Money* program is a fun way to teach Grade 4-5 students about money management. In this engaging and interactive program students learn about the role that money plays in our lives, how to manage their own bank account, and even how to develop their own business plan! *More Than Money* puts students on the right path to being responsible with their money now and later on in life.

“I don’t think I anticipated the level of enthusiasm that would emerge from the students when we started discussing future jobs, earning money and what they would like to save money for,” says Shirley Huang, a Grade 4-5 teacher in Vancouver. “The program has opened their curiosity about a vast range of money-related concepts, from the minimum wage to interest, and their evolving understanding of financial responsibility. And this is just the beginning. JABC has created a program that surfaces Core Competencies and supports our career education curriculum. I highly recommend this program.”

Learn more about *More Than Money*, *Dollars with Sense* and other JA programs at jabc.ca/programs.

Podcast Pro-D Playlist

Bryon Carpenter, Twitter @bryoncar and bryoncar@gmail.com, teaches middle and high school students at Abbotsford Virtual School and is a Google Certified Educator, Level 1. Have a listen to his podcast, *Fresh Air at Five*.

Professional development (PD) opportunities are officially presented to you a few times per year by myPITA and others as conferences and events. Yet, you can get free PD anywhere at any time through podcasts. Listen while you are driving, walking, running, or sitting in the park. All you need is your smartphone or computer and a podcast app like IOS Podcast, or Google Podcast. Another option is to listen through your computer browser. Your mobile device is the best, because you can learn while you're on the move. Just search for the podcast name, and off you go.

I listen to podcasts about educational technology regularly, and I recommend:

Got TechED the Podcast

50-60 minutes for middle to secondary educators. Created by Nick Johnson and Eric Guise with one, singular goal: to provide quality, tech-centric PD to busy teachers on the move. As educators who have always been passionate about PD, the authors have attended and created hundreds of hours of professional learning experiences for teachers to access conveniently on their own schedule.



Educational Duct Tape

50-60 minutes for educators of all levels. Hosted by Jake Miller, focuses on viewing edtech as a tool that can be used to meet goals, address learning standards, and solve problems in the classroom; much as duct tape is used as a tool that solves a plethora of problems in our lives. In each episode, Jake sits down with a different inspiring guest to share and discuss some awesome ideas for using tech in the classroom! The podcast is updated every other Wednesday.



You can also try podcasts that have educator stories and offer encouragement:

My EdTech Life

50-60 minutes for educators of all levels. Hosted by Alfonso Mendoza, the goal of the *My EdTech Life* podcast is to connect people from around the world so that they can one day collaborate together on a project or the next big idea. Alfonso genuinely cares about learning from his guests and sharing their stories.



Define YOUiversity

25-40 minutes for educators of all levels. Hosted by Lindsay Titus, the *Define YOUiversity* podcast, shares small, simple and strategic steps that help you fall back in love with your career, your relationships, your life, and most of all—yourself! *Define YOUiversity's* mission is to define yourself from within, instead of by the roles that we serve each day. When we can look within and love who we are, no matter what we are doing or have done, we'll succeed at creating the life we are meant to be living!



Good News Brad News

15-30 minutes for educators of all levels. Hosted by Canadian, Brad Hughes, the *Good News Brad News* podcast amplifies the stories of heart-led educators moving from positive intention to ACTION—improving kids' lives through service, connection, and finding the FUN!



I've been listening to podcasts since 2015, and they have greatly enriched my learning and joy for education and technology. I've enjoyed connecting with many podcasters, who are normal people like you and me. I've even started my own podcast called *Fresh Air At Five*. My podcast is typically 25-30 minutes in length and is for educators at all levels. I offer weekly reflections on podcasts that I listen to daily so that YOU can get quick summaries of respective episodes of a variety of podcasts. Think of it as my Coles Notes of podcast episodes.



Take a listen to podcasts to enrich your daily learning journey. To find more suggestions, or to recommend a podcast, drop me a line at bryoncar@gmail.com.

FAVOURITE THINGS

Starbucks Via Coffee is one of my favourite things in my classroom. Quick, easy, and only a cup of water from the water cooler's hot-water tank. So good.

– Bryon Carpenter



A Simple Secret Sound Source

John Munro will present *Science is a Verb* at the Spring Conference in Whistler on May 20. Register at spring.ourconference.ca. This article is a small sneak peek into the activities you will learn, experience, and enjoy during his session. He has over 26 years of teaching experience. He strives to create authentic and meaningful learning experiences, while engaging diverse learners.

A discrepant event is a situation where what you expect to happen is different from what actually happens. Often, we are surprised when we experience these situations. However, these moments can be used as powerful learning experiences to address misconceptions. In the end, our existing beliefs can be corrected as we discover the science behind our new discovery.

Curricular Competencies:

- Questioning and Predicting
- Applying and Innovating

Materials

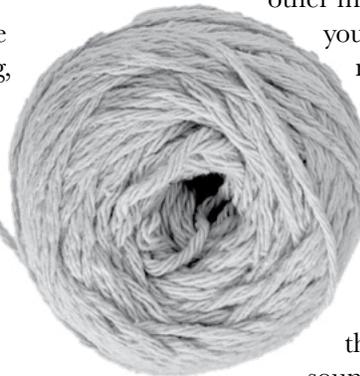
- Prepare one metal coat hanger for every group of 3–4 students. Remind students to be careful with the end of the hanger
- String
- Optional: Cooling or baking rack, metal salad tongs, soup spoons, etc. Use your imagination and encourage students to try several different objects that are available.

Assembly

1. Cut two lengths of string, each about 0.5m long.
2. Tie each string to the hanger. You can tie them to the twisted section of the hook or to the corners of the triangular section. In my experience it doesn't really matter where they are attached. Consider securing the strings in place for younger students so that the strings do not slip off the hanger.

Start the discussion:

Encourage students to share about the ways we can make sounds. They might suggest shouting, clapping their hands, stomping their feet, or playing musical instruments, among other things. Point out that when sound travels, the waves must move in a medium. Often this is the air, but it is not always this way. Students can share their experiences related to sound in different environments, such as under water, or even how sound seems different on a really cold and dry winter day.



Exploration instructions for students

“Predict what you think it will sound like when you tap one of the coat hangers on the edge of a desk and allow the sound to travel in the air of our classroom. Once you have made a prediction, use the two strings to support the hanger while you allow it to freely swing and then hit the edge of your desk.”

Reflection questions

- How did you do?
- Was your prediction correct or incorrect?
- What did you discover?
- What things could you change in order to modify the sound produced by the coat hanger assembly?
- What other objects do you think you could try that would produce different sounds (louder, quieter, for example)

Encourage students to keep exploring

“Next, make a prediction about what you think it will sound like when the sound travels in the strings directly into your ears. Once you have made a prediction, then you are ready to try it out. Wind the free end of each string around each of your index fingers a few times. Next, place the tips of your index fingers (with hanger assembly attached) gently on the small flap of skin just in front of each of your ears, closing off the ear canal, but without putting your fingers into your ears. Let the hanger swing freely so that it bangs lightly against the edge of your desk.”

Questions for student reflection

- How did you do?
- Was your prediction correct or incorrect?
- What did you discover?
- How did the sound differ from your first trial when the sound travelled in air?

Encourage even further exploration

“Go further. Try using different materials and see how well they work. Instead of using a metal hanger, for instance, try a cooling/baking rack or a pair of metal salad tongs. What other materials do you want to try besides metal? Do you have new predictions about these objects and new materials?”

What's Going On?

Although most of the sounds we hear are transmitted through the air, air is not the only carrier of sound waves—nor is it the best. A ticking clock can be heard through the air if you are close enough. But, put your ear to the table with the clock on it and the ticking will sound much louder. **CONTINUED ON BACK COVER**

PROUDLY PRESENT

Whistler

2022

MAY 20 HILTON WHISTLER RESORT

MORNING SESSIONS 9:30–11:45

Sound Assessment Design

Aligning Assessment with Learning Goals

Smarter Science Inquiry Design

The Strategy is YOU!

Empowering Approaches for Challenging Behaviours

AFTERNOON SESSIONS 1:15–3:30

Using Assessment to Communicate and Report Student Learning

Science is a Verb

Demos and Discrepant Events to Generate Inquiry

Building a Kinder Class

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We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of this conference by the BCTF.



MORNING SESSIONS 9:30-11:45

Sound Assessment Design

Aligning Assessment with Learning Goals

Nina Pak Liu, Josh Ogilvie, and Phil Stringer

How can we design assessments that align with the intended learning goals and purposes? This hands-on session is an overview of conducting thoughtful assessment planning. Presenters will use story, theory, and practice to approach equitable assessment in a variety of contexts. Learn how to select appropriate assessment methods to assess student learning. Discuss how assessment can increase the reliability and validity of what students know, understand, and can do with their learning.

Inquiry Design with Smarter Science

Karen Ibbott

Smarter Science is an inquiry-based framework for teaching students how to do science and think like a scientist. Learn how to use the Steps to Inquiry strategy to help students plan, and to implement their own investigations. Through demos and active participation, participants will learn how to scaffold the inquiry process that will support the learning needs of all students.

The Strategy is YOU!

Empowering Approaches for Challenging Behaviours

Paula Stroshein-Martinez and Fiona James

This past year has been challenging for both students and educators. The added stress of coping with a pandemic, contributes to wavering self-regulation and resiliency in many of us. Educators can be left feeling powerless, overwhelmed, and exhausted. In this workshop, you will come out with a renewed sense of confidence, learning that in fact, YOU are the strategy! Learn strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS 1:15-3:30

Using Assessment to Communicate and Report Student Learning

Josh Ogilvie and Phil Stringer

What are learning standards? How do we create, implement, assess, and act on evidence of learning? Join this exploration into standards-based learning and grading, data collection and analysis, using formative and summative evidence of learning to inform practice, and communicating student progress. We will discuss the role of professional judgement in assessment, and options related to formulating report card grades.

Science is a Verb

Demos and Discrepant Events to Generate Inquiry

John Munro

We will use readily available materials to explore scientific principles through eye-opening and mind-bending demonstrations and discrepant events. These activities can be used to spark curiosity and generate new questions to explore. Come prepared to explore together and address some of your own conceptual misunderstandings.

Building a Kinder Class

Regan Rankin

A meta study around students performing acts of kindness, found that their grades increased by 11% (on average)! Kindness is good for both the soul and the mind. Discover the whys and hows of building kindness and empathy in your Intermediate classroom and in the greater school community. Recent research, fun practical applications and examples, plus resources and activities, will inspire and prepare you to teach kindness tomorrow.

CONFERENCE DETAILS & REGISTRATION

- Registration includes a PSA membership of your choice.
- Coffee/tea to start your day, and mid-morning refreshments.
- Lunch is on your own; enjoy Whistler's many great offerings.
- Last day for early bird pricing is April 10, 2022
- \$150/\$170 BCTF members | \$180/\$200 Non-BCTF members | \$80/100 TTOCs and SEAs
- Register in advance online with a credit card; no on-site registration or payment. Registration closes noon May 15, 2022 or when sold out. No wait lists. Visit spring.ourconference.ca for details.

LOCATION & ACCOMMODATION

Hilton Resort and Spa www.hiltonwhistler.com 1-800-515-4050

Use rate code MYPITA22 before April 19 for preferred rates. Contact hotel for terms and conditions.

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Not Averaging Your Pizza or Your Marks

Phil Stringer is the Mathematics Department Head at Crofton House School and a founding member of the Assessment Consortium of British Columbia. He will be co-presenting *Sound Assessment Design: Aligning Assessment with Learning Goals* and *Using Assessment to Communicate and Report Student Learning* at the Spring Conference on May 20 in Whistler. Register at spring.ourconference.ca.

Assessment needs to increase the reliability and validity of measuring these aspects of learning and provide both the student and teacher with the ability to respond to this learning journey. Imagine stopping for some pizza on the way home from work and having two places to choose from: Hearty Pizza or Pizza Central. Hearty Pizza has a score of 4.8 from reviews online, and Pizza Central has a score of 3.2. These scores are the accumulation of data from hundreds of customers, so surely the average of these reviews must be correct! Unfortunately, these averages do not tell the whole picture. In fact, digging into a couple of recent reviews, a completely different picture develops:

Hearty Pizza

Maria ★★☆☆☆ (3)

“I’m not sure about this place anymore. The pizza used to be delicious, but now it’s really dry.”

Dusty ★★☆☆☆ (3)

“The place is clean enough. Okay, if you want something quick. Not really special, though.”

Pizza Central

Martin ★★★★★ (5)

“This place has been picking up! Their pizza is the best kept secret in the city.”

Diane ★★★★★☆ (4)

“Dough is hand tossed and ingredients are now all organic and local. Best value!”

How is this similar to how many students are assessed? Are we collecting data and (blindly) averaging or looking at trends and growth over time? What precisely are we measuring? Challenging our own biases as well as reflecting on our own experiences with assessment can lead to our own growth in how we understand student learning. Let’s ditch the average and explore ways to design a new assessment framework with methods that align with learning standards (and not point accumulation), inclusion (not compliance), and growth – and grab some pizza, on the way home.

How to Support Students with Epilepsy

Jennie Slack is the President of myPITA and teaches Grades 4/5 in Burnaby.

Epilepsy is a disorder that is characterized by unpredictable seizures. Seizures may show themselves in several ways: temporary confusion, a staring spell, uncontrollable jerking movements in their limbs, loss of consciousness or awareness, and may lead to feelings of fear, anxiety, or chronic *deja vu*.

Brief changes in chemical or electrical activity in the brain are what causes seizures. Seizures can be very obvious, or they can be mild enough that someone may not even be aware they have them. If a student is having a noticeable seizure, and you don’t have access to their health plan for specific directions, you should:

- help the student down to the ground safely
- remove glasses and loosen anything tight around their neck
- remove items nearby that they could hit
- do not try to restrain the student
- stay calm, call for help, and time the seizure duration

If your student is diagnosed with seizures and is subject to small seizures, these sometimes occur during class time and may not always be noticeable. It may present as times when a child “zones out” and then returns. The child may have no knowledge of the passage of time, which can lead to significant confusion and comprehension issues, as they have just unknowingly missed 30 seconds of class time without being aware of it.

Academic supports for students with seizure disorders:

- verbal and visual cues to help them follow along
- redirection
- provide written as well as oral instructions
- non-timed assignments
- frequent repetition of material or instructions
- chunk tasks and instructions into smaller, more manageable steps
- test for understanding rather than recall

In consultation with parents and students, and with age appropriate resources, it can be a good idea to discuss epilepsy with the class so that students know how to support their classmate. Affected students may also need a counselling referral to help with some of the anxiety and constant uncertainties around managing and living with the condition.

Cherry Blossom Art Project

Hannah MacKillop is a Grade 4/5 and Grade 6/7 job share teacher the Burnaby School District. She has a passion for collecting and creating resources.

Materials

- Liquid tempera or acrylic paints in a variety of colours
- Cotton balls
- Paint palettes
- Paintbrushes
- Clothespins
- Paper
- Containers for rinse water

Time: 1 long or 2 shorter art blocks

Seeing the cherry blossoms blooming in the streets and all over social media, always brings with it the excitement of spring art activities. The Grade 4 and 5 students I teach in one of my job-share classes are always asking to work with paint, and I felt this was the perfect opportunity to grant them their wish.

This art activity can be done by anyone with access to the materials. While this art project was enjoyable for everyone involved, one of my favourite moments happened when I was projecting images of the supplies we would be using. The students tried to identify what clothespins were, as many had never seen, let alone used them in their life. We had many guesses, including scissors, clips, and a beak. The reveal of the proper usage was quite exciting.

The art activity was divided into two time blocks. First, students paint the background and the main tree branch or trunk, using a paintbrush. Some students chose to paint their branch black instead of brown, and they turned out looking cool. After the backgrounds had dried, students dabbed on the blossom paint. Students had a lot of fun picking up the cotton balls with the clothespins and using these makeshift paint brushes to create their artwork. The results were wonderful and the differences between the art styles of the students provided a beautiful variety of artworks.

Extending activities

- Encourage students to try mixing monochromatic colours, tints and shades of a single hue like a variety of pinks.
- Ask students to experiment with layering their paint colours and dabs. What looks better, light colours over darker colours or vice versa?
- Consider the composition of your artwork. The subject doesn't always need to be in the center of the page. Try using the branch to lead the viewers' eyes into the page, and consider the symmetrical/assymetrical balance, or the amount of background or negative space.
- For more detailed blossoms use cotton swabs and show students Pointillism artworks by George Seurat.



FAVOURITE THINGS

I didn't think I needed these markers when someone gave them to me, but I was so wrong. These whiteboard markers are so useful for so many occasions!
–Margaret S.



Dry erase sleeves are amazing for math!
– Jessica M.

Mini-whiteboards! We do lots of whole class check-ins and a lot of math on them.
– Carolyn K.

Brian's Bits: Don't Believe Everything You Read

Brian Herrin is the co-author of *Innovations in Science 5* and *Science Probe 4*. He has been a Faculty Advisor at SFU for half a century. His ideas are practical, applicable, and inexpensive.

How can some folks accept the guff that comes from fringe political groups? Here is an exercise that might assist in getting students to listen and read critically.

Before the lesson, I set the room up like a parliament, with the students divided in half and positioned facing each other, with some distance between them. I told them this was an experimental setup that was supposed to promote discussion and learning. We then did a math lesson in this seating arrangement before moving on to the real reason for the seating change, a lesson on bias.

I didn't say much about the lesson, other than to say that we were going to silently read an article on a topic and then have a discussion about the content. You can find the articles in the right hand column and at www.pita.ca/uploads/1/2/8/1/12817523/bias_and_slant_handout.docx. What they didn't know was that each side of the room would receive a different story. They were carefully formatted to look identical, and I handed them out face down, with the instruction not to turn them over until told.

When each student had a sheet, I asked them to silently and carefully read the article and then replace it upside down, as they would not be allowed to consult their article during the discussion.

So far, so good. Now comes the fun. I started the discussion by inviting students to put up their hands and make a short statement about what they had just read. As they made their statements, I took 'minutes' on my whiteboard.

Soon there were some angry statements that begged to be countered, and the discussion turned into a debate that threatened to devolve into an argument.

After about ten minutes, I tried to get the students to concentrate on facts rather than feelings.

- Was the game important?
- What was the final score?
- Which team had more penalties assessed on them?
- When were the goals scored?
- Were there any injuries?

Soon the students settled and were then assigned into pairs of opposing students. At this time, they were to compare their articles and discuss what had just happened.

After the article comparison, they completed a letter-writing assignment with a new appreciation for the role of bias in a discussion. Maybe you can see my personal bias in the exercise above of letting students learn by doing!

Bias or Slant

Yesterday, the championship ratball game was held and Cogland won by a score of 18–15 over their arch rivals, Brickburn. The Cogland team had to overpower the Brickburn squad and battle the referee including her biased calls. Brickburn was ahead at half time, but seemed unable to score in the second half, as the Cogland team began to run away with the game, scoring 8 unanswered goals. It was a performance we will all remember!

The seven fouls called against the Brickburn players were due to the frustrations of losing, and showed that they were poor sports, unable to accept defeat graciously. Several of the Brickburn team left the game in the fourth quarter and never returned, obviously disgusted with their play. A few pretended they were injured to avoid being seen as crybabies and wimps.

Such poor sportsmanship does not belong in a championship game, but the triumphant Cogland ratballers showed their worth by patting a few of the Brickburn team on their backs and laughing with them afterwards. I am sure Cogland will wear their cloak of championship well.

On the backside of this paper, write a letter to your child and tell them why they cannot stay up late to watch a historical movie for Social Studies on a weeknight.

Bias or Slant

Yesterday, the championship ratball game was held and Brickburn lost to a very rough Cogland team by only 3 goals. The Brickburn team was ahead 12–4 at half-time, but the Cogland team came out of their dressing room and began to kick and punch their way through the second half. Several of the first string Brickburn players were so badly beaten up that they were unable to finish the game, and left to limp to the dressing room for medical aid.

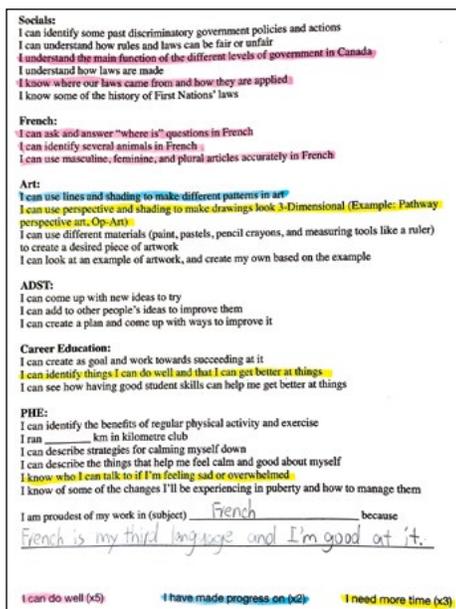
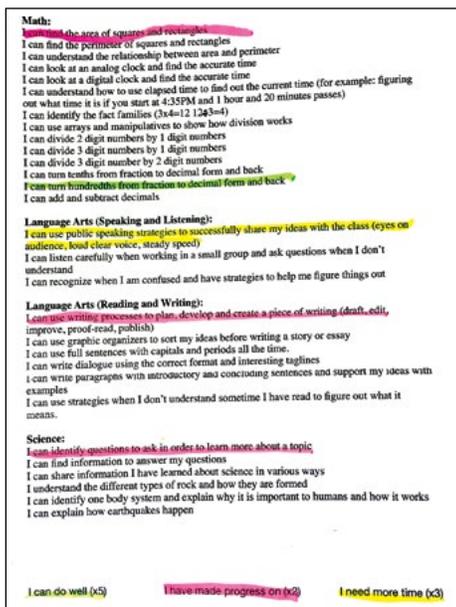
The eighteen fouls called against the Cogland ruffians indicated how bad the play had become and, after several injuries to Brickburn star players, the Brickburn team fell behind until the final score was 18–15 in Cogland's favour. When the rowdy winners were presented with the cup, they came over to taunt the Brickburn team, laughing and jeering at them as they tried to push them off the floor.

Such poor sportsmanship does not belong in a championship game, and the triumphant Cogland ratballers showed their true colours by their disgusting behaviour after the game. I am sure Cogland will receive their due rewards when the two teams meet again next year.

On the backside of this paper, write a letter to tell your grown-up why you should be allowed to stay up late to watch a historical movie for Social Studies on a weeknight.

Painless Report Card Commenting

Jennie Slack is the President of myPITA and teaches Grades 4/5 in Burnaby.



Writing report cards is often our least favourite task as teachers, right up there with having to call a student's parents when their child has done something mind-bogglingly inappropriate or with administering the FSAs! For me, one of the hardest parts of report-card writing has been the need to decide which comments to include in the report. After many years of gritting my teeth through the process, I have come up with a strategy that has made my life much easier and also helps my students reflect on their academic progress.

My Steps

1. I review my daybook to remember what I actually taught for the term. (It's always more material than I remember.)
2. I go through the curricular documents, jotting down the curricular and content competencies that were learned.
3. I have my students select three different coloured highlighters/light coloured felts. Each student receives a copy of the competencies we covered and the directions to use one colour to highlight five competencies in which they feel they did well. The second colour is used to identify two competencies in which they feel they made a lot of progress this term. The third colour is used to show where they feel they need more time, practice, or extra help.

Boom! Relevant comments that link to each student's sense of their own progress. I may choose to add in other comments for students who may have missed something that I feel is important to share, or I may not include a comment that really doesn't reflect a student's ability level. Generally, though I find that students are remarkably accurate about their progress.

Some tweaks that I have made as I refined this process include:

- Students must choose at least one competency from Math and at least one from Language Arts.
- I often combine several of the Math competencies into one comment when I input them into the report card.
- Students can highlight more than the number I ask for, but I don't let them highlight everything they can do. I ask them to focus on what they're proudest of, or would really like their parents to know.

I do something similar for the socio-emotional, student skills, and work habits comments/paragraph as well. I create a checklist of student skills: organization, handing work in on time, staying focused during class, helping others, etc.; and have students rate themselves. Then, providing I agree with their assessment, I translate that data into comments, tweaking it as appropriate. With that, the hardest part of report card writing is done. The rest consists of chasing down overdue work.

FAVOURITE THINGS

Oxford Letter-Size 3-Pocket Tri-Fold Pocket Folders, 20 Pack, Black. I love them for doing the writing power program. Find them at Staples.
– Loraine B.D.



A personally own a heavy duty 3 hole punch!
I can't go without it!
– Terra-Lee G.

The many colours of Papermate Flair pens make me happy and so do picture books with no words.
– Erica S.

Magnetic gel boards! They replace mini white boards and don't require relying on parents to supply white board markers.
– Amberly W.

Marché aux Puces! Flea Market!

Trish Kolber is a Modern Languages Consultant in Vancouver, and a member of the BC Association of Teachers of Modern Language (BCATML).

This activity encourages students to practise vocabulary and oral French. It requires a little prep-work, but once it has been established, it is a versatile and engaging activity for your students. It can be an excellent fall-back activity for when you have a TTOC in your class.

Materials

- Plastic coins or some form of money for students to use
- Pictures of items to be bought and sold

Divide the class in half: one half will be merchants, the other half will be customers. Each merchant sets up their desk with their wares in front of them. The customers then circulate through the class and “buy” items from the merchants. When they have spent all their money, they then find a desk and become a merchant with the items they bought. Merchants who no longer have any wares, take the money they earned and wander the flea market stalls, becoming customers.

If your students are focussed just on learning numbers, you can reduce the language required for the activity by allowing customers to simply point at objects and use “ça”. If you are working on other vocabulary, you could choose to make it a farmers’ market, using pictures of fruits and vegetables, or create a stationary store, using school supplies as the items. You can also practise greetings by having them say hello to each other at the beginning of each transaction, and say goodbye at the end. S’il te plaît – please, and merci – thank you, can also be practised because there’s nothing like teaching manners while also teaching French!

French vocabulary

Bonjour!	Hello!
Je vais vous donner ____ centimes pour ça!	I will give you ____ cents for that!
D’accord!	Okay!
Non, je veux ____ centimes.	No, I want ____ cents.
S’il te plaît	Please
Merci!	Thank you
De rein	You’re welcome

How to Accurately Guess French Noun Genders

Jennie Slack is the President of myPITA and teaches Grades 4/5 in Burnaby.

The amount of time I spend double-checking whether a French noun is feminine or masculine is much more than I would like. Even francophones have trouble keeping it all straight. Thus it comes as no surprise that learners and teachers are experiencing the same problems, especially when it is their second (or third, or fourth) language.

French’s gendered nouns link back to the language’s Latin origins, and potentially even further, to the gendered classifications of Proto Indo-European. Latin had three genders: feminine, masculine, and neuter; but other forms of noun gender have also existed. In the study of languages, gender is not necessarily related to biological sex. It is used to classify nouns when they require agreement with other parts of the language. For example, in French, the gender of the noun affects the spelling/gender of the adjective. It is “la jupe verte” and “le chapeau vert” because the adjective “vert” requires different endings and pronunciation based on the gender of the noun being described. In some early languages, the genders for nouns in the language were not based on sex, but whether the noun was animate or inanimate, among other potential classifications.

French, however, is pretty firmly in the masculine/feminine camp. Though, as I have mentioned in a previous article, there’s a lively conversation going on about whether and how the language should adapt for a less binary worldview. In the meantime, here is a quick series of guidelines that can help you guess the gender of a French noun; it guarantees almost 80% accuracy. While you’d want to go and check when proof-reading, it’s a quick-and-dirty strategy that can increase your, and your students’ confidence when writing or speaking on the fly.

The guidelines:

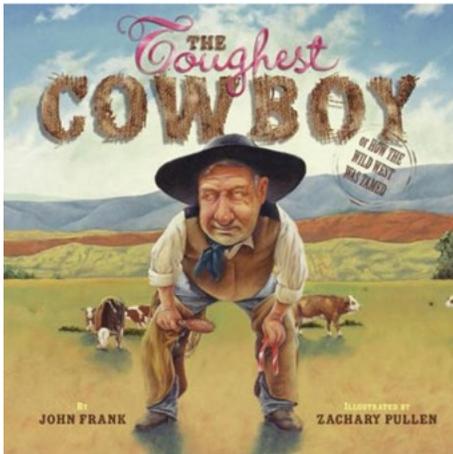
- Nouns that end with “-e” and “-ion” are generally feminine.
- Exceptions to the “e” rule are words that end in “-age” “-ege” “-é” or “-isme”, which are usually masculine.
- All the rest of the noun endings out there generally indicate masculine nouns.

I don’t know about you, but for me that list of guidelines is far easier to remember than memorizing the articles for 500 different vocabulary words!

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©2022, dianacruchley.com | Pinterest: diana cruchley.



The Toughest Cowboy or How the Wild West Was Tamed

John Frank, Author
Zachary Pullen, Illustrator
Simon and Schuster, 2004
ISBN 0-689-83461-6, 48 pages

This is a pourquoi tale about how the frisbee was invented. Grizz Brickbottom and his three friends are the toughest cowboys on the prairie. They accidentally adopt Foofy, the miniature poodle. She is a picky eater and likes French cooking so Chuck Wagon is charged with that as well as singing her to sleep. Bald Mountain has to comb her hair. Lariat has to make her a leash and tie a ribbon in her hair. They have a great time with Foofy who loves to fetch thrown tin plates.

Without meaning to, the cowboy team gets used to being clean and moves into the town to open a restaurant, a hairdressing salon, a gift shop, and a business making the Grizz-B.

TEACHING IDEAS

The Pourquoi Story

In English, the French word *pourquoi* means “why,” and a pourquoi story explains how things came to be. Part of *The Toughest Cowboy* explains how the frisbee came to be. This is a popular format for student creative writing as well. Some famous sources of pourquoi stories are Rudyard Kipling’s tales and the tall tales of Pecos Bill and Paul Bunyan.

There are teaching ideas for two more pourquoi stories in dianacruchley.com: *How the Leopard Got His Claws*, and *Blue Willow*.

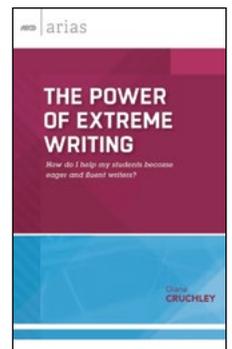
There are also many Indigenous tales of “how things came to be” such as the picture book *Why the Owl Has Big Ears*, which is an Iroquois tale of how Rawena, the Creator, came to create the owls out of clay. This is another opportunity to explore this format with students.

Once students have experienced several pourquoi stories, they may enjoy making up their own pourquoi. It helps to encourage them to make it the result of a lucky accident or amusing incident. These ideas might be productive: local geographic features; odd animals, such as the kangaroo; odd plants, such as the banana; and simple inventions or common objects in the everyday world, such as the needle and thread, hammer, stop-lights, and road lane lines.

Extreme Writing

There should always be three prompts for an Extreme Writing inspiration. See my book *The Power of Extreme Writing* for a complete description of the process.

1. The cowboys expect to get a serious working dog, and end up with Foofy, the miniature poodle. Write experiences where you didn’t get what you expected.
2. Write about any cowboy experiences you have had: camping out, campfire, riding a horse, etc.
3. Bubba has a great many chores to perform around the ranch. Write about chores you do, both at home and at school. Write about times when your chores goes well and times when they don’t.



Write A Fractured Cowboy Fairy Tale

The Toughest Cowboy is full of cowboy language. Give each student a copy of a single page and have them work in groups of four with their pages to identify some of the slang and the words about cowboy life on their page. Here is a sample of the words they will encounter: reckon, move’n, ain’t, hitched up, eatin’, druther, saloon, addled, a lick and a promise, saddle up, chaps, save your bacon, bad egg, ballyhoo, barrel rider, bed down, bee in your bonnet, big guns, bilk, blarney, bridle, reins, lariat, spurs, stirrups, and branding iron. Using their word list, they can create their own Western tale.

To make it easier, you could suggest creating a fractured fairy tale. A Western fractured fairy tale based on *Cinderella* is *Bubba the Cowboy Prince*. *Cinderella* is a

cowboy who is oppressed by his two brothers. The prince is a woman who owns the neighbouring ranch. There is a fairy godcow. Lots of fun. Read it to your students and discuss the points of comparison. If you can't find the book, just make up a story yourself.

If you have the book, read the story a second time, asking them to pay attention to the cowboy language being used. Stop after every page or so to ask them what they heard to help practise their listening skills.

Then give them a list of fairy tales for which they might do a cowboy version: *Three Little Pigs*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, etc.

Author: John Frank

John Frank has written several books, among them poetry books, but the one I think would be the most interesting, especially for students in Grade 7 studying Egypt, would be *The Tomb of the Boy King*. This picture book is a narrative poem about Howard Carter's discovery of King Tutankhamen's Tomb. Surprisingly, John Frank does not have a website.

Music Connections to Cowboys

Students may enjoy learning an old fashioned cowboy song. You can find the lyrics and recordings of the following songs on the web:

1. My Darling Clementine
2. Git Along Little Doggies
3. Streets of Laredo
4. The Cattle Call (yodelling)
5. The Last Cowboy Song
6. Ghost Riders in the Sky
7. Don't Fence Me In

Good Manners

"You got no upbringing', that's what's wrong," said Grizz. "You ain't had a bath in six months, you never heard of a napkin, and you use your fingers to clean your teeth, and pick your noses."

Work with your students to generate categories of good manners:

table manners, telephone/message manners, social manners when you're in a group, store manners, personal hygiene manners, etc.

Ask students to draw a line to create a grid or set of columns for each category. and to independently write for five minutes, recording as many things as they can about good manners in Canada, in each category. Then, working in groups of four, each group will generate the longest list they can for their category.

If you don't have a lot of time, select one of the categories. Note: table manners and other categories may have cultural differences. In many ways, good manners are culturally specific or based on increasing awareness of hygiene, to keep others from getting sick.

One international example of what constitutes good manners is the behaviour on the bus or Skytrain. In Canada, it is perfectly OK to talk to your friends, and even sometimes to the stranger sharing a seat. In Japan, the subways and busses are silent places. Even good friends and families riding together, will either not talk or have extremely quiet conversations. It is considered poor manners to use your cell phone on the train in Japan. Japan is very densely populated, so general rules on being respectful of the others around you help the environment from being full of noise pollution and disturbing your fellow passengers.

Good discussion can arise for what the logic behind the "good manners" might be. For example, it is said that shaking hands right-handed arose from showing your good intentions to demonstrate that you were not carrying a weapon.

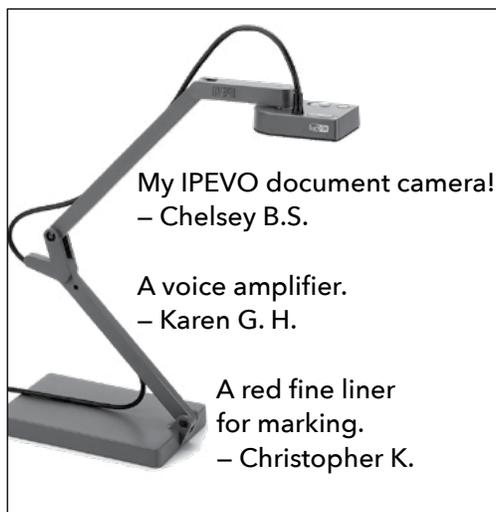
"Character" Exploration

Grizz Brickbottom is tough. Ask the student to listen for how tough he is. Then read the opening of the book to the students. Afterwards, ask them:

- what Grizz eats – fried boots and lizard gizzards
- what he drinks – a quart of Tabasco sauce a day
- how he sleeps – with a rattle snake,
- how he flosses – with barbed wire,
- what he can do with his stubble – grind a branding iron into a belt buckle.

Give students a collection of possible characters defined by a single quality: kind, mean, messy, neat, fast, slow, etc. and ask them to create a humorous opening description of that character, as though they were going to write a story.

Later, if you are interested in expanding beyond the creation of a character by stereotype, you can ask what other qualities we learn he has as the story progresses, and how we know: he's kind, he is a good friend, he's a leader, he likes animals, he can learn and change, he is playful, etc.



My IPEVO document camera!
– Chelsey B.S.

A voice amplifier.
– Karen G. H.

A red fine liner for marking.
– Christopher K.

FAVOURITE THINGS

- All the coloured Post-its!!! I literally use them for everything – planning, reminders, student exit slips, inquiry questions, page markers, creating groups, you name it!
- Beverley A.

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MYPITA.OURCONFERENCE.CA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

When something vibrates, the strength of the vibration and the length of time the vibrations continue can vary quite a bit, depending on the materials involved. Hit a piece of wood with a stick and the sound lasts for just an instant. Hit a metal gong with the same stick, and the sound may continue for many seconds. Water is another good transmitter of sound.

Why the difference? In some materials, the molecules are tightly packed together; in other materials, the molecules are more loosely arranged. How close the molecules are to one another can affect how easily they can bump into each other to start a vibration moving along.

When you hit the coat hanger against another object, it starts vibrating. The vibrations in the metal travel through the string and into your fingers. The vibration is transferred to your head through solid objects, not air. Compare the sound of the coat hanger swinging into the desk without holding the string against your ears. The sound is much more dull. This demonstrates how the same vibration sounds different when it travels through different materials.

Adapted from: *Secret Bells*. (2021, February 09). Retrieved from www.exploratorium.edu/snacks/secret-bells

FAVOURITE THINGS

Cardboard from the recycling bin. There is so much that can be done with it as a learning and regulation tool. Friendship bracelet weaving using a cardboard loom is one use. Weaving is a regulatory tool because it is repetitive, rhythmic, and present focused.

– Angela B.



Green marking pens. My students self-evaluate their work in red and I evaluate in green.

– Kristina P.

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