CREATIVE COLLABORATIVE CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

Playful Learning Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 2



By Christine Portier, Shelley Stagg Peterson and the Educators of the Northern Oral Language and Writing through Play (NOW Play) Project

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Creative Collaborative Curriculum Activities: Playful Learning Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 2 © 2017 Christine Portier and Shelley Stagg Peterson ISBN 978-0-9958653-1-0

NOW Play Publications Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto Toronto, Ontario now-play.org

Printed and bound in Canada

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This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.





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About the project

The information and activities presented in this book are drawn from a long-term action research project titled "Northern Oral Language and Writing through Play" (NOW Play), conducted in rural northern communities in four Canadian provinces. This project brings researchers and educators together to explore ways to support rural and Aboriginal children's writing and oral language development through play-based activities.

Educators participating in the NOW Play research project have kindly agreed to have descriptions of their Creative Collaborative Curriculum Activities (CCCAs) included in this book. These descriptions are organized by grade, with pre-school and kindergarten CCCAs in chapter 2, and grades one and two CCCAs in chapter 3. To help bring the teaching and learning activities to life, each example includes images of the children's interactions, the centre and/or some of the children's writing.

Please note that all the educators' names and the names of their communities are pseudonyms because we have promised to ensure anonymity to anyone participating in the NOW Play project. We are very grateful to participating educators and delighted to be able to recognize their enthusiasm, creativity and commitment to children's learning through this book. We also wish to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding the NOW Play project.

We also wish to thank The University of Toronto, The University of Saskatchewan, Brandon University and all of our community partners.

CHAPTER

1

Creative Collaborative Curriculum Activities: Playful Learning in Aboriginal Head Start, Kindergarten, and Grade One and Two Classrooms

Why Creative Collaborative Curriculum Activities?

We, and the educators contributing to this book, believe that it is possible to create playful learning opportunities that have curriculum objectives and students' interests, background experiences, and motivations at their core. We recognize that there are many influential factors that might make it difficult to bring play into classrooms, including the view held by some that play is a diversion from the "real" work required in the beginning years of school. This is due, in part, to underlying currents in curriculum and policy which imply that the primary grades must lay the groundwork for students' future success in relation to standardized assessments and to later employment. Attitudes emerging from this current have made it difficult for educators to find space in the school day for play-based learning. Educators are in a position where they must convince others (and perhaps reassure themselves) that their students are learning while engaged in classroom play-based activities.

Creative Collaborative Curriculum Activities (CCCAs) are an idea born from the experiences of educators, who found that some of their students' parents were concerned that their children's classroom play activities might not be conducive to learning and so were not appropriate in the grade one program. They were hesitant about their children's participation in our research project if it meant that there would be a lot of play activities, such as those associated with kindergarten. Conversations with these parents made it apparent that, for them, the word "play" carried with it a connotation that positioned it in opposition to the idea of learning. Those of us participating in this project associate the word play with exciting and authentic classroom learning opportunities for children. Given the wealth of research (e.g., Broadhead & Burt, 2012; Wood, 2013) that supports the use of play in the classroom, we wanted to help better convey to parents how play and play-based activities can serve their children's learning and development. So, we changed the terminology! Educators helped us coin a term that captures the spirit of play in classroom activities while utilizing language that is more readily accepted as befitting of its school-based context. We based the concept of CCCAs on research showing that active engagement in creating and learning along with others is the best learning environment for children (Chi, 2009; Fisher, Hirsh-Paskek, Golinkoff, Singer, & Berk, 2011). The educators then went back to the parents who had voiced their concerns. After they heard about learning activities where children would be creating (e.g., through writing/scribbling/drawing, visual arts, drama, digital technology, and media) and learning to collaborate with others—activities that addressed curriculum objectives—they were no longer worried about the appropriateness of play after kindergarten, and they were happy to allow their children to participate in our research project.

The learning outcomes of the *creative* and *collaborative* components of a CCCA involve many domains of children's development (Wood, 2013). When creatively constructing with blocks, for example, children develop not only visual/spatial abilities, but they also construct experiential scientific/technical knowledge. Recognizing the importance of the learning process the CCCAs embody, their open-ended, playful aspect can lead to children's positive attitudes and dispositions towards classroom activities and to learning. Furthermore, the *collaborative* component serves to support children's language development and communication skills, their ability to develop relationships with others, their own emotional wellbeing, and their sense of empathy and understanding towards the needs of others.

What are Creative Collaborative Curriculum Activities?

We define CCCAs as learning activities where small groups of children play with objects, as well as with ideas and narratives from books and other texts, to create written, digital, dramatic, dance, musical, visual arts or other types of products together. In the process, they learn content-area curriculum concepts and solve problems that arise in playing with objects and ideas, and playing alongside one another. CCCAs are authentic learning experiences that build on what children know and can do, and contribute to learning that extends far beyond the curriculum expectations for each grade.

These components are considered when planning CCCAs:

- 1. Creativity, through open-ended activities where children have some flexibility in how they participate and what they produce;
- 2. Collaboration with peers and possibly with adults, and;
- 3. Curriculum Objectives for language arts and other subject areas.

Curriculum objectives can provide a starting point for students' learning, and these need not restrict the opportunities for students to create and collaborate while engaged in CCCAs. The creative and collaborative elements are what contribute to the playfulness of children's learning.

The collaborative component is essential to children's learning. Conversations

with others provide children with new information and perspectives to build on. They may develop new understandings from new perspectives and ideas or they may consolidate or refine their working theories about relationships and concepts. However, the contributions of collaboration stretch far beyond bringing in new ideas. Learning is inherent within the process of negotiating how to go about creating something together (e.g., roles that group members may adopt, materials that will be used, ideas that will be communicated, group expectations on how to get along with each other). Additionally, as children try to find ways to put unclear ideas into words—to communicate what they mean to others—their ideas in turn become clearer to themselves (Boyd & Galda, 2011). Learning alongside peers is also motivational, as children can share the joys of discovering and learning with each other.

Setting Up Classrooms for CCCAs

CCCAs enhance children's learning in classrooms where teaching and learning are guided by play-based curricula and program documents, as well as in classrooms where teaching and learning are guided by subject-area curricula. CCCAs may become the overarching framework for an inquiry into any subject area or, alternatively, elements of CCCAs may be integrated into an existing unit. In this section, we describe what educators in our action research project have done to bring CCCAs into their classrooms. We also provide planning frameworks for setting up a CCCA, and observation and assessment templates and guidelines.

Educator's Roles

Educators carefully balance the goal of addressing mandated curriculum objectives with the goal of providing motivational experiences for children to build on their interests, their experiences, and on what they already know. To achieve this balance, educators take on a range of roles. Educators may be learning partners with children (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978), co-discovering and co-hypothesizing at some points in the CCCA. The role of learning partner might involve joining children in carrying out the creative component of the CCCA, to take up a role in the learning experience or demonstrate a way to use materials that children have not yet discovered. For example, when grade one students in Adrianna's class were creating lemonade recipes and variations for the class's lemonade stand, Adrianna noticed that they were not using any of the food colour that she had provided in the basket of various ingredients. So she took the food colouring vials and said, "I wonder what will happen if I drop a few drops of yellow in some water and then some red drops." The children saw the two coloured drops create an orange-coloured drink, and, with their teacher, marveled at how the mixing of two primary colours created a new secondary colour. They started mixing colours in their own lemonade concoctions, and in the process, learned more about primary and secondary colours.

The role of educator-as-learning-partner might also involve asking questions. As we have observed, the choice of question matters. For example, asking chil-

dren what they are doing seems to close off their talk and redirect their focus from the play and learning experience to the educator. However, as Adrianna demonstrates, questions might start with, "I wonder what would happen if..." to encourage children to think about new ways of looking at a situation. Teachers might request information to evoke students' discoveries about the people and objects in their environment. For example, when Ross, a kindergarten student in Samantha's class, was creating a roadway for toy cars, he created a flop-

py bridge by perching a paper plate over top of a structure he had made with LEGO. Samantha noticed that he was having trouble balancing the paper plate at first and finally positioned it so that the centre of gravity was over top of the LEGO pedestal. She asked, "How did you get the paper plate to balance on the LEGO stand?" He said that he kept trying until he got it to stay, so she followed up with the question, "Which part of the paper plate has to be right on top of the LEGO stand?" He noticed that it was the fat part in the middle, which prompted Samantha to suggest some experimentation with, "Let's try balancing some other objects on the LEGO stand to see if they balance on the fattest part, too."



...questions might start with, "I wonder what would happen if..." to encourage children to think about new ways of looking at a situation

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Educators can also take a *guiding and inspiring role* in CCCAs (Wood, 2013), providing input to extend and build upon children's existing understandings. Educators can plan in advance how they will scaffold children's learning in each CCCA, or they can respond spontaneously to what children are doing. Scaffolding may take the form of introducing new information, inviting children to help solve a problem, or introducing possible scenarios and materials that might serve as catalysts for further learning. For example, Lila, a kinder-

garten teacher, had entered the children's play in role as a mail delivery person who needed help sorting the mail at the post office centre. This had created an authentic context for the children to read each other's names. Next she wanted to encourage writing within this context, so she took on the role of a customer and brought a parcel wrapped in brown paper to the centre saying: "I want to send these bananas to my grandmother. Can you help me address the parcel so I can mail it to her? What should I write on it?" This invitation elicited new vocabulary from the students and helped build up excitement for writing. As soon as Lila left the play, the students started creating and writing addresses on parcels (for more information about Lila's scaffolding, see chapter 2).



FIGURE 1.1: Kindergarten educator Lila takes the role of mail delivery person as part of her classroom CCCA.

At other times, educators may be *kid-watchers* (Owocki & Goodman, 2002). In this role, educators provide space for children to direct their own learning while they observe what the children do and say, and take note of the children's thinking and learning processes. They also consider students' language uses, the ways they interact with peers, and the development of their fine and gross motor skills as they play with objects and creative materials. These observations inform what educators do next to scaffold a child's learning and impact



FIGURE 1.2: Handwritten signs accompany the sand centre in Polly's kindergarten classroom.

the ways in which they group children so that each child benefits from optimal learning conditions. For example, a kindergarten teacher, Kahli, conducted daily five-minute observations of Jake, a boy in her class. Kahli recorded the language that Jake used to describe his own actions and for asserting ownership over the play dough he was using. However, she noticed that he did not talk with other children in the group. Based on these observations, Kahli met with Jake individually to model and provide opportunities for him to practice ways to ask others for materials and to respond when others asked him for something.

Educators' scaffolding considerations can shape how they set up their classrooms for CCCAs and the planning required in fulfilling them. This is described in the following sections.

Classroom Environment

Numerous classroom arrangements can accommodate CCCAs as long as there is space for children to get together in pairs or small groups to create and learn together. Children can be involved in CCCAs at play centres, at tables or desks grouped together, or even in open spaces on the floor or carpeted areas. In Beth's grade one classroom, for example, a LEGO and writing learning experience (described in greater detail in chapter 2) began on the carpeted area where she did read-alouds and whole-class lessons. The students found that this area was not large enough for all the groups to build and write, so they moved desks into the centre of the room and then carried out the CCCA spread out on the floor around the outside edges of the classroom.

Many play centres can become CCCA sites. In Polly's kindergarten classroom, the sand centre is located in one corner of the classroom. She decided to move a small table next to this centre so that children could use it to create signs to accompany their play (see chapter 3 for further details)

In Sylvester's kindergarten classroom, children used turkey basters in tubs filled with water and dish liquid to experiment with ways to move bubbles up and down the length of the tube. As they played with the objects in the water, they were engaged in similar practices and learning in similar ways as scientists do when measuring liquids with pipettes. Although Sylvester did not directly talk about pipettes and creating a vacuum, his questions about what was happening to the bubbles in the tube guided the children's learning about science concepts (e.g., how the partial vacuum that is created when children squeeze the bulb to draw up the water holds the bubble in place until they release pressure on the bulb.)

In Figure 1.3 we have listed several typical centres and the potential CCCAs that might take place there.

Figure 1.3: Examples of Centres, Creative and Collaborative Activities and Curriculum Connections

Contra	Creative,	Curriculum
Centre	Collaborative Activities	Connections
Block centre paired with computers/tablets with software, such as: Claymation http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/cre-	Build something and then create a poster or podcast to advertise what has been constructed. This may involve naming the construction and describing it. Alternatively, students may think about	Science – structures Language Arts – persuasive writing/ designing
Tapikeo https://www.commonsensemedia.cor/	potential users of their construction and what they might find appealing about it.	
app-reviews/tapikeo-hd# Pictello https://www.commonsensemedia.org/ app-reviews/pictello		
The Story Creator https://www.commonsensemedia.org/ app-reviews/the-story-creator-easy-story- book-maker-for-kids		
Kitchen Centre	Create something using a variety of real or pretend foods (e.g., a new kind of salad/ soup/dessert) and then write/draw a recipe or menu to include this new food and show its nutritional information.	Health – healthy eating Language Arts – writing to inform
Water Table	After playing with various objects and trying to sink or float them in the water, children can create a podcast explaining what sinks and what floats. They might also create posters or digital presentations to accompany their podcast. They might also want to narrate a story about a character who has a problem related to buoyancy (e.g., trying to sink something they don't want or trying to get across a body of water).	Science – buoyancy Language Arts – using language to explain
Doll Centre	Preschool and kindergarten children may create lists of names of people that they will invite to a doll's birthday party (names may be real or imagined). They might create invitations with paper, other materials or with digital templates. Children may enact stories using their dolls as characters in the	Language Arts – narrative writing Drama – Character development through role play

Centre	Creative, Collaborative Activities	Curriculum Connections
Doll Centre (continued)	narrative and then write/illustrate these stories. The stories may also be digitally created using software such as: Clicker Paint https://www.osapac.ca/dlr_record/clicker_paint/ Pixie 3 https://www.osapac.ca/dlr_record/pixie_3/	
Truck/heavy Machinery Centre (with real toy machines or ones that children create from blocks) Books about machines, trucks, etc. might also be at this centre to provide information enhancing children's play.	Children may create maps, including topographical maps and GPS simulated ones, and show how to get to a road or building construction site. They might map the roads that they are building with the equipment being used at the centre. They may also create safety signs or labels for operating the heavy machinery or trucks.	Geography/Social Studies – using maps Language Arts – writing to inform
Toy Animal Centre Books about domestic and wild animals might also be at this centre to provide information to enhance children's play	Children might create manuals on how to care for domestic animals, or compose stories of a day in the life of a wild animal.	Science – needs and characteristics of living things Language Arts – communicating ideas through narrative
Found Objects Centre	Children might create a collage or diorama using the found objects (e.g., household and classroom items such as buttons, paper clips, plastic spoons, etc., or objects from the outdoors such as rocks, spruce cones, leaves, etc.). Collages might also be created digitally with the found object images by scanning them using software such as: Ribbet Collages http://www.ribbet.com/create-collage	Art – Creating 3-D works using elements of design Science – recycling/ reusing
Grocery Store Centre	Students create grocery lists or flyers with information about products on sale at the store. If a scale is at the centre, children can weigh objects and place them in bags/containers with their own labels to identify the weight and name of the objects.	Health – healthy eating Math – measurement

Planning CCCAs

Educators create CCCAs by intentionally planning meaningful learning experiences and focusing on finding ways for children to work together and learn from each other in the context of expressing ideas in open-ended creative ways. Starting points and considerations for the collaborative, creative and curriculum features of CCCAs are described with examples in the following paragraphs.

Starting Points

In addition to curriculum objectives, the starting point for a CCCA can be the students' interests or community/school events. Here are some examples of educators using various starting points to plan CCCAs:

Student Interests (and reflections on observations of students' classroom activity)

Adrianna's grade one class corresponds with pen pals in another province. Excited about the lemonade stand that their pen pals described in one letter, the students asked Adrianna if they could set up their own lemonade stand. Their interests became the starting point for the CCCA described in the chapter 3, section "Starting with Children's Interests – Lemonade Stand. Adrianna used objectives from the science, mathematics and language arts curricula to guide the activities leading up to the day when the lemonade stand opened for business.

Community or School Events

Marcel's grade one students participated in the school Terry Fox Run (more information can be found at: http://www.terryfox.org/SchoolRun/). Marcel used this shared experience as a starting point for the CCCA described in chapter 3, section "Starting with Community Events—Terry Fox Day". He incorporated art and language arts curriculum objectives into the learning experience.

Curriculum Objectives

Janice, a grade two educator, started planning a CCCA with the science, language arts, and art curricula in her province. She chose the animal adaptations topic and planned activities where children read information about the topic, discussed what they had learned in a "Let's Talk" quiz show, and created dioramas with playdough. More information can be found in chapter 3, section "All About Spring" and its paragraph entitled "Drama—The 'Let's Talk' Show".

Creative Products

In their creative products, children integrate what they have learned about the topic at hand, with their background knowledge about it, and how to communicate with others using whatever creative forms they are producing. Choice and open-endedness are guiding principles for planning the creative products. Each group's or each child's product should be different from the products of others. The possibilities for creative products are as vast as educators' and children's imaginations. Here are some examples:



Drawing or writing products

Educators might provide paper and a variety of other materials for the activity (e.g., markers, pencils, paints and paintbrushes, pens, chalk, wool/various types of pasta/found objects and glue) or a tablet or computer with software for creating, rather than a template to complete.



3-D Products

Educators might provide blocks, straws, clay or play dough, rather than models to put together.



Performance Products

These might include role-play, puppet show, song, dance, oral text, video or podcasts. Educators might provide a repertoire of narratives and characters for children's narratives by reading or telling of a number of stories, encouraging children to tell stories about their lives, showing videos, listening to podcasts, viewing videos of dancers telling or enacting stories, or inviting storytellers, authors, or community members to visit the class to tell stories.

Collaboration

In CCCAs, collaboration is more than getting along while working together with a partner or in small groups. The talk that emerges is directed toward solving a problem or constructing knowledge together in ways that ensure all group members participate fully and feel responsible for their own and their fellow group members' learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Being able to get along and ensure that all members of the group have a chance to contribute and to learn is important, so educators may have to model social skills to ensure that the groups function smoothly. These skills include showing interest in and respect for peers' contributions through eye contact and facial expressions, perhaps asking questions to invite peers to elaborate, and taking turns to ensure that one person does not dominate the conversation while others are left out of it. Collaboration also involves exploratory talk (Boyd & Galda, 2011) where ideas are introduced and group members pool what they know and have experienced or read/heard about to shape, refine, add or offer alternatives to, and challenge ideas, as they construct new understandings (Mercer & Littleton, 2007).

Some examples of educators planning collaborative activities as part of CCCAs.

Discussing and selecting what is known about a topic or what is learned through reading, viewing or listening to information on a topic

Polly read fairy tales involving castles and talked about the characters who lived in castles with her kindergarten class. The children then talked in small groups about characters and objects they would include in their dramatic play in their collaboratively created castle centre.

Planning possibilities for creating something

Olivia read *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* to her grade one students and then invited the children to plan with a partner which masks and props they would make for the dramatic play centre. The children individually created their own masks and other props, and then used them to dramatize their own versions of the fairy tale. More information can be found in chapter 3, in the section titled "Responding to Folktales".

Creating something together

Marcel gave each group grade one students a large piece of paper and markers to create their group's "Onster" (a term he coined for the activity). The children talked about the physical features and the personalities that they would give to their Onsters, and then either took turns drawing those features, allocated the drawing of particular parts to one another, or simultaneously drew their Onster together. More information can be found in chapter 3, in the section "Creating an Onster".

Presenting creations to peers

Beth's grade one and two students read the collaboratively written stories that they had created after playing with blocks. Peers gave each other feedback, prompted by Beth's questions, such as: "What parts of the story are exciting or interesting to you?" and "What do you think of _____ (character's name)?

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Preschool and Kindergarten Creative Collaborative Curriculum Activities

Introduction

Most of the CCCAs presented in this chapter engage preschool and kindergarten children in exploring various aspects of the curriculum through play. Play is the focus of these CCCAs. Curriculum objectives give shape to the children's play, extend from the play, or are brought into the play.

Play is at the centre of each activity presented in the chapter, so we have organized the CCCAs by how the teacher related their new teaching direction to the children's play in the various classroom centres. The teachers thought of their new ideas as "playful curriculum interventions" that they integrated into play centres of the sort that may typically be found in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Some teachers integrated writing into the roles that children take as part of their dramatic play, others brought writing into the play in new and inventive ways. Some teachers developed writing activities that came from the interests of the students in the narratives that they created while playing, and other teachers developed play centres that drew upon the expertise that community members shared with their students.

For each activity, we offer a background to the classroom/teaching context, show how the CCCA was developed by the teacher, offer examples of how the students responded to the new ideas in their play, and make suggestions for how the activities might be extended into other areas of learning. We share some of the teachers' reflections on what worked for their students, how the activities might have exceeded their initial expectations, or what they might change when next implementing the CCCA.

Writing in Role

Some of the CCCAs were designed to encourage the students to write while playing in the dramatic or construction play centres. Teachers wanted the writing to become integrated into the different roles that the students took in their play. These teachers typically taught formal mini-lessons to address letter sounds and formations, but they wanted this dramatic centre to be more open and to be

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They placed the writing materials at the centre alongside other props and costumes and left it up to the children to follow their imaginations in enacting the narratives

a place where the children could bring everything that they knew about print, without worrying about writing conventions. When they introduced the new centres to the children, the teachers included a brief demonstration or explanation about how the writing might fit with some of the roles. They placed the writing materials at the centre alongside other props and costumes and left it up to the children to follow their imaginations in enacting the narratives. The students frequently picked up the writing materials whenever they took on particular roles. Teachers found that the students' writing products would vary, with a range from scribbles through to full sentences.

Veterinarian Clinic

Lila, Kindergarten Teacher, Eagle Hills, Alberta

Introduction

In April, Lila turned the dramatic play centre into a veterinarian office. With this new centre, the children contributed by creating visuals for the bulletin board while Lila incorporated more writing into the centre play.

Curriculum Connections

Early Literacy: Creating original messages using knowledge of how letters and

words work (creating lists); expressing ideas in writing (thoughts

about and experiences with pets); developing vocabulary

Responsibility: Contributing to group activities; getting along; respecting and

collaborating with others

Social Studies: Learning to appreciate the interests that unite members of the

community; learning about community services—a veterinarian

clinic

Community

Awareness: Showing an interest in learning about community services

Dramatic Play: Using imagination in dramatic play



Setting Up the Activity

Creating the Centre

Lila arranged some chairs in the reception area of the clinic, where pet owners could sit with their pets (stuffed animals) and wait their turn to see the veterinarian. She also set up a desk and chair in another corner of the play area, where the doctor would treat the animal "patients". She had a few other items on shelves, such as elastic bandages, and toy syringes, stethoscopes and thermometers. And of course, there were pencils, clip boards and strips of paper.

Student Writing

With the veterinarian office, Lila really encouraged an abundance of student writing. First, in whole group discussions, the students drew upon their experiences with their own pets. Then at the writing centre, Lila asked each student to talk about a specific pet and what the pet needed. After the students drew their pictures, they wrote about them. Some students sounded out the words, some copied words, and some asked Lila to scribe the words for them.

Lila referred back to these experiences when the children were playing at

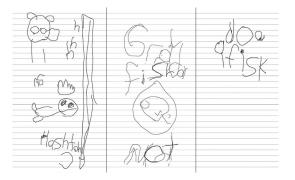


FIGURE 2.1: In role as the vet or receptionist, students took notes about the animals that were admitted and the care that they needed.

the centre. For example, Lila gave the students dry erase markers and mini whiteboards, or pencils and strips of paper, to create checklists. They wrote the names of their pets, and then checked off pertinent information, such as the pet's heartbeat, temperature, shots, and owner's name.

One student listed an inventory of what items were available in the veterinarian's office. Another student began taking down the names off all the people who were waiting with their pets in the veterinarian's office

One time Lila went over to the centre while students were in-role as frantic veterinarians in training, and crying "Oh, no!" One boy told Lila: "We ran out of

medicine and all the animals are sick and none of us know what to do! Who could we talk to, to tell us what to do?" Another student responded, "We could talk to another doctor, another vet. So let's write a letter." Lila worked with the small group to compose a letter. She guided them through the letter writing, with each student writing a word. They wrote: "Hello, we need help."

At other times, the play focused on writing the veterinarian bills and the children wrote numbers on papers to give to the pet owners. Another girl wanted to write about what pets need and Lila suggested that she look at the drawings that were posted on the bulletin board to match the student drawn pictures to the words they had written. With this student, Lila was encouraging learning independence in school.

Teacher's Reflections



On Students' Learning

Lila says: "At this centre, getting to play with my students in these ways and coming up with new ways to re-engage them in the centre, became a real learning experience for all of us. I also enjoyed the interventions that I tried around vocabulary usage. There were students that I worked with on specific IP [individual Program] needs, such as language concepts, pronouns, talking more, vocabulary or categorization, as well as behaviour. I did a lot of interventions with behaviour at this centre, because this centre really lent itself well to small interventions [one-to-one mini lessons]. I could suggest ways for a student to rephrase what he or she said during the play."

On Extensions

"There are a lot of new things that I want to try next year. I would like to be more systematic with the groupings of students that go to the dramatic centre and I would like to create checklists of the ways that each student is using language here."

"I also think the dramatic play centre is a great place to ask the classroom aides to assist at, especially when there are students with specific language concerns playing there." Lila felt that this centre lent itself well to helping students focus and it assisted them in developing a range of language uses.

Lila also found that by bringing writing into these centres, she was able to assess the students' early writing skills and encourage their writing development. She wants to be more systematic in how she records and assesses the writing from these centres so that, in the future, she can group students together who might support and encourage each other in their writing.

The Diner

Polly, Kindergarten Teacher, Aspen, Alberta

Introduction

By moving furniture around and adding a few signs, Polly turned the house centre into a diner. Here, the children took on the roles of chef, waiter and customers.

Curriculum Connections

Early Literacy: Using knowledge of how letters and words work to write orders and

read menus; developing oral language and vocabulary

Social Studies: Learning about a community service—a restaurant

Responsibility: Getting along, cooperating

Community Awareness:

Developing an interest in learning about community services

Dramatic Play: Using imagination in dramatic play



Setting Up the Activity

Creating the Centre

Polly created the diner by simply moving the table and chairs from inside the house to outside the window. The inside of the house became the kitchen and food prep area (with sink, shelves, cutlery, toy food) while the outside served as the restaurant area (with table and chairs). Polly placed a bookcase and shelves around the table area and placed a cash register and phone there

for the students to take calls and ring up the customers' bills. She also had plenty of toy food items and costumes for the different roles.



FIGURE 2.2: A customer calls for the waiter to return and take another order. Pointing to his menu, he called: "Service! I would like a cupcake and a pizza, please."

The diner setting provided a print-rich environment for the students' dramatic play. There was a sign above the house centre window that read "Diner" and the wall of the diner was covered in pictures of different foods with identifying labels. An open/closed sign, attached by a string, hung in the window. This sign played a prominent role in the students' narratives, as Polly observed, "The students loved the 'open' and 'closed' signs for the diner." With the students, she had also created a menu with pictures and words.

Supporting Reading and Writing

Among the props that Polly placed at the diner was a pad of paper for taking orders. The children who took on the role of waiter placed the pad on their trays and carried these to the tables. In her chef hat and apron, one student, Jennifer, looked out the order window and asked, "What would you like?" Another student, Lori, looked at her menu and replied, "Can I please have pizza?" Jennifer began writing the order and Lori helped her by pointing to the letters in the menu and spelling, "It's pizza."



FIGURE 2.3: A "chef" writes down a customer's order.

Polly wanted to help make writing a natural part of the play. She said, "I did not think the children would use the writing materials if they had to leave the play area to go and write. So I moved the writing materials into the play centres."

Students' Responses

Sometimes the students played beside each other, exploring the food items and talking out loud about what they are doing. For example, one boy said, "We have hotdogs and sandwiches... there's a sandwich with meat sauce and hotdogs ... I can really write." Another boy put away his clipboard and notepad and said, "The chef is at another restaurant so I'll work for them." He then went over to the kitchen and put on the red chef apron.

Another time a student, David, suddenly left the kitchen area to answer a phone call, saying: "There's a call. Hello. Okay, bye." He then turned to fellow student actor Michael and told him: "There is an order to downtown. Can you work for me? Can you be the waiter and waitress and chef, okay?"

To involve peers in his narrative, Justin called out to the other students in the centre, "Can someone buy something?"

A few students did not speak a lot but they contributed to the play scenario by putting lunch orders together.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Polly noticed that a few of her students, especially the ones who struggled with language and had difficulty interacting with other students, were playing at the diner but not talking. She used this centre as an opportunity to join in the play with the children, saying "I was trying to get Adam to talk more during the play, which is why I was joining in their play for a few minutes." Polly joined the play centre in two different ways. Sometimes she simply asked some questions or made a suggestion to a student for how he or she could speak with a peer. Other times she entered the dramatic play in-role to help

encourage a student to also take a role and play with peers. For example, one time she put on the chef hat and walked into the kitchen. In-role as the chef, she went over to Brett to say: "Brett, I see there is a customer. Can you go over and take their order so I can prepare their lunch?" Polly also encouraged the students to switch roles in their play so some hesitant students could try out new ways of interacting.

On Extensions

Reading: Students could bring in empty food boxes or jars and add these to their diner (e.g., cereal boxes, jam jars, cracker containers). This would encourage students to read words that they encounter frequently and to identify letters and sounds.

Math: The menus page can be expanded into a menu book, by adding pages with breakfast, lunch and dinner items and the price of each meal can be included. This will encourage students to begin writing numbers.

Mail Room

Lila, Kindergarten Teacher, Eagle Hills, Alberta

Introduction

Lila created a post office setting at the dramatic play centre. She sought to provide a real-life context for reading and writing by introducing children to the workings of the postal service in their community.

Curriculum Connections

Early Literacy: Creating original messages using knowledge of how letters and

words work (writing letters, addressing envelopes & labeling maps);

expressing ideas in writing; developing vocabulary

Responsibility: Contributing to group activities; getting along; respecting and

collaborating with others

Social Studies: Demonstrating appreciation for interests that unite members of the

community; learning about a community service

Community Showing interest in learning about community services;

Awareness: investigating towns and cities in the province

Dramatic Play: Using imagination in dramatic play



Setting Up the Activity

Background

This year, Lila had several English Language Learners and students with severe language delays, so she set up her dramatic play centre in the corner of the classroom beside a large bulletin board. In September, when she created a house centre with commonly used props, she also used the bulletin board to post pictures of items grouped by different "house" themes. For example, one theme was "how we fix a house" so she posted pictures and labels of items such as a screwdriver, hammer, putty knife, nails, etc. She also found as many of these toy items as she could to add to the house centre for the children to incorporate into their play.

During the classroom sharing time, the students categorized and discussed the "house" items. To encourage oral language expression, she asked questions like: "What is the wrench for?



FIGURE 2.4: Students write letters, address envelopes and pay for stamps at the post office centre



FIGURE 2.5: Lila enters the play centre in-role as a mail carrier. She takes some letters from the mail slots and places them in her mailbag so they can be delivered.



FIGURE 2.6: After the teacher leaves the play area, the students start placing letters in the mail bag.

How do we use it?" She encouraged the children to bring the new vocabulary into their dramatic play.

Creating the Centre with the Children

One month, Lila transformed the house into a post office mailroom. Lila and the children created the mailroom using cardboard shelves for sorting the mail, a cash register, stamps and ink, and plenty of paper and envelopes.

Teacher's Role

With this new theme at the dramatic play centre, Lila decided to briefly join in the play, in-role, and introduce some vocabulary and suggest a narrative direction. After a group of students had been playing for a few minutes at the mail centre, Lila walked into the centre areas carrying a mailbag over her shoulder. She said to the students: "Goodness! Look at all this mail that

needs to be delivered! I'm going to be late for my doctor's appointment. I'll leave this [her mailbag] here and maybe somebody can deliver that mail for me." She then put the mailbag on the table and left the centre. Three of the children volunteered to deliver the mail and their play moved to reading the names on the envelopes and placing them into the mail bag.

Supporting Reading and Writing

In her next "intervention" Lila wanted to introduce new vocabulary for the children to use. So, later, after some children had taken roles as a truck driver and a mail carrier, Lila again entered the play, this time as someone who wanted to mail a package.

Lila: I need to send this box of bananas to my grandmother. She really loves bananas.

I brought this [Styrofoam packing material] with me to pack it with. Now I'm

going to tape it up. What is it called when you pack up a box like this?

Student: A parcel!

Lila: A parcel. Okay. This is a parcel for my grandma. What can I write on it so that I

know it will go to my grandma?

Student: Write her name!

Lila: Okay, let's do it together

(She sounded out her grandma's name and the children told her the letters she should write).

Lila: What else? Do you think if I give this to the post office, they're going to know where

my grandma lives?

Student: Nope! We have to know the numbers. . .

Student: We usually write the number of the house.

Lila: Oh, that's a good idea. She's at 40. Forty is her house number. What else should I

write down?

(This continued as children provided information about the address)

One child introduces the concept of a stamp:

Student: You should also put the flag on.

Lila: The flag on the stamp! Because I need to mail it so I'll draw our Canada flag here.

That will be our stamp.

Lila remained at the centre working with the students to figure out what information would be important on a parcel, so that it would arrive at the correct destination.

Lila also brought the children together for mini-lessons to expand their vocabulary. She used mailroom terms and shared their letters and envelopes.

On another day, one boy exclaimed, "We need a map so that we know where to deliver your grandmother's letter!" This led Lila to extend the mailroom play into geography (see below).



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Lila says: "My dramatic play is a free choice centre so I am not sure who will be choosing to join the mailroom each day. However, I have one student in my class who always uses the new vocabulary that I have introduced in the larger group. So sometimes I plan my intervention for a time when he is playing at the centre, because I know that he will continue to use the mailroom language with the other students, and encourage them to talk as well."

On Extensions

Geography: The children looked at maps of their community, province and country to find locations where they had friends and family to whom to address letters. The children made their own maps to show mail deliverers where to take the mail. It became very common to hear children say "we need a map" when taking up a role as mail deliverer at the centre. They then consulted maps on the SMART Board to determine the route that they would take to deliver the letter.

Writing Enhances Play Context

Some of the pre-school and kindergarten teachers wanted to encourage their students to bring writing into their play centres as a means to enhance the play or take the narratives in new directions. They did this in a few different ways. One teacher joined in with the students as they played and added writing, in the form of signs, to her own narrative line. As she added the signs, she spoke out loud to model how they might be used. Then she left the sign-making materials at the play centre and went about observing children at other centres. As she had hoped, the children imitated her use of writing and adapted it to their own storylines. This teacher then placed writing materials at several centres and would gather the students at various times throughout the day to make suggestions about things to write or to share the writing that children had incorporated into their play. Another teacher set up a mini-writing area beside her dramatic play centre and, after the students had decided upon the roles they might take in their play, asked them to spend a few minutes to create a list that might help them when they entered the dramatic play centre. The teacher expected that the students would write for a few moments at this mini-centre and she made sure that it did not take away from their dramatic play time. The

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...the students were thrilled to bring their lists into their play and this writing gave shape to their narratives, dialogues and interactions with their peers students were free to bring the writing into their play or leave it at the writing centre. Not surprisingly, the students were thrilled to bring their lists into their play and this writing gave shape to their narratives, dialogues and interactions. All the teachers felt that the children needed to be free to write at their own current stage of writing development so that writing was fun and could be easily brought into the context of play. Of course, the teachers organized more formal writing instruction at other times during the day but, in these play contexts, left the students to explore what writing meant to them at whatever level they were at in their learning.

Signs at the Sand Table

Polly, Kindergarten Teacher, Aspen, Alberta

Introduction

Polly set up a sand table centre with sand toys and toy cars and animals. She later added a basket with paper, wooden craft sticks, markers and glue for the children to create signs that could be added to their sand play.

Curriculum Connections

Early Literacy: Creating and reading signs using knowledge of how letters

and words work; expressing ideas in writing; respecting and

collaborating with others; developing oral language

Responsibility: Contributing to group activities; getting along

Social Studies: Appreciating the interests that unite members of the community

Community

Awareness: Learning about the use of signs in local communities

Science: Learning about the properties of sand

Dramatic Play: Using imagination in dramatic play



Setting Up the Activity

Creating the Centre with the Children

Polly has toy animals, fences, trees, and shovels for the children to use as they play in the sand. She joined the children as they played by forming another hill and placing some plastic animals on it. She introduced the idea of adding signs to their sand scenes, using small signs made of pieces of cardstock glued to wooden craft sticks. At first she created a few signs and added them to the play. Then she told the children she had to leave and would return soon. She left some writing materials and the wooden stick signs beside the sand table so that the children could create their own.



FIGURE 2.7: The sand table with some signs posted on the hills. The basket of writing materials can be seen on the shelf beside the door.

Introducing Vocabulary to Support Reading and Writing

Polly joined three girls and a boy who were playing at the sand centre. Their scenario began like this:

Polly: I see a sign in here. What does it say?

Student 1: It says (child's name).

Polly: Is it here because that's your farm?

Student 1: Yes.

Student 2: I'm going to wash my hands so I can make a sign.

A little later, Polly asked: "Have you ever seen a sign that says, 'Keep out. No trespassing'?" The children nodded and Polly got some paper to write a sign for the farm in the sandbox. She asked, "What do you think 'keep' starts with?" The children suggested the first letter "k", and Polly helped out with the two "e" letters in the middle and the children provided the final letter "p". She explained that the "ou" sound in "out" is tricky and wrote it for them. She then asked the children to provide the final letter after repeating the /t/ sound. Polly placed the sign in the sandbox and the children discussed whether it was friendly or unfriendly to have a "Keep Out" sign and why such a sign might be needed.

Polly introduced the notion of a fence to help keep vehicles and people out of the fields. One boy asked for the sign so he can ensure that there would be no trespassers on his property. He let his peers know that the sign says "Keep Out." Soon all but one of the children washed their hands so that they could make some signs for the sandbox. The children went back and forth between the sand table and the sign-making table, creating signs as they felt were necessary.

On another day, one boy read his sign to his peers: "This means, 'Don't go there'." His friend looked at the sign and said, "It's just an X." But the boy restated the meaning of his writing: "Yeah, don't go there."

Another boy asked Polly, "How do you spell, 'Do not go in the farm'?" Polly told him that he could write words using whatever letters he knows.'



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Polly said that "the students would make signs and go back to play. This back and forth happened frequently. And the students have kept making signs long after I introduced it in this centre."

She also observed that "the give-and-take aspect of the play was interesting. They would sometimes delineate their territory. Some students had developed different ways of delineating their territory, for example, with the 'Keep Out' signs."

Polly noted that the writing at the centre was informal (e.g., not part of a formal lesson about letters or letter sounds), as she felt that it was important that the students found their own ways to bring writing into their activities so that it would became part of their play.

On Extensions

"Later in the year we will be talking about farms. This is a concept that we talk about throughout the year and it later becomes part of our 'plants and animals' theme in April. I think that I can introduce some writing into the farm activity play."

Polly also decided to place sign-making materials at some of the other centres. At the block centre, the students made signs and taped them onto the blocks. This continued into the castle centre so Polly made suggestions about addressing some signs to the "dragon" that they had imagined was part of their play scenario. Some students added signs that told the dragon to keep away from the castle. The students even created some signs for their dress up play, and in the post office centre, they created and sent notes to each other.

Sometimes Polly suggested a use for the signs at the different centres, either during a lesson or discussion or later while the children were playing at the centre.

The Castle

Polly, Kindergarten Teacher, Aspen, Alberta

Introduction

Polly created a large castle out of numerous milk cartons that the children had collected over several months. The students helped construct the castle, and soon it became one of their favourite dramatic play centres.

Curriculum Connections

Early Literacy: Reading and writing using knowledge of how letters and words

work (making and posting signs); selecting from different writing materials to express ideas and experiences (through signs and

messages); oral language; developing vocabulary

Responsibility: Contributing to group activities; getting along; respecting and

collaborating with others

Social Studies: Learning about different time periods

Community Awareness:

Learning about the use of signs in local communities

Dramatic Play: Using imagination in dramatic play



Setting Up the Activity

Creating the Centre

The castle centre evolved slowly. For several years, Polly built basic castles using some boxes that the children had brought to school. One September, she thought to ask parents to begin sending their empty milk cartons to

school with the children. At times, her class would even ask other students in the school to contribute milk cartons. As the students brought in the cartons, Polly numbered them so she knew how many they had collected. Then in March, she designed the castle shape (walls, windows, doorways, rooms) based on how many cartons were collected. The centre began with small groups of children rotating the centre to count, glue and tape cartons together to form large blocks (2, 3, 4, 5 and 6- carton blocks), and eventually they pieced, taped and glued the blocks together, much like a bricklayer might make a wall. Slowly, over the weeks, Polly and the students put the glue "mortar" onto the carton "bricks" to form the castle walls.



FIGURE 2.8: The castle centre.

Bringing Information and Imagination Together

During the weeks of the castle centre, Polly read several fairy tales to the students, many of which involved castles. To support their imaginative play, Polly put out dress up clothes and some props (e.g., swords, shields, treasure chest with beaded necklaces, crowns, wands). One student asked if there was a dragon for the castle centre, so Polly brought in a stuffed dragon, which quickly became part of the imaginative play.

Polly read information texts to the whole class about castles to introduce new vocabulary to the students (e.g., moat, knight, etc.).

Digital Art and Design

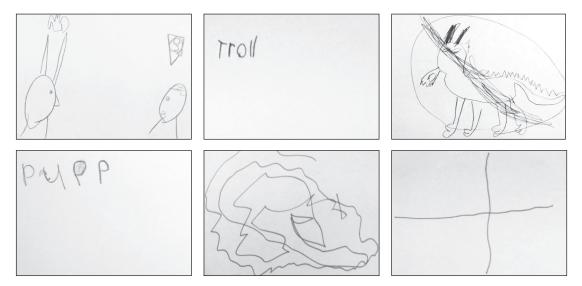
Polly also set up a centre for digital drawing and showed the children how they might use an online drawing program to create pictures of castles. This centre was added to the students' centre tracking sheets.

Supporting Reading and Writing

Polly told us that the students "liked writing notes to each other and making signs". So after the students had a chance to explore the castle centre, she grouped the whole class and offered suggestions about how writing might be brought into their play, based on her observations of the students' discussions and the narratives they had been creating. For example, they might create a "Help Wanted" sign if they needed a knight to defend the castle, or a "Stay Out" sign for the dragon. She mentioned that they could tape their messages on the castle wall or write notes to give to one another. Polly also reminded the students that they could sound out the words themselves, ask someone for help, or even use pretend writing and pictures.



FIGURE 2.9: A writing table with paper and markers was placed just outside the castle. On the wall, the teacher posted vocabulary from different fairy tales that they had read.



FIGURES 2.10 – 2.15: *Examples of student writing at the castle centre.*



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Polly said: "Part of what makes the castle centre successful are the simple props that we put in there ... there is a treasure chest in there with beads ... the children string the beads all over the castle and like to wear them around their necks and pretend that they are part of their treasure. So having a treasure chest filled with things like dress up clothes, swords and shields, crowns and wands really encourages oral language development. The props are not complicated. The most expensive item is a \$10 hobby horse and it was a good investment because it really added to the language that they used."

"I love the dramatic play and the language that comes out of that kind of play". For example, with one group, Polly shared notes she'd kept on some of the students' in-role discussions. They said things like:

"Give us back the treasure"

"Don't let him in again, lock the doors"

"Don't be a bad knight, be a good one. Put the treasure back ... I'm going to check the treasure."

"I'm trying to put on my glass slippers"

"Now this is what I call a real sword!"

"Excuse me, where are the princesses? You can't defend the enemy without princesses."

"These are special wands and they can defeat you. You cannot break through the walls. Hey, Justin, you are the bad knight and Kelly is the good knight."

"All they gave us were fake wands. They tricked us and gave us these fake wands."

On Extensions

Polly plans to keep the castle up until the end of the year, adding a few new items to the centre each week and joining in the play briefly to extend the writing and dramatic play. She will add to the writing materials to extend the writing possibilities and pair this with some play "interventions" where she will enter the play and suggest possible narrative directions (e.g., the dragon has been circling the castle with plans to move in). She anticipates that this might lead to some letter writing by herself in-role as the dragon, and by the children in-role, responding to the dragon. They might develop a plan to defend the castle or design another more appropriate home for the dragon. She hopes to "stimulate a little more writing".

Grocery Store

Cassie, Kindergarten Teacher, Eagle Hills, Alberta

Introduction

When Cassie turned her dramatic play centre into a grocery store, she asked the students to write out their shopping lists before "going shopping".

Curriculum Connections

Early Literacy: Using knowledge of how letters and words work to write and read

shopping lists; developing oral language and vocabulary

Responsibility: Getting along, cooperating

Social Studies: Learning about a community service—a grocery store

Community Developing an interest in learning about community services and

Awareness: various roles in the community

Dramatic Play: Using imagination creatively in dramatic play



Setting Up the Activity

Setting Up the Play with Students

Cassie turned her dramatic play centre into a grocery store by bringing in new props. These included small shopping carts, plastic food items, and a cash register. Cassie introduced the grocery store centre by discussing the roles that the students could assume when their group rotated to this centre. Before a group entered the centre, Cassie asked each student to decide

which role he or she would take. If students chose to be the store "employees", they immediately went to the centre to get the store ready to "open". The students who decided to be "customers", went over to a small writing centre to prepare their grocery lists. Then they took their lists and went shopping.

Writing at the Grocery Centre

Cassie set up a small writing area beside the grocery centre. Here she placed long strips of paper and markers so the students could create grocery lists before going shopping. The students wrote their lists using scribbles, pictures, letter shapes and words. They wrote side by side, sometimes quietly completing their lists and sometimes discussing what items they wanted to pick up at the store. They wrote the items any way that they could, asking peers

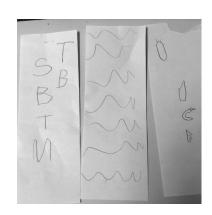


FIGURE 2.16: Shopping lists showing a range of students' writing development.



FIGURE 2.17: The "cashier" scans the price of milk.

for assistance, or looking around the room for letters or words on the walls. They did not often ask the teacher for help spelling words for their shopping items, which was not surprising since this writing activity was intended to lead into a 'real world' play context and the children were not expected to spend too much time focusing on correct spelling. The children were primarily concerned with the message and function of their writing.

Students' Responses

Almost all the students chose to bring their shopping lists with them as they went shopping at the centre. They carried their lists to the carts, and then went from bin to bin (designed to stimulate aisle-to-aisle movement in a real-life grocery store) and filled their carts with the items that they needed. Some

students read aloud from their lists, others placed check marks beside the items when they had retrieved them, and others asked the grocery store employees for help finding their items. Once their shopping carts were filled, they proceeded to the checkout counter. Here, another student scanned the bar codes on items or entered the price on the cash register, processed their credit cards and put the groceries into bags.

Teacher's Role

Cassie encouraged the students to create their shopping lists on their own, using any form of writing with which they were comfortable. She also did not intend that the writing would take too long or take too much time away from the play activities at the centre. Instead she wanted the students to "play" with one way that writing is used in our daily lives. The shopping lists were stored in a basket after the students had completed their shopping activities.



FIGURE 2.18: This "customer" checks her shopping list to see what else she needs to put in her cart.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Cassie said: "Although I asked the students, who chose to be customers in the play centre, to create a shopping list before going shopping, I did not insist that they use their lists in their play. A few students wrote their items and left the list in the writing area. However, it surprised me that most of the students brought their lists with them into the grocery store and used them in their play. They checked the lists before taking items from the bins and placing them in the carts. I even observed a few children asking the store employees for help finding an item on their lists. The writing really became an important aspect to the play activity."

On Extensions

Teachers might extend this activity into the art centre and have the students create a name and sign for their grocery store, as well as labels for the different bins of items (e.g., vegetables, milk, eggs, etc.). The students could cut out pictures of grocery store items and glue them into little books for their class library. New vocabulary words could be written in these books and the students could read them during the day.

Teachers could also set up a recipe centre, perhaps with playdough, where the children could write and create recipes once they returned from the grocery store.

Play Leads to Writing

Some of the preschool and kindergarten teachers decided to build upon their students' play by developing writing activities that took place at a different time and a different centre than that of the play. As they observed their students playing, and watched and listened to the narratives and ideas that were created through interactions, the teachers developed CCCAs that extended the children's interests into writing, often by adding mini-lessons or whole class writing activities. The teachers drew upon play ideas (e.g., camping activities and writing letters) and asked the students to use writing to express these ideas. In Lila's classroom, the children had a wide range of experiences with camping and these were expressed in the different play scenarios that each group developed at the camping centre. She grouped the students to share their per-

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The teachers drew upon play ideas...and asked the students to use writing to express these ideas

sonal and play experiences around camping and then asked them to draw and write about them. Their writing was posted at the play centre to make the camping vocabulary and writing prominent and to encourage new directions in their play. Shelby was inspired by her students' enthusiasm for letter writing at the post office centre, so she organized mini-lessons on letter writing conventions and developed a pen pal exchange between her students and others in the school. This extended the play centre activities beyond classroom walls.

Growing Vegetables to Make Soup

Rose, Pre-kindergarten teacher, Goose Point, Saskatchewan

Introduction

Rose and her students planted seeds in the spring to grow vegetables for a soup that they would later make in October, when children returned as kindergarten students.

Curriculum Connections

Early Literacy: Using knowledge of how letters and words work to write and read

recipes; developing oral language and vocabulary

Responsibility: Getting along, cooperating

Social Studies: Learning about a community service

Science: Learning about parts of plants, including which parts of vegetables

that humans eat, and about how vegetables grow

Math: Learning about area while engaged in square foot gardening



Setting Up the Activity

Setting up the Centre

The project began in March when Rose brought a disassembled portable greenhouse into the classroom. As Rose and her students assembled it, the children imagined what it could be used for (e.g., a dog house, a shopping cart, a place for growing vegetables). Later, Rose read the story, *Grandpa's Garden Lunch* (Caseley, 1990), and her students became excited when she told them that they, like Grandpa, could grow vegetables for their lunch. They decided to make soup and brainstormed the different types of soup they might like to make. Rose then read books



FIGURE 2.19: The seeds have sprouted.

about plants and seeds to build their knowledge about plants, the parts of plants that people eat, and growth cycles of plants. She brought soup recipes to show children the ingredients for various soups and the chil-

for various soups and the children categorized the ingredients as plants and non-plants, to determine which ingredients could be grown in their classroom garden. They plant-



FIGURE 2.20: *The garden plots outside.*

ed seeds in large containers that soon became the classroom greenhouse and later transplanted the seedlings into plots that they had prepared in the schoolyard.

Writing and Designing





FIGURES 2.21 – 2.22: Students drew pictures of their imagined gardens.

Together, Rose and her students engaged in 'square foot' gardening, as they mapped out a grid in the containers (they called them the *garden boxes*), and the children selected which square foot they would use to plant their own seeds. The children counted the number of seeds they could put in the square foot spaces. At the gardening centre, the children played with the seeds, drawing pictures/scribbling labels of what they thought the seeds would become. Over the weeks, as they watched the seeds begin to grow, they made vegetables, seeds, seedlings, etc. out of

playdough. Knowing that they will make soup after they harvest their garden, the students drew, scribbled and wrote recipes for their soup.

Student Responses

In discussion about what to grow in the classroom garden for the soup, children expressed surprise to find that potatoes could be planted (rather than coming from stores!). They teased that the class should plant cows after finding out that the cheese they wanted to add to their soup comes from cow's milk.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Rose was delighted to see her students' excitement about "seeing things grow" and about digging up potatoes in the fall. "It was like they were finding gold!" Rose commented that she wants to expand the gardening project to include herbs.

FIGURE 2.23: *Students prepare their plots for planting.*

On Extensions

Community/Parent Involvement: Over the summer, the community school counselor looked after the garden and parents stopped by periodically to help with weeding and watering, as needed. Rose wants to involve parents to a greater degree next year, as she has found that some of her students' parents want to learn how to garden, so that they can start their own gardens at home. Those parents who are already gardeners will become consultants and co-teachers with Rose.

Cultural Awareness: Rose will also ask parents of her students to advise on plants they can grow to make traditional Cree food for lunch. She and her students will create a book, patterned on *Grandpa's Garden Lunch* that they will entitle *Mischef's Garden Lunch*.



FIGURE 2.24: A student pours water on the soil.

Going Camping

Lila, Kindergarten Teacher, Eagle Hills, Alberta

Introduction

Lila created a campsite at the dramatic play centre and encouraged students to talk and write about their experiences camping, whether real or imagined.

Curriculum Connections

Early Literacy: Using knowledge of how letters and words work to write about real

and imagined experiences; developing oral language and vocabulary

Responsibility: Getting along, cooperating

Social Studies: Learning about community and family activities

Responsibility: Using imagination in dramatic play



Setting Up the Activity

Creating the Centre

To create the camping centre, Lila used a fold-up tent and two sleeping bags, which the children set up each day they went "camping". She added an indoor fire that she created with tissue paper flames and paper towel rolls as logs. She also placed some non-camping related items (e.g., spruce cones, wood blocks, buttons) for the children to use as props in any way they needed.

FIGURE 2.25: A student sets up the campsite.

Introducing Vocabulary

During the first week of this camping centre, Lila gave the children a chance to explore the theme and incorporate random classroom objects into their play. A few times, Lila grouped the children to talk about camping. Once, she brought a basket of blocks and fabric to the centre, explaining, "I noticed that you forgot to pack something for your camping trip." She showed the children and they exclaimed that it was the picnic lunch they had forgotten. The blocks became items of food and the fabric became a tablecloth for spreading out the food. This provided an opportunity to introduce vocabulary for various food items for camping.

Another time, Lila brought out a bag of paper towel and toilet paper rolls for students to build up the fire. This led to conversations about making the fire bigger and staying away from the fire to avoid getting burned.

Supporting Reading and Writing

Previously, Lila gave her students new related vocabulary and posted these words in the centre area. At the camping centre, however, she noticed that the students had very different experiences around camping, and she wanted to explore this further. So, during the second week, Lila grouped the children to ask "What does camping mean to you?" In this exercise, she did not try to direct or limit their perspectives. She encouraged the children to draw pictures and write words to contribute to the word wall in the dramatic play centre. Children drew pictures and wrote words or anecdotes about camping experiences. If the children asked, the adults in the room (educational assistant and/or parent helpers) helped by scribing ideas or spelling words.

Lila also developed some mini-lessons from the direction of the narratives that the children developed while playing. For example, one girl spread a bin of buttons on the floor around the camping centre. She then went along picking them and placing them into a small basket. When Lila walked by, the girl explained that she was picking berries and wanted to make a recipe for "rainbow juice". Soon the other children at the centre joined in the "berry" picking. Later that day, Lila grouped the children to collaboratively write a recipe for their rainbow juice that they could bring with them on their next camping trip. On another day at the writing centre, Lila noticed students creating lists of items they need to bring camping.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Lila said: "I tried to think of ways to promote creativity and having the students think about what they would do at the camping centre. Instead of having any other topic specific items to introduce into the centre (aside from the tent and sleeping bags), I would bring random objects that don't really relate to camping, to see what they would come up with to make new items. I brought in wood blocks, buttons, toilet paper rolls. It sparked new conversations every time I brought something else in. And sometimes I would have an idea of what I thought they would do with the items, and they would take it in a completely different direction than I thought. Which was kind of fun, for me too, to explore that as well."



FIGURE 2.26: A student wrote about camping ("A squirrel jumped into my boot").

Lila thought that the writing samples showed a range of development in the students' writing, vocabulary acquisition, and in their understanding of conventions. For example, one boy with a vocabulary "as large as his imagination," demonstrated both his narrative abilities and a wealth of personal ideas about camping trips. His written products involved both plausible and fictional elements. Other students wrote any letters or words that they knew on their camping pictures.

On Extensions

The camping centre could easily lead into local land and animal studies. Books about the wildlife that the students have seen in their communities can be taken out from the library and students can look at the different features of these animals and what they need to survive. Some of this could be developed with simple costumes so that students can assume different animal roles in the camping centre. Mini dramas might be performed, ones that demonstrate the different animal movements, how they meet their needs and interact with other animals.

Post Cards and Pen Pals

Shelby, Kindergarten Teacher, Greenbrook, Manitoba

Introduction

As the kindergarten students began a new pen pal project with another school in the province, Shelby decided to develop a post office centre for the classroom and extend this theme into other reading and writing activities.

Curriculum Connections

Early Literacy: Using knowledge of how letters and words work, in order to read and

write letters to pen pals; write about real and imagined experiences;

developing oral language and vocabulary

Responsibility: Contributing to group activities, getting along

Demonstrating appreciation for interests that unite members of the **Social Studies:**

community; learning about a community service—the postal service

Community

Showing interest in learning about community services; visiting and Awareness:

learning about the jobs people have

Dramatic Play: Using imagination in dramatic play

Visual Arts: Creating collaborative murals

Math: Sorting mail; counting letters; writing numbers



Setting Up the Activity

Background

The post office CCCA evolved from a resource about play and preschool-age children. Shelby introduced the topic of a post office by having students create Christmas cards for students in another Manitoba kindergarten class. The class collaboratively created a letter of introduction in which they described themselves and their classroom activities. From this activity a discussion about the post office, sending mail, and mailing addresses occurred. Students shared prior knowledge about their own experiences sending and receiving mail and told stories about visiting the post office with their family.



FIGURE 2.27: The mailroom.



FIGURE 2.28: A student, in-role as a mail carrier, gathers mail for delivery.

Teacher's Role

Shelby collected tissue and cardboard boxes to construct post office boxes. Canadian-themed stamps, ink pads, envelopes and maps of Canada were also collected and placed in dramatic play area of her classroom. She created school postage stamps, and an address book. She collected ideas from Pinterest.com, baskets for sorting the mail, and printed signs with postal office symbols and vocabulary words. Based on the information obtained in classroom readings, she set up various stations. These included stations for canceling, sorting, parcel weighing, writing, and customer service.

Then Shelby took on a facilitator role, explaining the different roles and jobs within the post office and modeling

each of these jobs for the students. In an observer role, Shelby watched students explore the post office and take on the various roles themselves. She provided support and guidance as students gathered, stamped, and sorted the mail. Shelby found that students required the most assistance with reading addresses and sorting letters, so she used visual pictures of each student by their corresponding box number to assist with this process.



FIGURE 2.29: A student mails her letter

Art Collaboration

Students collaboratively painted a mural of a post office scene to decorate the post office area of the classroom. Parents contributed by finding tissue boxes in order to make post office boxes.

Creativity

Students were able to send letters, pictures, cards or postcards to their classmates, students in other grades, or their family members. Students also collaborated with the grades 1/2, 5/6, 7/8 classes in the school by writing and sending letters back and forth to each other. They drew pictures for the cover of their postcard after they discussed that a postcard could be from a place that they had visited, or show something special to them. Creativity was also evident in their spelling as students began to use inventive spelling and tried to sound words out independently.

Words in Context

Shelby showed the students the conventions of addressing an envelope. The students "mailed" a variety of letters to their peers, including pictures and written messages. This activity supported their development of letter-recognition and letter-sound relationships. As the project continued, new post office vocabulary was introduced and discussed, with the dramatic play cen-

tre offering the ideal place for students to practice using these new words in the context of the roles that they took in the post office.







Figures 2.30 - 2.32: Samples of students' writing.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Shelby said: "The highlight of this CCCA was the writing. Students were thoroughly engaged in writing letters, greeting cards, and postcards to their peers and the older students in the school. I highly recommend that teachers bring community services and members into classroom projects."

Shelby explained, in detail, how helpful and informative the post office worker trip was for the students: "As a culminating activity, the students walked down to our local post office for a tour. The post worker was an excellent tour guide. When they came in, she talked to them about dropping mail in the mail slot. She posed the question: 'You watch your moms and dads put letters in the slot, but where do they go?' She took some of the letters and showed them where they went and how they were stamped. The students remembered the process of canceling the stamp. She explained stamps to them and showed them what different stamps looked like. The students saw mailboxes and how mail is sorted. Every time a customer came in, the post office worker asked students to follow her, as she explained what she was doing to serve the customer. The community members were surprised when they walked in and saw a bunch of little kids peeking over the counter. They interacted with them as well and they were explaining what they were doing. It was an excellent learning experience."

On Extensions

Shelby thought the students' literacy development would benefit if pictures or symbols and labels were added to the various post office items and props, e.g., mailbox, stamps, envelopes. Because she found that "the amount of writing needed to write the students' addresses proved to be a challenge for some students," next year, she plans to scaffold the letter writing conventions so that students can address letters quickly, and gradually add to the information that they include on their envelopes.

Drawing on Community Members' Expertise

Community members' expertise is invaluable for classroom demonstrations. Some teachers created CCCAs that used these demonstrations as starting

a community member's expertise can provide experience and information as starting points

points. As the CCCAs are carried out, students can re-enact, alone or together, what they learned in the demonstrations. A community member's expertise can provide experience and information as starting points for the CCCAs, and then teachers can draw upon their curriculum and pedagogical understanding to extend students' learning.

Making Fried Bannock

Icema, Aboriginal Head Start Program Educator, Big Lake, Ontario

Introduction

A few weeks prior to the school's Mother's Day Tea, students were asked what they would like to make for the celebration. They decided that bannock would be perfect to serve at the tea. Icema invited an Ojibway Elder from the community to the class to demonstrate how to make bannock, a traditional flat bread.

Curriculum Connections

Responsibility: Learning to share, help and take turns

Community Showing interest in learning about community services; visiting and

Awareness: learning about the jobs people have

Math: Learning to recognize numbers; measuring; distinguishing and

describing size; counting in Ojibway and English



Setting Up the Activity

Teacher's Role

To prepare for the activity, Icema had placed bowls, utensils, measuring spoons, measuring cups, trays, and a rolling pin at one end of a round table. The children prepared by cleaning their hands and standing around the table. Icema introduced the guest speaker, an Ojibway Elder in the community.

Bannock-Making Demonstration

During the Elder's classroom visit, he answered the students' questions about what he would be making, the ingredients he would use, and the method he would adopt. There was a continual dialogue throughout the time of preparing the bannock. The children took turns handling the different ingredients and discussing the properties of flour, sugar, and baking powder. Through these different actions, the students would make interesting observations or discoveries; for example, one student commented that the flour being poured into the bowl looked "like a cloud" and other students tried to smell the difference between flour and baking powder.

While helping the Elder make the bannock, the students used measuring spoons and bowls, they took note of



FIGURE 2.33: A student rolls out some bannock.

shapes and colours. They helped each other measure the water and pour it into the bowl. Mixing required a different type of spoon and the students were able to talk about the distinctions between varieties of spoons and their functions. By adding raisins and cinnamon to one of the mixing bowls, they learned about recipe and taste variations. They all took turns mixing, rolling, cutting out circles and placing the circles on the tray. When they were done, a parent fried the bannock for them in the kitchen.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Icema said: "This activity was completed by two separate groups. The first group is very independent and the majority can verbally communicate. They are able to wait their turn, assist with measuring, as well as communicate with each other. Their baking was more child directed than educator directed."

"The second group is made of a different dynamic. They needed a lot of redirection as well as open ended questions to hear some verbal language. It was interesting to view the video and see how much talking and direction I was giving. I believe next time, I will verbally hold back and have the children initiate. Even if it is 'What do we do next?'"

On Extensions

Icema explained: "Due to the uniqueness of our location, children are adjusted to sometimes having open fires at our centre and they comprehend the safety issues associated with that. I would only have a ratio of three children to an adult participating in the following activity for safety. I would extend this activity by explaining how we could make bannock over an open fire. I would have a story and description of what would happen. Talk about safety around fires. This would occur for a few weeks. At the end of the week, we would have a fire. I would give each child their own clean, long stick. Have them roll their stick in the batter and place it over the fire. As it cools down, they can enjoy their bannock along with some blueberries and water outdoors."

Filleting a Fish

Kadie, Kindergarten Teacher, Keen's River, Manitoba

Introduction

Kadie invited the grandfather of one of her students to the classroom to demonstrate how to fillet a fish. This demonstration inspired her to set up a few new dramatic play centres in the classroom.

Curriculum Connections

Early Literacy: Using knowledge of how letters and words work to read and write

recipes; write about real and imagined experiences; developing oral

language and vocabulary

Responsibility: Contributing to group activities; getting along

Social Studies: Demonstrating appreciation for interests that unite members of the

community (hunting and fishing)

Dramatic Play: Using imagination in dramatic play

Visual Arts: Expressing personal experiences through art



Setting Up the Activity

Background

Justyn's grandfather, Dave, accepted an invitation to the classroom to show the children how to use a boning knife to gut, debone, and fillet some freshly-caught fish. Kadie set up a round table for this demonstration and the children gathered around it as Dave talked about catching, cleaning and filleting the fish. Although there were chairs available for all the children, they were free to sit or stand, close by or far away, depending on their level of curiosity or "bravery". Dave spoke to the children at their level of understanding, showing them the egg sacs and relating this to the fish's life cycle, discussing the different parts of the fish, both inedible and edible (e.g., fish cheeks and liver are a delicacy), and asking them about the animals that their relatives hunt. When one or two of the children expressed reactions to the guts and blood that they saw as "gross", he continued calmly with his explanation of the filleting process. He also discussed safety issues when using a knife and only allowed the children to touch the knife if they had some experience at home with filleting or skinning. Here is an example of students' interactions with Dave as he demonstrated the fish filleting:



FIGURE 2.34: Students reach out to feel if the fish is rough or smooth.

Dave: These are all the fish eggs.

Sabina: Why?

Dave: If this fish had laid the eggs,

then all these would turn into

fish.

Ginessa: Why is it coming out?

Dave: Well, because it is opened up.

Ginessa: Look, that part tastes good.

Dave: See, lots of people would eat

this. It's fish liver and it tastes

pretty good.

Dave: See this piece? This piece is

right full of bones and what Leeta does, when we catch lots of fish... Leeta makes pickled fish out of this chunk, and the bones get soft. They get rub-

bones get soft. They get rubbery and soft and you can eat

them.

Lilli: We can't cut it.

Dave: Why?

Lilli: Because our dad says so. He

doesn't let us cut.

Dave: Oh, okay. If your dad doesn't

let you use a knife, then I won't let you use a knife. I let Casey use a knife. He helps me skin the beavers and coyotes and

wolves and deer.

The children were very curious about the fillet process, responding to Dave's questions and asking their own questions, using exploratory and experiential questions. Sometimes they walked away for a few moments and watched from across the room, but then returned to get a closer look. Many of the children felt "brave" enough to touch the fish scales, flesh and even the roe.

The students helped Dave and Kadie bread the fillets and then the adults fried them in butter and shared the fish with the students for snack time. Everyone agreed that it was delicious!

Teacher's Role

Dave was obviously used to working with children, as he showed great care and patience in his explanations and the children responded in kind. This let Kadie observe the activity, listening and thinking about how she might extend this demonstration into the new activity centres over the next few weeks. She also asked questions to help develop the students' vocabulary (e.g., "How does it feel? Is it rough or is it smooth?").

Kadie already had a house centre in her classroom, which was perfect for the children to dramatize cooking fish and preparing meals. She decided to create an adjoining area where the children could "go fishing" and then bring their catches home to prepare for the meals. She brought in a large piece of blue fabric and, using some mid-size branches, set up a wooded area with a stream in the corner of the classroom. They created a chart with the items that were needed to go fishing (e.g., bucket/basket, fishing rod, jar of worms, fillet knife, etc.) and Kadie set these up in a special place in the house centre.

Art: Filling the Stream with Fish

When one student mentioned that there were not any fish in their "stream", the children decided that they would make some. Kadie cut out fish shapes (front and back), and the students glued around the edges to fix the front and back together. When they were dry, they stuffed the fish, sealed up the last edge and painted them a variety of colours. When the fish were dry, they were placed in the "stream".

The students would go to the house centre, pick up their fishing gear and head over to the stream. They created many different narratives as they dug for worms and caught the fish. They would take their fish back to the house centre and some would even act out the "fillet" process before placing them in a fry pan or pot to cook. Some students added (plastic) onions, bacon, eggs, salt, milk and other interesting ingredients to create the meal of the day.

Kadie grouped the students to share some of their fishing adventures and how they prepared their fish dishes. The students talked about the ways they eat fish at home and how they prepared it in their play.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Kadie said: "This was the first time I invited a student's family member to give such a detailed presentation! I was not entirely sure how the students would respond to watching a fish being gutted and filleted at school. I knew that many of them were familiar with some of this kind of preparation . . . many of them have talked about deer hunting and skinning rabbits. However, I have met Dave many times and he has such a calm way with children so I felt sure that he would explain the process in a way that they would understand it. He was so matter-of-fact about each step, even when a student said 'ewww'."

Kadie plans to repeat this activity again next year and wants to invite a few more community members to the classroom. She is considering how to include some demonstrations and discussions around how deerskin is prepared and used for clothing. She liked connecting the play centres (drama) and typical family activities (social studies).

On Extensions

At the writing centre, students might draw pictures of and/or write about their fishing and hunting trips. Students can make up stories, such as those they enacted in their classroom play, or draw and write about family and community hunting trips. Kadie plans to include some writing materials at the house centre in case the students want to record their favourite recipes.

References for Chapter 2

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Grades 1-2 Creative Collaborative Curriculum Activities

Introduction

The starting points for many of the CCCAs in this chapter are grades one and two curriculum objectives. Accordingly, they have been organized to foreground each teacher's pre-CCCA planning, their connections to curriculum objectives, and their students' interests. As part of the CCCAs, students created a wide range of visual, performance, print, and digital products, and collaborated in meaningful ways with their peers to do so.

As in chapter 2, we present teaching and learning activities along with a description of what the students said and did when participating in the CCCAs and photographs that tell their story in ways that words cannot. We conclude by presenting the teachers' reflections on how the CCCAs benefited the students' learning, and then we offer suggestions for further and future extensions of the CCCAs.

Starting with the Curriculum

Grades 1-2 teachers usually began planning CCCAs by consulting the curriculum documents for language arts and one or two subject areas—often science, social studies or art. They tried to integrate subject areas as much as possible

in their CCCAs, in addition to ensuring that students had opportunities to collaborate to create open-ended products to support their achievement of curriculum objectives.

Students collaborate to create open-ended products to support the curriculum

objectives

Responding to Folktales

Olivia, Grade 1 Teacher, Moose Lake, Ontario

Introduction

The students in Olivia's class are English Language Learners who speak Ojibway at home. At school, Ojibway is the language of instruction in kindergarten, and grade one is their first year immersed in English language instruction. In this CCCA, Olivia asked the students to join in the reading of folktales with verbal phrases, actions, and gestures. The folktale reading was followed up with activities at the writing and dramatic play centres.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Listening to and understanding narrative texts; responding

appropriately for the purposes of retelling the story; expressing ideas to peers; developing oral language; generating and organizing

information to express ideas in writing

Learning Skills: Developing positive responses to the ideas of others

Drama: Responding to a text by stepping into a role; exploring the point of

view of various characters from stories; social interaction through

dramatic expressions



Setting Up the Activity

Creating the Activity with the Children

At the beginning of the week, Olivia read aloud the story of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* (Galdone, 1973) to her students. During the remainder of the week, the class revisited the tale several times, each time with new opportunities for the children to participate in the reading. Sometimes students would chant repeated dialogue together; other times, students would roleplay the different characters as Olivia narrated the story. Olivia also encouraged the students to use gestures and facial expressions to convey the characters' emotions.

During other parts of the day, the children rotated into the art/drama centre to make billy goat and troll masks and to re-enact the tale. The students were also free to use their props to tell their own versions of the story or to develop entirely new stories.

Supporting Reading and Writing

The following week Olivia prepared a storyboard framework for the children

to use to organize and express their retelling of the folktale using words, pictures, or both. As in the drama centre, she gave the students the choice of retelling the original tale, recreating a new story that involved the billy goat and troll characters, or creating their own characters in original compositions. The students practiced telling their tales to partners.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Olivia said: "The students were really excited about contributing to the dialogue as I read the stories. They do not usually talk very much during whole class activities but this seemed to free them up to participate."

Olivia's primary goal was to give the children opportunities to tell a story to others, first verbally and then through their drawings or writing. She was pleased with all of the retellings that the children displayed through the storyboard framework. The combination of pictures and words allowed students to retell their tale to a partner, and look back to the storyboard for cues to the events in their tale.



FIGURE 3.1: This student retold the original "Three Billy Goats Gruff" tale, using drawings and some letters.



FIGURE 3.2: This student added some new characters to the original tale and used some arrows to indicate the movement and actions in the story.

On Extensions

Olivia said that she was pleased with students' use of language and their writing in the folktale CCCA and decided to carry out similar processes for a few other folk stories. With the next story, the children were each given booklets with blank pages so that they could create their own books, again either retelling the original tale or composing their own versions. The children worked and talked about their ideas in small groups, as they independently wrote stories.

Wild Things

Maria, Grade 1 Teacher, Moose Lake, Ontario

Introduction

Maria's class responded to Maurice Sendak's classic story, *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), by creating masks and improvising their own variations of the story. They role-played characters from the book.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Responding to literature by dramatizing characters' interactions;

showing understanding of plot structure by creating new narratives from a familiar story; using knowledge of how letters and

words work to create posters; exploring point of view

Learning Skills: Developing positive responses to the ideas of others; working to-

gether toward a group goal

Visual Arts: Using mixed media to create a mask showing the personalities of an

imagined character

Drama: Responding to a text by stepping into a role; exploring the point of

view of various characters from stories; social interaction through

dramatic expressions



Setting Up the Activity

Teacher's Role

Maria read the story, *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), several times to her students, each time asking them to think about and infer different aspects of the story. For example, students were asked if Max might have imagined the Wild Things, and how he might have felt before and after his adventures with them. Sometimes Maria invited the students to take up

roles as Wild Things at particular parts of the story (e.g., having a rumpus, begging Max to stay). During another reading, Maria took on the role of a Wild Thing, dressing up in Halloween costume with fake unruly hair, and wearing an old bath robe over her clothes, with the belt pinned to the back as a tail. She introduced herself as a 120-year old Wild Thing who has ticklish toes, rides an ATV (all-terrain vehicle), and has a brother living in a nearby town. She invited students to ask her questions to find out more about her habits, likes, family, etc. as a Wild Thing.



FIGURE 3.3: *Three students practicing "Wild Things" actions.*

She wrote and drew pictures on the interactive board of herself as a Wild Thing, based on her invented responses to students' questions.

Designing and Creating Dramatic Scenes

The students created masks and other parts for their own Wild Things costumes using paper plates, wool, fabric scraps, sparkles, pipe cleaners, etc., Maria placed students into small groups and asked them to imagine habits, likes, families, and lifestyles for their Wild Things. Maria asked them to imagine what would happen if Max were to visit their Wild Thing: What would they want to do together? Where would they want to go? The students created storylines for their encounters with Max and enacted them a number of times within their small groups.

The students put their ideas in writing and later, Maria helped them write up some of their ideas into traditional script forms. Here is an example of one of the dramatic scenes:

Max: What is your name? Where do you live? What do you eat? How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Wild

Thing 1: My name is Big Foot. I am four hundred years old. I live in the bush. I eat moose. I have ten brothers and sisters.

Wild

Thing 2: My name is Jeepers. I am 500 years old. I live on the Monster Island. I love to eat bats and spiders. I don't have brothers and sisters. I ate them all!

Wild

Thing 3: My name is Shrek. I am 100 years old. I live in the ocean. I eat sharks. I have ten brothers and sisters.

Max: Let's have a party.







FIGURES 3.4 – **3.6:** The students wrote about what sort of Wild Thing role they were going to develop. They read their writing to Maria and she scribed the rest of their ideas (see above script for edited version)

Writing and Designing

Maria collaborated with three other kindergarten classes in her school, pre-arranging times when her students would visit them while in-role as Wild Things. The children visited each kindergarten class wearing their Wild

Thing costumes and enacted their Max and the Wild Things stories for the kindergarten children. Their performances were met with great applause.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Maria said: "I needed to explain some of the vocabulary to the students. Because they were learning English, I gave them more commonly-used words. For example, instead of using the word 'rumpus', I said, 'Let's use the word party . . . we'll have a party."

The "Wild Things" reading and drama was a winter project. Due to colder temperature, students spent much of the school day indoors, so the masks and props that the students made for this Wild Things dramatization provided the students with a great opportunity to express themselves playfully. As Maria said, "Our Ojibway community does not have many toys . . . toys are so important so we make many things to be played with as toys . . . they are so creative . . . and toys are so important for the development of oral language."

On Extensions

To include more writing, Maria plans to ask students to create posters advertising the impending Wild Things visit to kindergarten classrooms. She is considering asking students to design paper or digital books of the stories of their Wild Things' adventures with Max.

Forest Animals

Adrianna, Grade 1 Teacher, Deerview, Alberta

Introduction

Adrianna brought writing, art and drama together for a "local wildlife" study. The grade one students developed fiction and nonfiction readers' theatre scripts using local wildlife as main characters. They later created puppets and performed their scripts for each other.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Responding to and creating nonfiction and fiction texts

Learning Skills: Developing positive responses to the ideas of others; working togeth-

er for a group goal

Visual Arts: Using different media to create props (animal puppets)

Drama: Responding to a collaboratively-created text through readers'

theatre puppet performances; exploring the point of view of

various characters from stories; social interaction through dramatic

expressions

Math: Categorization



Setting Up the Activity

Background

Three aspects of Adrianna's program came together to form this CCCA. A month earlier, a student teacher, placed in Adrianna's classroom, had organized a fairy tale unit with a puppet readers' theatre component. The grade one students had enjoyed this unit and, after the student teacher had left, expressed interest in continuing to use the readers' theatre puppets. Adrianna has also used an assessment tool that was being piloted in the school division, involving the students in answering "personal interest" questions about their reading preferences. The students became very opinionated about and interested in the differences between fiction and nonfiction texts. In addition, each year, Adrianna involves her students in a pen pal project where the students correspond with other students in Canada. In a few of their letters, they had shared information about the kinds of animals that they saw in their local environment. These three facets gave shape to the new CCCA project.

Developing Scripts

Adrianna and her students developed the following criteria for the small group collaborations:

- the students would compose a fiction or nonfiction readers' theatre script
- the characters in their scripts had to be local wildlife
- they would create their own puppets to act out their scripts

Together, the class composed the beginning of a forest animal narrative. Adrianna composed the first sentence on chart

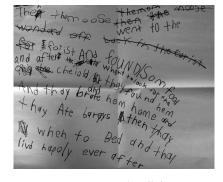


FIGURE 3.7: One group's collaborative writing draft.

paper, and then the students added sentences one-by-one to develop the text. The narrative involved a baby moose wandering into the garden in the backyard of a little girl's home. Then working in small groups of four, the students completed the narrative. At this point they needed to decide if the narrative would proceed as a fiction or nonfiction narrative. These narratives were re-written as readers' theatre scripts. For example, one group ended the story as follows:

Moose: It's my mother.

Narrator: He saw a bush wiggling. The moose started running sud-

denly he bumped into something big! It was his mother! They started running toward the woods. The little girl was sad. The mother and the little girl played tag and

then went home. [edited version]

The students then created puppets and performed their plays for the class. The student groups were encouraged to develop a second narrative starring another local wild animal and to illustrate their stories/scripts.

Creating Puppets

In their groups, the students decided how they would make their puppets. Some of the students found that the first puppets that they made with paper bags did not suit the readers' theatre performance because they made too many "crinkly" noises during the performance. Some of these noisy puppets were brought home and new ones were created with "quieter" materials. Most of the groups decided that stick puppets worked best.

In their groups, the students decided how they would make their puppets. Some of the students found that the first puppets that they made with paper bags did not suit the read-



FIGURE 3.8: A moose puppet used with a fiction script.



FIGURE 3.9: Some students perform their nonfiction script. The students downloaded realistic images of animals to create their puppets.

ers' theatre performance because they made too many "crinkly" noises during the performance. Some of these noisy puppets were brought home and new ones were created with "quieter" materials. Most of the groups decided that stick puppets worked best.

In some discussions about their fiction scripts, students wondered what kinds of "abilities" their animal characters might have and whether this needed to fit with the physical characteristics of the animal. For example, some students discussed what magical or super powers their owls might have. They realized that their depictions of their fictional owl characters might not

look like the "real" owls they have seen. As a result, one student wrote: "He can shoot Rainbow Pawrs from all ovr Hes Body. He is as bright as the sun. He is SParklly." Another group's owls had invisible powers, while another gave their owls laser beam powers.

Teacher's Role

Adrianna helped the students complete their stories and then move them into readers' theatre script form. Adrianna noticed that some students had



FIGURE 3.10: An illustration to accompany one group's story

difficulty coming up with ideas for the narratives and later with their puppet creations, while others jumped at the creative opportunities. She found that she needed to adopt a discussion-facilitator role. She listened to group discussions and helped the students extend their ideas and build upon their peer's suggestions. She provided a little more support as students moved their narratives into script form. She also refrained from giving the students pre-made puppets to perform their plays. Rather she left the project open for the students to problem solve how they would create their puppet characters.

Adrianna also organized mini-lessons to delve deeper into the ideas that she heard in the students' discussions. For example, during one lesson, they discussed the features of fiction and nonfiction and then categorized all the "moose" books in their classroom library. Example titles in their nonfiction category included: *It's a Baby Moose!* (Doudna, 2008), *Backyard Animals: Moose* (Winnick, 2010), and *Backyard Wildlife: Moose* (Appleseed, 2015). Example titles in their fiction category included: *Moose!* (Munsch, 2011), *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* (Numeroff, 1991), *Mooseltoe* (Palatini, 2000) and *Elusive Moose* (Gannij, 2011).

During another mini-lesson, the students discussed the "real-life" actions and behaviours of a moose. Some of their ideas included: "scratch trees", "visit people's yards", "walking in the bush" and "standing near the road". The students continually added to this list as they listened to both fiction and nonfiction narratives that Adrianna read to them.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Adrianna said: "The students really enjoyed the CCCA but we were time-constrained. I think that it could have really involved into something that really did belong to them and that could touch into all kinds of other curriculum areas. We didn't work on backdrops as they did with the fables and fairy tales with the student teacher: everything was self-created there. The students wanted to go in this direction but we were crunched for time. So we used our pre-fabricated puppet theatre. It would have been nice if they would have been able to create the habitat that belonged to their animals."

On Extensions

Adrianna thinks that with next year's class, she will find a way to share the scripts and performances with their pen pals, perhaps by video recording the puppet plays and uploading them for viewing by their partner class. By sharing the process that they followed to develop their scripts, they could "challenge" their pen pals to compose readers' theatre scripts with wildlife characters taken from their local environments.

Since Adrianna feels that the "local wildlife" topic could easily extend throughout the school year, she plans to start much earlier next time. She wants to develop the topic and spring-board it into poetry, art and science units. Adrianna explained: "It seems that the students like . . . a project where you just keep building upon it, instead of starting something new and going in a different direction. . . . If you allow yourself to follow their lead, and go down the path that they want to go down, they can really create some amazing things . . . that you don't think of yourself."

Adrianna suggests that she might work with the students to create a goal for their animal characters. Whether fiction or nonfiction, their animal character could be in search of something that it needs, e.g., food or shelter. For example, if the animal is in search of food, students might be prompted to consider questions like the following: What does your animal eat? How will it search for this food? Where will it find the food?

Designing a Game

Marcel, Grade 1 Teacher, Aspen, Alberta

Introduction

Drawing on the games played during their physical education classes, grade one students in Marcel's class worked in small collaborative groups to plan and develop a game that could be taught to their peers.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Organizing information into a game format; exploring the actions of

characters within their invented game; recording ideas in writing

Learning Skills: Considering the ideas of others; cooperating with others; working in

groups

Visual Arts: Using mixed media to demonstrate directions for how to play their

games

Drama: Selecting actions to demonstrate the roles within a collaboratively

created game; exploring the point of view of various characters;

social interaction through dramatic expressions



Setting Up the Activity

Marcel talked with the students about some of the games that they have played in the gym or at home and asked them to explain why they liked those games. He asked the students to contemplate how they might create their own games and how they would teach others in the class to play their games.

Collaborative Art



FIGURE 3.11: A student uses arrows to show how the "cars" would park in the parking lot spaces for his group's game

The students met in groups to discuss the theme and content of the game they were going to create. After lengthy discussions, the students planned their game on paper. Then, they independently drew one part of the group-created game and put the individual parts together to create the whole game.

Teacher's Role

As the students worked in their groups, Marcel asked questions to elicit more details about the game planning and to help students add details to their illustrations (e.g., How many players are going to be in your game? How do you start your game? What do you do first?). He also asked them how their individual drawings contributed to the collaborative game design by asking, "What is

everyone supposed to be drawing to show the directions for the game?"

Later, with the whole group, Marcel asked students to reflect on the collaborative process, specifically how they felt about sharing ideas and including others in the planning and designing of the games.

Students' Small Group Responses

During their independent work, students talked about how their individual parts would contribute to the overall game. One group of two boys and two girls discussed how their game, named *Tag*, would centre on an evil character they named Pegasus. Another group of three boys and one girl drew their own scenes (on their own papers) as they lay side by side on the floor. They overheard a group of boys talking about their "parking lot" game, and considered adding cars to their own game.

Another group of three girls discussed how a young vampire character named Dennis, would fall from a tower, and how other vampires would need to save him. This game was eventually titled *Hotel Transylvania*. They drew upon the plot and characters from a movie that all three had seen.

Dramatizing the Games

Marcel asked the groups, one at a time, to stand in front of the class and demonstrate how their game would be played. Marcel taped their pictures on the board so the students could refer to it. The drama had not been rehearsed but rather was intended to provide a way for the students to begin expressing their ideas in front of a group with words and actions. In one instance, four boys stood in front of the class to explain their game *Teacher*. As they did this, Marcel interjected to ask them to "show" their explanation. One boy moved chairs around to organize a class setting where the "students" would sit. He placed his group members in these chairs and then told them things to say (e.g., "Say the letter 'B").



FIGURE 3.12: Students dramatize how their "Car Park" game would be played.

Another group explained: "It's a parking lot game where people are parking to go shopping," and then used a chair as a car to demonstrate how the game pieces would move around the board.

Each group of students created a very different game. They gave their games names, such as *Dragon* and *Car Parking*, and the aforementioned *Teacher*, *Tag*, and *Hotel Transylvania*.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Marcel said: "I came over and asked them more about what was happening. Just by being asked, 'What is this line, here?', One student was able to explain a lot more and give me more detail and really expand on here idea. First I gave them time to collaborate and listen to everyone's ideas."

With the whole class, Marcel would address specific issues, especially around collaboration and group work. He said, "I would have conversations about this, as a recap, after they've shown their work, I would talk about things that I saw, what they did, and things they could work on, for example, when there was one situation where someone felt left out."

On Extensions

Marcel observed: "I noticed that they really just explained how you played the game. They wouldn't show exactly how to play the game." The students were unsure about what it meant to dramatize and show ideas. Marcel plans to work with the students more in this regard through lessons on how to show actions and dialogue instead of simply explaining. He also wants to give them some time to practice their dramas in their small groups before performing.

Marcel wanted to repeat the collaborative and design aspects of this activity with a new theme or project that might also allow for independent or collaborative writing.

Creating an Onster

Marcel, Grade 1 Teacher, Aspen, Alberta

Introduction

Marcel asked his students to work in groups of three or four to create creatures that would be called "Onsters". They later dramatized how their creatures would move, behave and sound, and extended it into a large class mural and writing.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Organizing information to form a creature; exploring the actions of an

invented character; recording ideas in writing

Learning Skills: Considering the ideas of others; cooperating with others; working in

groups

Visual Arts: Using drawing materials to collaboratively create an imagined

creature

Drama: Selecting actions to dramatize their invented character; social

interaction through dramatic expressions



Setting Up the Activity

Begin with A Story

Marcel told his students a story of how, once long ago, when he was a little boy, his father described to him an "Onster" that he had seen. After the story, Marcel said that he wanted to draw the Onster for the students, but needed their help to describe it. As they gave him descriptions, he drew the creature

on chart paper. When it was done, Marcel dramatized how he thought this Onster might walk around the room (e.g., emphasizing posture, gait, etc.).

Collaborative Art

The students worked in small groups to discuss how they would create their own Onsters. They had one large sheet of paper and could use markers, crayons and pencil crayons to draw their creations. This was an open-ended activity, where students could design their creatures any way they wished, within the parameters of "Onster". They could choose any attributes: colours, shapes, sizes, features, etc.





FIGURES 3.13 – 3.14: *Onsters from two different groups*



FIGURE 3.15: Students add settings and other items to their "Onster-meeting" mural.

Drama

Marcel posted the drawings on the board and gave each group a turn to describe the features that they gave to their Onster. They also had the opportunity to dramatize the possible actions of their Onsters in relation to the features that they gave to them.

Teacher's Role

As the students created Onsters in their small groups, Marcel asked questions about the features that they were drawing and how these features might shape the Onster's movements.

While the students were presenting their Onsters to the class, Marcel asked them questions to elicit further elaborations about the different parts they drew. He asked them to act out how their Onster might use certain features or how it might behave (e.g., "Show me how that might look").

At a certain point, with all the excitement over the Onsters, it became obvious to Marcel and the students that the Onsters had to meet each other. Marcel grouped the students to discuss what might happen if their Onsters met each other. They talked about what Onsters would do, how they might behave, the games and activities that they might engage in, and where they

would meet. Marcel rolled out craft paper almost across the length of the whole classroom and the students gathered around all sides of it to draw their Onsters meeting. This activity extended over several days.

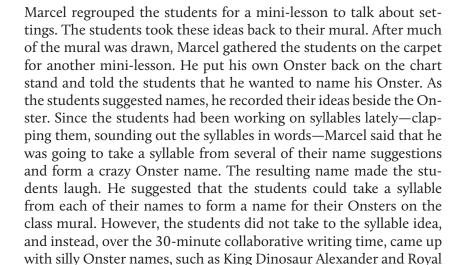




FIGURE 3.16: A group of girls named their Onster "Royal Jewels".



FIGURE 3.17: A group of boys named their Onster "King Dinosaur Alexander".

Jewels.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Marcel said: "The conversations in the small groups is where the children's ideas really take shape. . . . There were lots of conversations and lots of details." When the students came together for the class mural, the students were engaged in developing ideas together and getting these recorded on the mural. "It went really well . . . it got to a point where it got to be so fluid. It was still about their Onsters playing tag but they were deciding to put all kinds of details. They had apartment buildings, ladders and the girls at the other end had eggs hatching . . . the boys were almost playing a game, they were playing together [as they drew] saying 'I've got my airplane and it's coming down and we need a fence to protect it.' They were having fun and getting their ideas on paper."

On Extensions

Marcel plans to keep up these collaborative drawing and writing activities, and will start to draw lines at the bottom of the pages to encourage the students to start writing sentences and narratives.

All About Spring

Janice, Grade 2 Teacher, Aspen, Alberta

Introduction

Janice and the grade two students in her class brought their study of "Spring Changes" across the curriculum, integrating writing, research, oral language, construction and design, visual art, outdoor education, social studies, and drama in this CCCA.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Reading a variety of books, online links and videos about a topic;

explaining researched information in verbal and written forms;

creating original texts

Learning Skills: Considering the ideas of others; cooperate with others and work in

groups

Visual Arts: Creating a collage on a theme and present to others; illustrating

spring animal behaviours; visually representing animals in their

habitats

Science: Investigating seasonal changes and needs of animals and plants

Drama: Exploring the movements for the different activities associated with

spring (charades); taking on the different roles for a talk show



Setting Up the Activity

Teacher's Role

On top of the organizing that Janice did for each activity, she listened carefully to the students' ideas so that she could create new activities that extended from their discussions and suggestions.

Know and Wonder Collaborative Activity

Janice wanted to cover the spring changes that affect the ground, lakes, animals, activities, tools, weather/days, holidays and clothing. She started by placing the students into small groups with chart paper to record their ideas under the headings, "What I Know" and "What I Wonder" about spring.

Examples of what students knew:

- tad poles are growing into frogs
- animals are having babies
- yous garn tools [use garden tools]
- I ues [use] grandan [grandma's] tools for planten [planting] flower
- foxs [foxes] are comeing [coming]out of hibernatoshin [hibernation]
- we wear shorts and t-shirts
- the nise [nights] are getting shorter and the dase [days] are getting longer
- the ise [ice] is melting
- I yours [use] an ax for cutting bon [down] trees.
- flouirs becmn to blosum [flowers begin to blossom]
- mama birds have more baby birds
- I see mar [more] fish in the pond

Examples of what students wondered:

- if the cubs is lrking [are looking] for food
- wat [what] the mommy and the daddy birds do with there [their] babys [babies] in spring
- when is there swimming
- are animals shangin [changing] culler [colour]

The students wrote up their ideas onto posters and then went on a class-room "gallery walk" to examine the different ideas about spring conveyed in their peers' posters.

Janice selected library books to help answer some of the students' questions. She read some of these books to the students and they explored the

others during their own reading times. They also discussed the ideas they'd been reading about during pair-share times.

Community Walk - Exploring Spring

Janice and the students went on a local nature walk to look for, collect, and record signs of spring. The students each had a large plastic bag and they collected some items from nature that they saw. These items were brought back to the classroom and the students created murals showing their

PUT GUARC

FIGURE 3.18: The students discuss their findings from their local community nature walk.

local environment—land and nature—during springtime.

Drama - The "Let's Talk" Show

The students wanted to put on a talk show dramatic production. They called it the "Let's Talk' Show". Janice guided the students in planning for the roles that they would assume and the materials required for each role. For example, they knew that a talk show needed a host and that the host often has prepared questions to ask the guests. Each student group got together to come up with two questions that the host could ask during interviews, and these were written on small cue cards attached to a ring.

Example questions included the following:

What are some spring activities?

What happened to the ground and lakes in the spring?

Tell us about some spring tools and how they are used?

What does the weather look like in spring?

What happens to the days and nights during spring?

What happens to the trees in spring?

What happens to the animals and plants during spring?

What are other signs of spring you did not mention?

The students created a talk show sign and this was posted on the board behind the host during the show times. The host interviewed spring "experts" and used their questions to guide the discussions. The students video-recorded their shows to watch later. The host interviewed a guest in front of the rest of the class, who formed the audience. However, after the guest responded, the host often opened up the questions to the audience members, and so the dramatization became a performance that included the entire class.



FIGURE 3.19: The students created a sign for their "Let's Talk!" talk show.

Drama – Charades

Janice observed that students "loved the acting and charades." The students generated a list of spring-time activities (e.g., swimming, riding, planting, climbing, scattering, digging, hiking). Then in small groups, they took turns acting these out for their group members to guess. The students used actions and some props in their charade groups and found it both fun and challenging to find ways to communicate ideas without using words.

Art – Spring Changes

Janice cut out two human shapes from craft paper (the size of the students) and taped these to the wall. The students used various materials to create spring clothes for the "dolls" as they thought about the human changes in clothing and activities upon the arrival of spring.

Animal Research Project

Janice made a list of local animals (e.g., frogs, ladybugs, butterflies, ants and spiders) and the students worked in pairs to research one of these. They recorded notes about each animal on their research sheets. One group researched ants:

What does this animal look like?

"it has a thororasx abmin and hed and six legs. It has big ise. It has feeles. Thar is ovr 10,000,000,000,000,000." [It has a thorax and abdomen and head and six legs. It has big eyes. It has feelers. There is over 10 quadrillion.]

Where does this animal live?

"It livs in a hill. Ants live in fields. Ants live under side walks. Ants are everywhere!"

What does this animal eat?

"Ants eats bugs."

What is interesting about this animal?

"Apua ant lives in the sea. It is werd at the qwen lase the egs." [Aqua ant lives in the sea. It is weird that the queen lays the eggs.]



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Janice said: "The talk show had a good review. When it came to the final assessment, they knew so many things because of the interaction. Honestly, I didn't have to teach anything again. We had met so many objectives in more than one way—the hands-on gallery walk, the talk show, chart paper and sharing, doing charades. . . . "

On Extensions

Art – Sculpture: Janice said that it was the students who suggested an extension to their spring study. They wanted to build the habitats for the different animals they had researched. They used playdough to create sculptures of their animals and then used natural items from their nature walk to create the setting/habitat for their animal sculptures.





FIGURES 3.20 – 3.21: These students used Plasticine and natural items to create a sculpture of an ant (top) and frog (bottom) in their habitats.

Facts and Opinions: Janice only briefly touched on the difference between facts and opinions, and would like to extend this a little more. She will ask students to write sentences that are facts about spring and an equal number of sentences that are opinions about spring. Students might then categorize these as they share them with the class.

Collaborative Writing: Once the students have learned about spring and the changes in animal behaviours, they might compose two books for the class library: one of the facts and information they have learned about their animal in the spring, and the other involving their animal and the researched information used to create a fiction story about it.

Starting with Children's Interests

In the curriculum-initiated examples presented at the beginning of this chapter, teachers in grades one and two often made modifications to CCCAs as they observed that their students showed greater interest in particular subtopics. For example, one teacher devoted a little more time than anticipated to learning about frog habitats because the children were enthusiastic about amphibians and animal habitats.

In a few classes, teachers in grades one and two started planning a CCCA because they wanted to build on students' enthusiasm for something that happened in the classroom. In Adrianna's example, the children wanted to try something (create a lemonade stand) that their pen pals had described in letters to the class. Adrianna used curriculum objectives to flesh out a CCCA based on

the children's desire to create a lemonade stand. In the second example, Beth noticed that her students were creating detailed narratives when playing with blocks, and that they were not including many details in their narrative writing. She designed a CCCA using children's play with blocks to enhance students' writing.

66

...build on students' enthusiasm for something that happened in the classroom

Lemonade Stand

Adrianna, Grade 1 Teacher, Deerview, Alberta

Introduction

After receiving their latest pen pal letter, in which their friends described a classroom lemonade stand, Adrianna's students decided that they wanted to build one of their own. Adrianna followed their lead, and together they developed a project that involved teamwork, design and creation, writing, lemonade and a lot of school spirit.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Recording ideas in writing; sharing ideas with others

Learning Skills: Considering the ideas of others; cooperating with others; working in

groups; participating in the school community

Visual Arts: Using drawing materials to collaboratively plan a lemonade stand

Science: Solving problems; investigating mixtures; making models using a

variety of materials

Math: Asking questions to solve a problem; collecting and tallying

information



Setting Up the Activity

Background

Adrianna's class was matched with another school in another area of the province as part of a pen pal project that she involved her students in each year. In the letters that they exchanged each month, the students from both classrooms describe the various activities and events they experienced. One letter sent by the pen pal class included a lengthy description of a lemonade stand that the students had put together to sell lemonade to the other students in their school. Adrianna's students responded with such enthusiasm and were so eager to try this idea at their school, that Adrianna embraced the idea to see where it would take them.

Setting Up the Activity with the Students

The students decided that they would need to build a stand, experiment with different lemonade recipes, and then sell the lemonade to other students in their school. Adrianna decided to create a kind of "small business competition" in the classroom. The students were divided into small groups of 4–6 students for this project.

Designing the Lemonade Stand

On chart paper, the students planned out lemonade stand structures. They labeled the different parts that would be needed and Adrianna asked them to consider the types of materials that might be used. Using some of the building blocks and other materials in the class, the students tried out their designs in miniature form. Adrianna called the students into brief sharing sessions so that they could see what other groups were working on and to discuss their discoveries. The students came to a consensus on the best design and applied their ideas to a display "stand" that Adrianna had brought to school.

A Letter to Request Permission

Adrianna worked with the whole class to compose a letter to the principal for permission to hold a lemonade sale at the school. Together they discussed the important elements of a letter and the content. The students made suggestions and Adrianna wrote their ideas on the chart paper. The letter was delivered to the principal. He was happy to give permission and in his reply, asked about the lemonade recipe. This prompted the students to include him in the final decision about the lemonade recipe that they would use.

Lemonade Recipes

Again the students worked in their small groups to plan how they would make the perfect lemonade. However, unlike the stand designs, these recipes were kept secret from the other groups. Adrianna made a list of ingredients and brought these in to the staffroom/kitchen. The educational assistant worked with the class while Adrianna brought groups, one-at-a-time, into the kitchen to test out their recipes. Some of the ingredients included: frozen berries, frozen limeade, frozen lemonade, fresh lemons, sugar, and various spices. The students mixed together the different ingredients from their recipes until they were satisfied with one of their concoctions. Some of the students found that their recipes did not produce a tasty drink and they ended up simply using the frozen lemonade.

Once all groups had prepared their lemonade, they regrouped to share their successful recipes. The principal was called to the classroom and joined students in tasting, discussing and then voting on the best recipe. The winning recipe involved a simple lemonade mix with mixed frozen berries. However, it was not the recipe that elicited the most excitement. Rather it was one group's addition of tiny umbrellas in their drinks that won over most students. They loved the presentation!

Teacher's Role

Adrianna moved from group to group, listening to the students planning and discussions. She helped them draw connections between their ideas (e.g., the quality of materials for the construction of the lemonade stand) and prompted the students to consider new ideas or to take the next steps.

She also developed mini-lessons based on her observations of the students' planning.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Adrianna said: "It was a lot of work to keep adding new group activities to support the students' ideas and to expand the project but the students loved every step and were so enthusiastic so this made it worth the time and energy." She did not expect that the lemonade stand project would bring together so many aspects of the curriculum.

On Extensions

In their groups, students discussed the important information that would need to be included in both posters and "radio" announcements advertising the lemonade sale. Some small groups were put in charge of making posters while others created scripts for the morning announcements. This created quite a buzz around the school so that when groups of grade one students arrived at each classroom to take lemonade orders, students were ready with their money.

Adrianna extended this project into her math program, specifically the data management strand. When the class was discussing how they would sell lemonade at recess to all the students in the school, one student commented that they should just ask each class how many people wanted lemonade. So that evening, Adrianna planned out how the students could collect and graph data about the lemonade. She suggested to the students that they could sell tickets in advance so that they would know exactly how much lemonade to make. This way they would buy enough ingredients and make enough to satisfy the interested school population.



FIGURE 3.22: Three different lemonade orders are ready for pickup.

The students created tally charts with three beverage options: plain lemonade, limeade, and fancy lemonade with frozen berries. A few days before the lemonade event, grade one students were assigned to different classrooms to collect drink orders. They collected money and wrote down the name of each student who ordered. When they returned to their classroom, tallies were made for the final ingredient list. In addition, students created tickets with students' names and lemonade order on them. These were handed back out on the day of the event.

The lemonade sale day was warm and sunny—perfect weather for a cool drink! The grade one students delivered the tickets to the classrooms, and at recess, student "customers" lined up, handed in their ticket and picked up their drinks.

Blocks and Stories

Beth, Grade 1 Teacher, Cougar Creek, Ontario

Introduction

Beth implemented a CCCA into her literacy centre time. After the students constructed with blocks, she asked them to write narratives about their constructions and create play scenarios.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Organizing and expressing ideas and information in oral and

written forms; making connections between different contexts (e.g., personal experiences and texts), and different disciplines (e.g.,

language arts/writing and science/construction)

Learning Skills: Considering the ideas of others; cooperating with others; working in

groups



Setting Up the Activity

Creating the Activity

Beth noticed that her students had been bringing together some of the characters (often animals, people, and super heroes) and structures (often castles, houses and forests) that they had created with blocks into the narratives that they wrote. She decided to bring the play and writing together as part of one extended activity. The students were given time to play with the classroom blocks in small groups of two or three. As each group played and created with the blocks, they developed different narratives.

To demonstrate, here is what Alexandra, Cara and James (a silent group member) did and said while playing with their blocks.

(1) Some students told each other what they were building:

Alexandra: She's building her little

teepee to be in a movie.

Cara: Alexandra.

Alexandra: She wont tell. It's a secret.

Cara: Look, I made a computer.

(2) Some students began to develop a narrative around their constructions:

Cara: I got no family and no

home.

Alexandra: No, she can live with me.

Cara: I will change my clothes

to golden. Golden clothes.

No, golden armor.

(3) Some students began to build collaboratively:

Alexandra: 'Cause we have a lotta blocks ... This will be our ... our

chair. I'll make the chairs.

Cara: Great. How about these ones? How about these ones for

chairs? How about golden chairs? Okay, I found one gold

chair.

(4) Some students extended their narrative and became characters within it:

Alexandra: That's the village. We build the castle. We're gonna have a

party ... Look! These are the bad guys. There are lots of.

Cara: In the - in the dungeon!

Alexandra: We locked them.

Later...

Cara: You look. Here's my, here's my backpack. Cause I'm - cause

I'm - cause I'm leaving the town.

Alexandra: She'll get away in Winnipeg to hide. I'm driving

(5) Some students brought aspects of movies into their discussions:

Alexandra: Here's the gate.

Cara: I'm gonna build a gate too, okay? Here's the doors.

Alexandra: Almost like in Frozen. Like on Frozen..

Cara: You know. Let it go! I can't hold it back anymore!

Both: Hee ha ha ha ha.

Supporting Reading and Writing

Once the children finished playing, the teacher invited them to talk about the "block" stories that they had created. She then gave them a large sheet of chart paper and a marker to write their stories together. The children gathered around the chart paper talking and writing a story about their play. For example, two children described what they built together (a house and people) and wrote imaginatively about moose hunting (e.g., "We had a dream a moose chasing after me"). Another group of children wrote about the castle that they had made and how one of them had been chased by "bad guys" in the play scenario. They also talked and wrote about having a party but one of them was too busy to attend. When the students had finished writing their

stories, they read them to the class and then posted them around the room.



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Beth said: "I had thought of this activity from watching what the students were doing naturally. Parts of their play were finding their way into their writing so I thought they might really enjoy writing about their play immediately after they played together. The blocks tended to draw out the students' creativity and they enjoyed writing about this after. The students tend to be shy about sharing their work, especially their writing. This activity helped them talk in front of their peers because they could simply read what they had written or they could elaborate verbally about the play and constructions."

On Extensions

After observing the students' growing confidence to talk in class and the richness of their writing, Beth extended this activity into different collaborative play/construction scenarios. She feels that this CCCA could also be extended by drawing upon texts—both fiction and nonfiction—that the class reads together. The students could be encouraged to bring some characters, actions and settings into their enactments and then these could be brought into their own compositions.

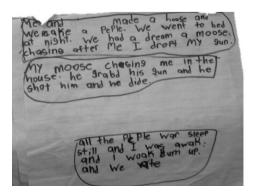


FIGURE 3.23: One group's writing brought together community events and their imaginative play with blocks. (Text: Me and ____ made a house and we make a People. We went to bed at night. We had a dream a moose chasing after Me. I dropped my gun. My moose chasing me in the house. [H]e grab[bed] his gun and he shot him and he died. All the PeoPle were [a]sleep still and I was awaKe. and I wo[ke] H[i]m up. and we ate).

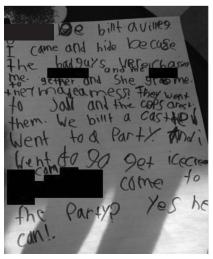


FIGURE 3.24: One group's narrative focused around the castle that they built with blocks. (Text: _____ built a village. I came and hide because the bad guys were chasing me. ____ and me ____ together and She grab me. [T]hey made a mess! They went to jail and the cops arrest them. We built a castle. I went to a Party And I went to go get ice cream. Can ____ come to the Party? Yes he can!)

Sign Company

Beth, Grade 1 Teacher, Cougar Creek, Ontario

Introduction

Beth developed a "sign company" with her students. The students took the role of "employees" in the company to create signs for their classroom and the rest of the school.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Recording ideas in writing; sharing ideas with others; expressing

ideas from their experiences in writing; relating sounds, letters and

words to intended messages

Learning Skills: Considering the ideas of others; cooperating with others; working in

groups; participating in the school community

Visual Arts: Using drawing materials to collaboratively create signs



Setting Up the Activity

Background

Beth had previously organized a few lessons, discussions, and activities around the importance of labels in the students' local environment. As she was discussing this with the students, one boy responded, "A sign company would be fun!" And thus the project was born. Beth later asked the children questions about who made the signs that they see in their community and suggested that they might form a sign making company. The students immediately took to this idea, notably because they thought it was important to ensure that their own classroom had necessary labels in the right places and that pertinent information could be posted for them.





FIGURE 3.25: A student draws a symbol of the coat rack for her sign. When asked about the message of this sign, she responded by pointing to the coat rack.

Beth assigned herself the role of head of the company. She set up a station where students were able to create badges that identified their roles as employees at the "sign factory". Beth converted the writing centre into a sign-making area and gathered the materials that the students would need (e.g., scissors, paper, markers, glue, tape, etc.). They made a sign to identify the company and the newly organized production area.

Creating the Signs

During literacy rotations and at other times in the day, small groups of students put on their badges, went into role at the production centre and discussed what signs they might make that day. Sometimes Beth gathered students together to talk about other categories of signs that their company might take on, such as signs to provide safety information around the school, labels to identify the location of items in the class, signs for other students in the school, and school messages.

As the students moved to different parts of the school (e.g., gym, library, office), they discussed what types of signs were needed there. Soon, those areas of the school demonstrated evidence of their sign productions!

Student Messages and Writing

The students created signs and posted them throughout the classroom and the rest of the school. They did not mind if another student had previously labeled something and would simply add their own version to the item (see images below). Students also took orders from the kindergarten class. For example, one girl made a sign for the kitchen play centre showing the birthday cake that was a specialty item made there (created with round wood blocks with pegs to serve as candles). Another student created a washroom sign, spelled "woshrroom", for the kindergartens. One student teasingly created a sign that warned the younger kindergarten classes to keep out of the production area.

The signs represent all levels of student writing development. Students wrote their messages using pictures, symbols and icons, squiggles and shapes, some letter shapes, initial and ending letter sounds, invented spelling and conventional spelling. They wrote on their own and asked peers and the teacher for help with spelling.

Teacher's Role

Beth wanted the students to feel that they could create any sign or label that interested them. While they were writing, she would answer questions about letter sounds if they needed help or she would ask the students to read their signs to her. Some of the students were shy about speaking to adults, especially in English, so she would also accompany the students when they delivered the signs to the other classes or people in the school.



FIGURE 3.26: These students used a mix of pictures, icons, letters, and inventive spelling to label the student storage spaces. One student labeled this area as "cubez" (cubbies) and another drew an image of the coats hanging up.



FIGURE 3.27: The children used icons and inventive spellings to label the classroom window.

Teacher's Reflections



FIGURE 3.28: A label on the LEGO box.

On Students' Learning

Beth said: "At the beginning of the year, my students were often hesitant and shy about speaking English. This centre gave them chances to produce signs . . . at any stage in their writing development. They also could express the meaning to me, verbally, as well as to each other. It really got them talking."

Beth found that the students were eager to rotate to the sign production centre. When they completed activities at other times during the day, they often went to the production area to write. Beth found that this project encouraged the students' English development, both verbal and written.

On Extensions

Beth plans to extend this project next year by taking her students on an excursion through their local community. As they walk, students can keep a log book to record the different signs that students discover along the way. They can discuss the messages conveyed by the signs as well as the intended purpose of the signs and why a particular sign was placed in a particular place.

Students might categorize signs by the type of message they convey or by their purpose. Students can begin to distinguish how specific messages are "written" (e.g., image, symbol, few words, long message) and the benefits of writing messages these ways (e.g., why all stop signs have the same colour and shape, and why they have only one word written on them).

Additionally, as one of the "company's" projects, students could create advertisements to solicit "jobs" from people throughout the school and community. Beth might also develop mini-lessons to bring the art curriculum into the project. Students can learn about visual design elements and begin to use these to create their signs.

Starting with Community Events

Special events, such as the building of a new school or a cultural performance by local or visiting performers, along with annual events, such as the school's Terry Fox Run, are ideal starting points for CCCAs. The shared experience provides a springboard for students to construct new knowledge collaboratively. The excitement of the event makes for a highly motivational learning experi-

ence. Although the curriculum is not the initiator, language arts objectives can readily be used to frame the creative and collaborative activities. Other subject area objectives can be linked to the CCCAs as well.

66

the shared experience provides a springboard for students to construct new knowledge collaboratively

Terry Fox Day

Marcel, Grade 1 Teacher, Aspen, Alberta

Introduction

Marcel extended the grade one students' experiences during the Terry Fox Run into a collaborative group "re-telling" through pictures and dramatizations.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Organizing information into a personal/shared narrative; describing

actions in writing; connecting experiences to writing

Learning Skills: Considering the ideas of others; cooperating with others; working in

groups

Visual Arts: Using drawing materials to collaboratively recreate a shared experi-

ence

Drama: Selecting actions to dramatize an original text; social interaction

through dramatic expressions



Setting Up the Activity

Background

Marcel introduced his class to collaborative activities in September, just after their school's Terry Fox Day. With a beginning writing focus on recounting events, he asked the students to re-live some of their experiences on this day. Marcel asked them to close their eyes and try to picture what they did, what they saw, and how they felt during the Terry Fox Run events. The students remembered details such as the line of water bottles on the side of the track, all the students running, in a group and on their own, and the bingo blotters used to mark cards and indicate their progress around the track. Marcel used the oral language and whole group discussion as a way for the

students to plan the artworks that they were going to create collaboratively in small groups.



FIGURE 3.29: A collaborative drawing of the Terry Fox Day events.

Collaborative Art

The students brought their writing materials to a place in the classroom where each would have space around the large pieces of paper. Each student in the group contributed to the collaborative "re-lived" scene. The students shared their ideas with each other before they added images to the page and as they were drawing. Some groups planned out their scenes, fitting each other's drawing to the whole scene, while in other groups, students added images from the perspectives they took around the page. The students shared their completed drawings with peers, talking about the compositional choices they made and the story they told through images.

Drama

The students worked in their small groups to dramatize the experiences they recorded in their pictures. Once they had practiced a short dramatization, the students gathered together to perform for the class.



FIGURE 3.30: Students talk about what to add to their depiction of the Terry Fox Day events.

Teacher's Role

Marcel primarily took an observer role during the collaborative aspects of the art and drama activities. As the students drew their pictures, he walked around the classroom, passing by each group to observe how they negotiated with one another to contribute to the drawings, and how they planned their interactions for the dramatic productions.

Students' Responses

The grade one children gathered on the carpeted area in their small groups and, one at a time, took turns acting out what they did during the Terry Fox Run and what they drew in their pictures. Initially students gathered in a group on one side of the performance area and whispered together. Some were shy about performing in front of an audience and requested that their peers perform first.

Several students modeled running or skipping actions, showing ways to swing their arms when running, and then motioned for others to imitate the actions. In some groups, one student moved across the carpet and then came back to the group members; in others, the group lined up along the wall (perhaps in the same way that they drew the audience standing along the track) while one group member walked or ran by. Students in one small group cheered as their group members ran by, calling, "Wu-AHHHH!" or "Yeah!" The audience also responded enthusiastically to this group by laughing, cheering and chanting.

Most of the students dramatized their participation by simply taking turns skipping or running across the carpet. This was obviously a new experience for them. However, they clearly had a sense that they were performing. One group introduced their performance with a boy facing the audience to say, "Okay we're going to be doing a hard act, so it's gonna to be a little bit difficult for you guys to notice what we're doing, okay? It's kind of going to be a hard act." One student wrapped up her group's dramatization, by saying, "And that's what we did in the Terry Fox Run."



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Marcel said: "I did not ask the students to explain their decisions while they were drawing. Instead I observed the students so that I could see how they interact and what kinds of scaffolding and modeling I can provide for them. By observing, I also gave the students a chance to simply focus on their ideas and those of their peers. Next time I will ask them questions about what they are drawing so they can talk about the choices they are making."

On Extensions

Marcel wanted to repeat the collaborative art aspects of this CCCA. He thought that the students might plan out a game together. Because grade one students are early writers, he thought that the art and drawing activities might eventually become collaborative writing activities.

Onsters Go to School

Marcel, Grade 1 Teacher, Aspen, Alberta

Introduction

A new school is being constructed for the students in Aspen! They drew upon what they were learning about this construction, and their imaginations, to consider what kind of school would suit their "Onsters".

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: Organizing information; recording ideas in writing; connecting their

own experiences to their writing; creating an original text

Learning Skills: Considering the ideas of others; cooperating with others; working in

groups

Visual Arts: Using drawing materials to collaboratively create an imagined

structure

Drama: Exploring the point of view of various characters; social interaction

through dramatic expressions



Setting Up the Activity

Background

Marcel teaches in a school whose students are excited about the construction of their new school building. Marcel had been discussing the new school construction with the students, including what they are looking forward to at the school, what the playground might have, etc. Marcel carried the students' everyday experiences observing the construction site across the road into the Onster project. He grouped the students for mini-lessons about construction, introducing the students to new vocabulary and the various roles/jobs involved in building a new school. Marcel moved between non-

fiction and fiction, beginning with the construction of their own new school and moving into what form this might take with their imagined Onster schools.

Marcel was inspired by the story *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* by Louis Sachar (Sachar, 2004), which he had read with a previous class. This story was set at a strangely designed school and this got Marcel thinking that if the students' Onsters went to school, it would have to be a very strange looking school



FIGURE 3.31: *Students working on their Onster school puzzle pieces.*

Independent and Collaborative Art

Marcel and his students discussed features of schools that might be included in their Onster schools. He modeled his own drawing of an Onster school. Then, Marcel divided sheets of tag board into four puzzle pieces and cut them out. Each student drew and coloured their Onster school ideas onto the four puzzle pieces.

When these were drawn, the students worked in collaborative groups of four, to decide which of their puzzle pieces would come together, and how their four different visions would combine, to form a final Onster school.

Teacher's Role

In addition to the mini-lessons on construction, and which elements to include in the imaginative Onster schools, Marcel supported the students as they collaborated and discussed their designs. He moved from group to group asking the students to describe their drawings and how their elements would contribute to their group's Onster school. He prompted students for details about the items they drew, what construction materials the items might be made of, and how the Onsters would use the items or interact at the school.

Consider the following exchange as an example:

Student: It's actually a waterproof bubble.

Marcel: What is it made of? What material is it made of?

Student: It's made of a plastic bubble.

Marcel: Do you think that it's a soft plastic?

Student: Uh, huh, yes.

Students' Responses

One group included elements for the Onster school that would allow the Onsters to participate in Parkour, a game developed from military training on obstacle courses, where a person moves from one place to another in fast and efficient ways. One student explained:

"We have a Parkour centre, so we jump over here and we swing up to here and we go across the zipline and then you go through the door and climb up to the other end, and start all over again ... it's called The Little Legend."

Another student group included zip lines at their Onster schools. They explained:

"It has a playground ... you can go across ... iPads on the wall ... that's a window and a zip line there." "I draw the iPads." "That's stairs to get up into the playground." "These are thunderclouds."

Another student, Bryan, included an elaborate water slide for his group's Onster school. Bryan pointed to each part of his picture and said:

"These are the big bubbles and they go all the way down here so they don't get wet. There are fish in here so they can see the fish and dive and get all wet. These are the huge water slides. This is how you get into the bubble. It's actually a waterproof bubble and it splashes into the pool ... these are Onster windows". (See Figure 3.32)



FIGURE 3.32: One of Bryan's puzzle pieces for the Onster school.

Other descriptions included:

"These are spiders so that if someone is being bad they can get them"

"This is a big sparkly pool"

"They are supposed to go down the ladder."

"You can go down this and end up in the water slide ... here's a racing track."



Teacher's Reflections

On Students' Learning

Marcel said: "I knew that it wasn't going to be a traditional building that you would see, but that's okay because I remembered reading Louis Sachar. It was really cool and the students like that. Right away, from the start, they liked that it was going to be their own school, and they were designing it and putting the puzzle pieces together so that it would look very different. I did not anticipate that it would turn into the project that it did. I was going to continue with different ideas . . . but I would like to continue with this kind of extended project/theme next year. It was really successful. . . . The kids took more ownership over this long process. The kids were growing with it. Each step of the journey as we went along just got better and there were more ideas. Now they are really writing a lot, whereas at the beginning, they were not at that stage."





FIGURES 3.33 – 3.34: Robin's independent writing (on right) about her group's Onster school (on left). She wrote: "Our Onster school has a playground, and a zipline and a water slide. You don't have to do your work. Even you have to have fun and be nice to other Onsters."

On Extensions

Marcel plans to have students work in small groups to prepare and perform two short dramas for their peers. The first drama will centre on how a new school is constructed. The students can bring their understanding about construction roles and equipment, which has been part of their readings and discussions, to shape the actions and sounds for this performance. Their second dramatic piece will be more imaginative as they enact how their Onsters would interact and behave at school.

Following the collaborative work and performances, and now that the students have had plenty of opportunities to discuss and consider their ideas about school construction, Onsters and Onster schools, Marcel plans to extend the activities into longer pieces of independent writing. First, the students will write about an aspect of the Onster school construction (nonfiction) and then they will compose a story about their Onster attending the new school (fiction). Then, Marcel will ask them to look at the school that they created and write about what Onsters might do at that school.

Marcel said that, "at the beginning of the year, and into the middle of the year, I read through the children's stories and gave them positive feedback about the ideas. Now I am able to give some feedback about spelling, word sounds, and punctuation."

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