Honouring Students as Creators, Thinkers, & Communicators

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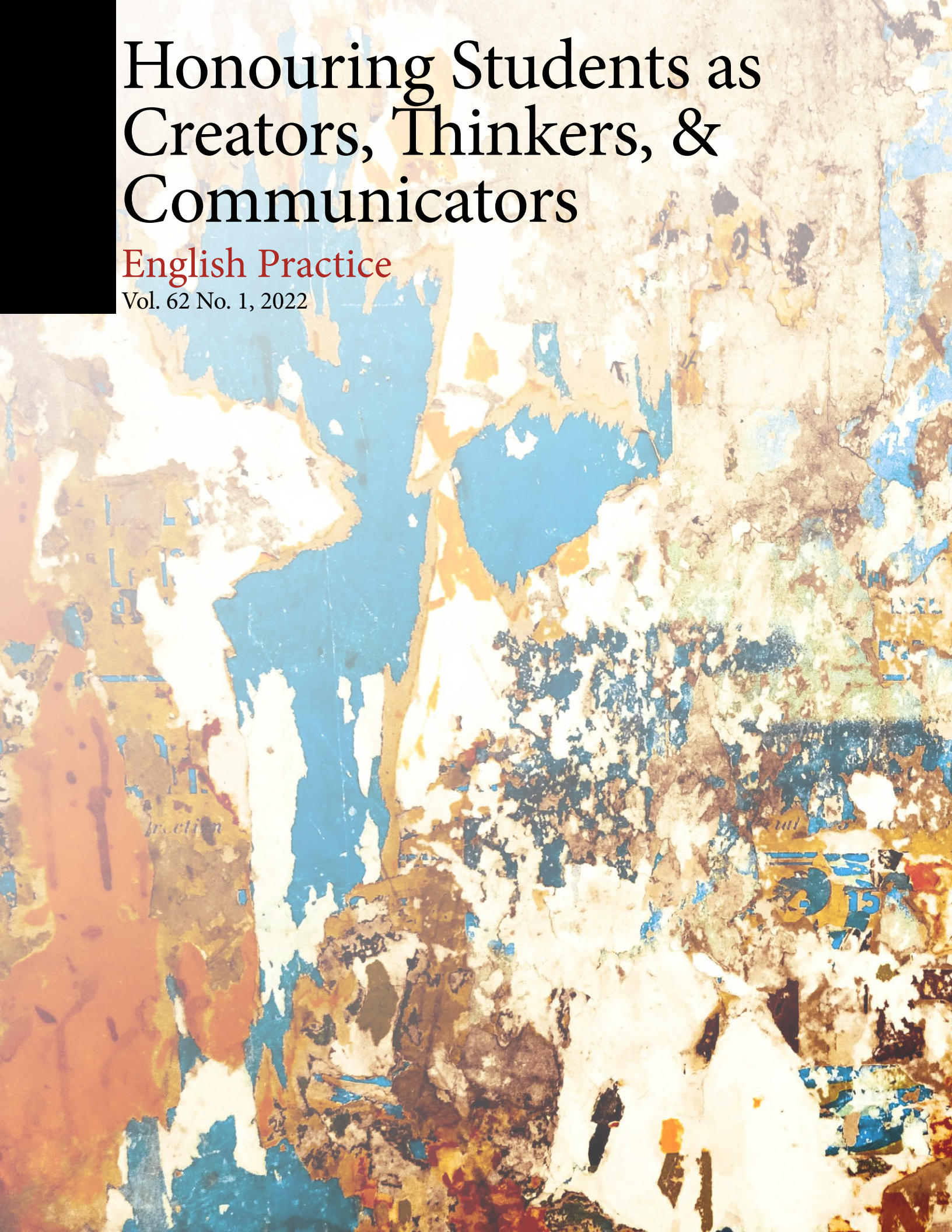

Embracing Equity in Text: The Power of Mode and Perspective (Call for Articles)
In line with the BCTELA Fall 2021 conference theme, *English Practice* invites you to submit teaching ideas, classroom inquiries and practice-focused research, reflective and critical narratives, poems, fiction and other arts-based renderings, or book reviews for our upcoming issue.

Entitled *Embracing Equity in Text: The Power of Mode and Perspective* this issue encourages us to think about the texts we bring into our classroom, in teaching English Language Arts. Guiding questions may include: How can we build a safe and inclusive classroom community by the choice of texts we share with our students? How are the texts we use, reflective of the students in our classes? How can we encourage ourselves and our colleagues to explore texts from diverse backgrounds and voices? What kinds of modes and perspectives are important to bring into our English Language Arts classrooms when fostering an equitable environment for our students? How do we support our students, as they find their voices and share their perspectives?

We have four sections to assist you in preparing and submitting your writing:
- Teaching Ideas (classroom lessons and strategies)
- Investigating our Practice (teacher inquiry)
- Salon (literary & arts-based pieces)
- Check this Out (book reviews)

Submissions can be emailed to:
englishpracticejournal@gmail.com

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Editor: Belinda Chi

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Honouring Students as Creators, Thinkers & Communicators

"Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we reperceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life."

-Peter Senge

Welcome to our issue *Honouring Students as Creators, Thinkers & Communicators*. In this issue, we invited educators to share how they support students in ways that honour them, as they learn to reflectively, critically and creatively express themselves in our English Language Arts classrooms. Themes include exploring the possibilities of online, classroom and outdoor environments, fostering story creation through technology, exploring identities through reflection and examining the voices and perspectives of the stories we bring into our classrooms.

Guiding questions may include: What does being a creator, thinker and communicator mean to students? How can we encourage students to show their thinking and learning in creative ways? How can we teach students to be mindful communicators? What kinds of perspectives are important to bring into our English Language Arts classrooms when fostering a safe space for students to discover their identity? How do we support our students to find their voices?

In this issue, practitioners share how we can engage students in a multitude of ways that allow for all students at various ages and abilities to express themselves. We are inspired by how students were able to build on their capacities as creators and makers through an online learning environment. We learn about how students activated their creativity by staging scenes in the outdoors to develop original stories. We are introduced to ways in which we can engage students in creating podcasts and how this mode of expressing themselves allowed for all students to feel successful. We are reminded about the importance of personal narratives and reflection; looking at ourselves can be a mirror and window to understanding how we can better connect to our students. As well, we are encouraged to look through our bookshelves, to ensure that multiple voices and perspectives from diverse cultures are being taught to our students.

We hope that you enjoy reading this issue of our journal. We want to thank our editing circle for their time and effort in peer reviewing the submissions that were sent to *English Practice*. We would also like to thank all the authors who took time to share their thoughts, insights and practice with us, especially during these unprecedented times. We look forward to future contributions from more of you and hope that this journal inspires you in your own practice as an educator.

Joan Greenlay is an intermediate teacher in Burnaby, with a passion for social emotional learning, social justice and community. She has a Master's in Educational Practice and is currently on secondment with SFU as a placement coordinator in Professional Programs.

Belinda Chi is an elementary school teacher with the Burnaby School District and has an M.Ed. in Educational Practice. Currently, she is working with student teachers as a Faculty Associate at Simon Fraser University in the Professional Development Program. She is passionate about social justice, critical literacy and building community through personal narratives.

Tim McCreesh is a Vice Principal with the Greater Victoria School District. He has a Master's in Educational Practice from Simon Fraser University. His passions are in helping his students develop a deep love for reading and writing, social and emotional learning and developing a community of learners for all.

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Renée Sarojini Saklikar

Discovering our birthright in English: Suggestions for teaching students of colour in English Literature

I grew up in this country rarely seeing or hearing writers or teachers of colour. For example, Mr. Maharaj taught me grade 10 chemistry. He was the only teacher of colour I encountered throughout my primary and secondary education. While studying English Literature in university, my required text, the *Norton Anthology of Literature* (3rd Edition) featured a front cover with thirty white men. This experience changed when I entered Simon Fraser University's The Writer's Studio and the more diverse writing community in Vancouver, BC. When I became a creative writing instructor, I was determined to create poetry of high merit, in English, with narratives and visual elements, that included characters who looked like me.

In 2015, I became the first the poet laureate of the City of Surrey in British Columbia. I worked with culturally diverse groups of pre-teens (8-9;10-12) and teenagers (13-18), as well as their parents. The City of Surrey is one of Canada's fastest-growing, multicultural "edge cities" with complex social and economic challenges—including gang violence and lack of access to affordable housing—as well as a rich and lively arts scene. My three-year term gave me insight into my students' interest in myths and fables from the point of view of their multicultural backgrounds.

The youth and children that I worked with told me they didn't see themselves represented in Canadian literature. Pre-teen residents and their parents consistently told me: "If we can't see ourselves reflected in the culture, we can't grow and flourish and participate in the culture. "*We can't be what we can't see.*" To help them, I conceptualized, planned, obtained funding, and then facilitated and lead a series of teen chapbook-making workshops where we explored storytelling, poetry, and visual art, and investigated our "origin stories." We held a series of afternoon chapbook making workshops and provided materials and ideas. The teens signed up and attended, with enthusiasm and a penchant for making whimsical and interesting booklets. We shared stories as we worked: about arrival, about our names, about heartaches and triumphs. At the end of my tenure, Surrey Libraries displayed our chapbooks at the Surrey Central Library. Several teens gave me their chapbooks as mementos, which I cherish. Several teens are now pursuing writing as part of their post-secondary studies.

What emerged from my work with Surrey youth and their parents was their expressed need to see themselves in "mainstream, established 'white' Canadian culture." They didn't necessarily want to read and be inspired by poetry and fables from their cultures of origin; they were interested in "mash-ups" and "re-telling's" of the stories they heard and saw in school. These teens felt disconnected to many English literary traditions and stated they "wished they'd been exposed to literature where they saw themselves portrayed in the classics."

In 2019, as Writer in Residence for the Surrey English Teachers Association, I worked with students to help them make poems and re-tell cultural myths and legends with non-white protagonists and antagonists. Our work

often revolved around poems to do with alienation and family struggles. Some of the most powerful work came from students who didn't say too much in the writing workshops. For example, one afternoon, at a North Surrey secondary school, a grade eleven student of colour, sketched a simple diagram of a house. He chose a few words, cut out from newspapers, crafting a series of statements that evoked family trouble and his own anxiety. At the end of the session, without looking me in the eye, he placed his creation on my desk and walked away without a glance. I keep his work in a collection that I now use for teaching similar workshops. The power of making, as a learning experience, as witnessed in this example, is one I hope teachers of literature and language arts will adapt as fits their own classroom needs.

I am taking a risk by venturing out of my poet's comfort zone in writing to practicing teachers of English Literature and English Language Arts: to say, consider expanding your choice of books introduced to students, that represent genres. For example, if referencing epic poems, choose the work of Canadian long poem writers such as Dionne Brand, Canisa Lubrin, or Jordan Abel, to name only a few of the award-winning writers of colour expertly practicing in the long form and telling engaging stories. If choosing picture books for younger grades, consider Akem's illustrated, *Brown Sugar Babe.* I see on the Twitter feed of BCTELA such a rich diversity of learning resources: it makes me so happy.

As a board director for the Surrey International Writers conference with primarily genre-based writers, I've become aware of range of diversity offered in Y.A., Fantasy, and Spec Fiction and I'm gratified to see this community embrace authors such as Michelle Grey Smith. May I also suggest the work of Nalo Hopkinson and Octavia Butler? My sense is that teachers in B.C. are rapidly advancing the cause of diversity and representation in the genres books they share with students. Also, I will speak bluntly here, as a former poet laureate and writer in residence in Surrey, I saw a lot of classrooms filled with almost all students of colour, taught by white teachers. Often, not always, what I saw in the Prep Rooms were stacks of books such as *To Kill A Mockingbird.* At a BCTELA workshop, several teachers expressed dismay when I suggested this book didn't add or serve Canadian students today; although it's a book I've read and loved as a child.

What choices will be made in these classrooms when it comes to the selection of representative works in genres such as poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and memoir? Will the teaching of literature include time for creative making so that students can practice the ideas they are learning, with guided prompts to help them actualize their own visions for what how to learn the rules of form?

For example, one of the popular activities I shared as Writer in Residence was the use of what I called the "10 x 14" (ten beats across, 14 lines down). Only when the room hummed with that powerful connection of a community of makers, did I sneak in the word, "sonnet" and say a few words about the meaning of the word "stanza" (Italian for room). As students worked out their "10 x 14" puzzles, I shared with them how long it took me to get the "beat" of what is called *iambic pentameter.*

I told them this story: in 2010, at the Skagit River Poetry Festival, when I was *well* over thirty, with two post-secondary degrees, I finally "got 10 x 14": and it was in a drafty hall up in La Connor WA, with the African American poet Terrance Hayes. He told us the tragic story of the poet Robert Hayden and made us count out the beats of Hayden's poem, *Those Winter Sundays*, as we practiced reading it out loud. Something magical happened: I finally felt welcomed enough into English, my mother tongue, to take the timid initial steps into metered verse. I entered into my full birthright as an English language speaker and began the steps to gain a basic level of skill with the sonnet verse form.

Were the students in my workshop rapt with attention as I then quoted, from memory, "Oh then I see Queen Mab hath been with you" (Mercutio's dream speech to Romeo, *Romeo and Juliet*) and tapped out the beats on the fingers of my hands, asking them to join in—followed with the first line from Hayden's poem, "Sundays, too, my father got up early"? Okay, well, to be honest, most of them just ignored my little homily and got on with their "10 x 14"

before the buzzer ended the block. But after each class, a few would rise and come and talk to me about rhyme and metre. Joy.

My desired outcome is that in our classrooms, we research and introduce books that resonate with Canadian students, from all backgrounds, including those of colour, like those I served in my role as Surrey's poet laureate. Let's help students to see what they can be, through the power of fully embracing English language skills and through the sharing of a wide range of literature. I've always been intrigued with the narrative potential of poetry combined with visuals. Perhaps teachers will consider Wayde Compton's *The Blue Road?* I would love to hear from English teachers about the books you are choosing to demonstrate to your classrooms the range, and depth, and audacity of what Canadian writers of colour are producing right now.

Renée Sarojini Saklikar is a poet and lawyer who lives in Vancouver on the un/ceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples. She is the author of four books, including the ground-breaking poetry book, *children of air india,* about the bombing of Air India Flight 182 which won the Canadian Authors Association Poetry Prize and is the co-author, with Dr. Mark Winston, of the poetry and essay collection, *Listening to the Bees,* winner of the 2019 Gold Medal Independent Publishers Book Award, Environment/Ecology. *Bramah and The Beggar Boy* is her new book, the first in an epic fantasy in verse series, which features a female hero helping seed savers and orphans save a planet ravaged by climate change. Renée Sarojini curates the poetry reading series *Lunch Poems at SFU* and in 2021 curated Vancouver's first free Poetry Phone, 1-833-POEMS-4-U. She is an instructor for SFU and VCC and was the first poet laureate for the City of Surrey, (2015-2018) and served as the Writer in Residence for the Surrey English Teachers Association in 2019. Passionate about helping students find their creative voice, Renée Sarojini loves visiting classrooms (virtual, online, and in person) and is enthusiastic about connecting with teachers. DMs on twitter to @reneesarojini are welcome. #representationmatters

Jessica Knott, Cree-Métis

My Bookshelf

"Decolonize your bookshelf."
I saw this on a t-shirt once and immediately fell in love. The idea of weaving in multiple perspectives, shifting away from dominant ideologies in order to embrace various worldviews and perspectives. As a bibliophile, I immediately created a list in my mind of all the authors I would include in this magical space. But then came the questions. What does it mean to decolonize a bookshelf? Is the bookshelf itself not a colonial construct? The concept of ideas being stored and shelved – collecting dust in the possession of those who can afford to own them- seemed to defy the term "decolonize".

Maybe "indigenize" would be better?
Once again, I dreamed of the perfect Indigenous space –King, Robinson, Wagamese, seated on the cedar planks of my library laughing and swapping tales. But - is it possible to Indigenize something that is inherently not-Indigenous? To confine the stories to written word. To the English language. Stories bound by paper instead of being brought to life by being spoken. I was once told by a Kwantlen Elder, Cheryl Gabriel, that Indigenous narratives are more than just a story. It is how our ancestors speak to us. Every time we tell a story, we are engaging in a conversation. To not share their words would be like putting them on hold. I wonder if they like elevator music?

Maybe we could try "diversify"?
There is no radical change needed to craft this space. A peppering of perspectives. Think of the rainbow that we could create…except is it enough. Placing hooks and Battiste on the shelves next to all those loud voices – many of whom have not had to share the podium and do not know when to stop talking. Will these "diverse" texts be strong enough to make their voice heard?

Maybe I should not seek out a word? Maybe this is an action?
Let's take the books off the shelves and open them on the land. Let the salmon tell us of their sacrifice as we wade in the river, and coyote sing songs of his journeys and misadventures as we weave him a new coat. I guess that is one way to decolonize our bookshelf – by bringing the stories back to life.

Jessica Knott (Cree-Métis, British) is a teacher within the SD42 Aboriginal Education Department and currently working part-time at UBC as an adjunct professor. Her research interests include adolescent literacy, Indigenous pedagogies, land-based practices and teacher education. She is also an avid hiker and enjoys writing poetry.

Michelle McKay & Klara Redford

The AMAZING Kindy Makers: A Story of Fostering a Maker Mindset in an Online Kindergarten Classroom

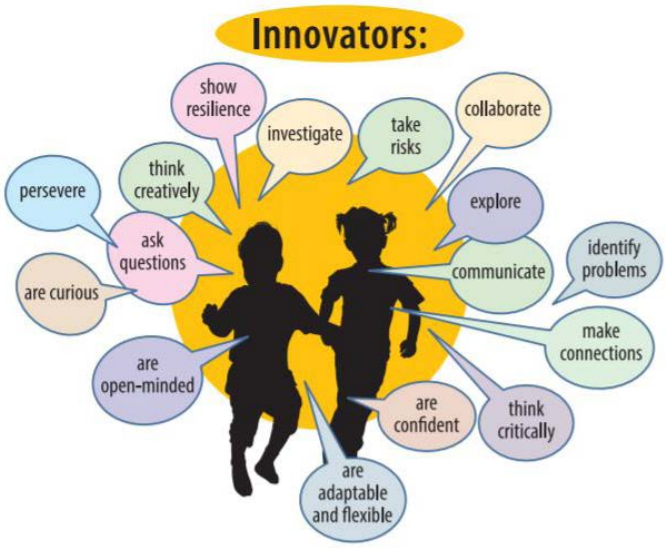
Setting the Context of an Online Kindergarten Environment

If you ever asked us as experienced Kindergarten educators if we would be teaching a play-based, inquiry-based Kindergarten program to 4, 5, and 6-year-olds online, we would have confidently answered a strong 'no' (and most likely laughed at the developmental inappropriateness of such a practice). March 13, 2020, changed that for us, and almost every other Kindergarten educator around the world, as the COVID-19 global pandemic emerged and required us to shift our practice to an online learning environment. We quickly had to pivot and rethink how we could provide a play-based program that honoured our students and our pedagogy. A natural starting point for us was to continue to engage our students in the making process, as we had done throughout the school year.

As the new school year began in September 2020, and online learning continued to be a reality, we knew we had to build on the successes we had in "making" with our students. This article will explore how we thoughtfully co-created an environment with our resilient Kindergarten students, enrolled in online classrooms, that would allow them to flourish and shine as they engaged in authentic making opportunities precipitating them to also develop key early literacy skills.

Overview of the Making Mindset

What does it mean to be a "maker"? It's simple. Making allows students to be engaged in a process of "learning by doing" - by making something (e.g., using loose parts, paper, construction materials like blocks or Legos, recycled items like empty boxes or containers, creating with playdough or plasticine, coding a story or game, creating a video or photograph, painting, cooking, making music) or taking something apart. It means that we provide space and time for our capable, curious and competent young learners to be engaged in opportunities, that by nature, concurrently develop 21st-century competencies like critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving and innovation. "Making" creates not only excitement and engagement, but at its



"This illustration shows "what innovators do" and the traits they possess. Children who are encouraged to innovate develop habits of mind and characteristics that serve them throughout their lives" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 89). These were some of the traits we were looking for in students as they engaged in the making process.

core, we are creating an environment that fosters the joy of lifelong learning. Providing opportunities for students to develop a "maker mindset" allows for the intersectionality of the soft skills, mentioned above, but also much necessary intentional learning and application of our curriculum, specifically, demonstrating literacy and math behaviours in the Early Years. How we do this as educators, in an online environment, depends critically on the relationships we have built with our students and their families and how we have documented and honoured student interest and abilities. As John Spencer and A.J. Juliani (2017) so aptly put it, "our job is not to prepare students for something. Our job is to help students prepare themselves for anything" (p. xxxiii).

Co-Constructing an Understanding of "Making" with Students

As we reflected on teaching and learning in an online environment for 4, 5, and 6-year-olds, we began to consider opportunities for students to create, make connections and become engaged independent learners, where the learning could align within the prescribed "screen time" (e.g., synchronous learning) as set out by our Ministry of Education. "Making" was a natural fit. It was accessible, honoured students' learning journeys and provided access to all through a lens of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2018).

Our journey began with introducing "making" and providing opportunities for developing a maker mindset by choosing meaningful and culturally responsive mentor texts - texts that allowed students to make connections to their own lives, build vocabulary, develop comprehension skills and link the concepts and ideas within the text to critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and innovation - in essence, "making".

Our first mentor texts included "Be a Maker" by Katey Howes, "The Most Magnificent Thing" by Ashley Spires and "What Do You Do with an Idea" by Kobi Yamada. The Most Magnificent Thing created a special sort of interest among the students. This is the story of a little girl who was determined to tinker, create, iterate, fail up, problem solve, communicate and find resilience in the joy of "making". Students were able to make immediate connections to the character and felt like they were on her maker journey with her! It was brought to the educators' attention by some of the students that "even girls can make awesome things with tools and stuff, just like my mom and just like me!" And so, our maker journey began.

Our first virtual making began with a co-created understanding that the process of making was far more important than the final product. We talked about materials and what was available in students' homes that would allow for open-ended making. We talked about the potential need to fasten items together and what that might look like. We talked about student interests, ideas and plans. We talked A LOT! In an online environment, this was a perfect opportunity to listen and document oral communication skills, vocabulary development and understanding of key concepts. Students' homes became "makerspaces" and families became excited to listen, watch and also participate. Students were excited to create their very own "Most Magnificent Thing".

This is a photograph of a LEGO maze that one Kindergarten student created as their first maker project. The purpose of their maze was to get the mung beans from the beginning to the end of the maze. They decided to use plastic wrap to cover their maze so that the mung beans would not fall out.

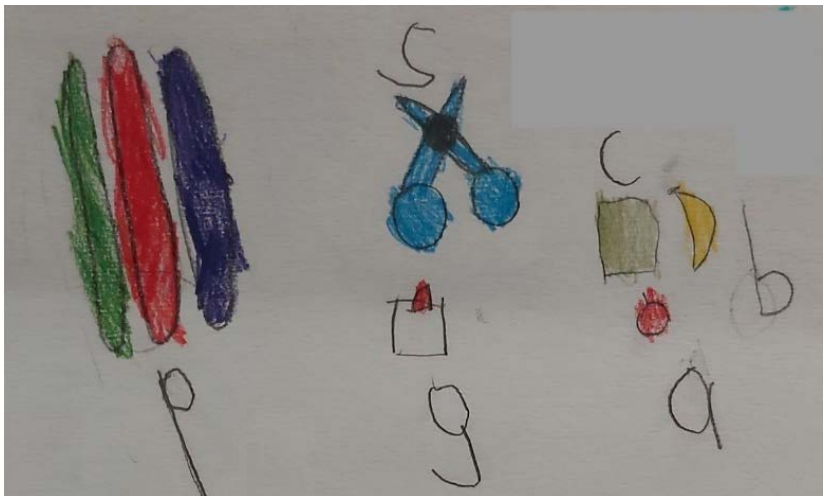
Beginning the Making Journey

Once we had co-constructed an understanding of what "making" is, we began to explore the concept that we all are 'makers'. Again, we relied on a mentor-text to develop an understanding of being in a maker stance using the text "Boxitects" by Kim Smith. This is the story of a little girl who loves to make with boxes - she calls herself a Boxitect. Her mother decides to send her to "Maker School" where she meets other students who are also makers, of all kinds: Tinfoilers, Spagettitects and Bakeologists. After reading this book, students were eager to make connections and

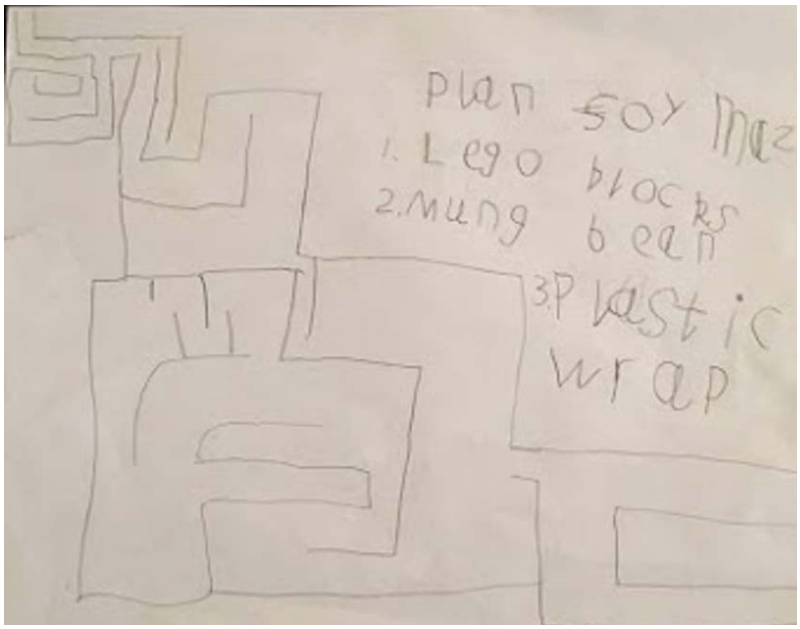
share what type of 'maker' they see themselves as and educators recorded their ideas on a Google Jamboard. Some shared that they were 'LEGOtects', and others were 'BLOCKitects', 'PAPERmakers', and 'BLANKETeers'.

Once students articulated how they see themselves as makers, we began to engage in an open-ended making process with them. We first focused on the importance of making our thinking visible when engaging in the making process by creating plans to document our ideas and design process (much like the main character in the "Boxitects" story). We invited students to engage in the making process, creating anything they could imagine using the materials around their homes, but encouraged them first to create their plan. Many students used drawings to document their thinking and we encouraged them to use their written language skills to provide more detail in their plan by labelling their pictures or writing a list of materials they would need in the design process. These plans were shared with students and educators during a synchronous learning experience before students began engaging with the making process.

Some students used materials that were already familiar to them while others tried new materials for the first time. Whatever it was, these materials came from students' homes and they were not required (actually discouraged) to buy anything new for their maker creations. These initial creations were unique to each individual student and student makers were so very excited to share their finished creations with the class. There were castles, drums, cars and boats. There was a bridge, a garden and a robot. There was so much that students wanted to share with each other about their maker projects! We began by having students share their plans so their peers could see the connection between the initial planning stages and final stages of the making process. Some students shared photographs of their creations, while others shared 'live' by holding their creations up to the screen during synchronous learning sessions where they could speak about their maker projects.



This is a photograph of a plan developed by a student who was creating a 'trap' for a snowperson that outlined the materials they would need for their creation. They used the first letter of each word to label the materials they needed to create their trap. For example, 'p' for popsicle sticks, 'g' for glue. This gave us insight into this student's understanding of initial letter sounds in words.



This was the plan that the student who created a LEGO maze for a mung bean drew before engaging in the making process. This student used words to represent the materials they would use for their creation.

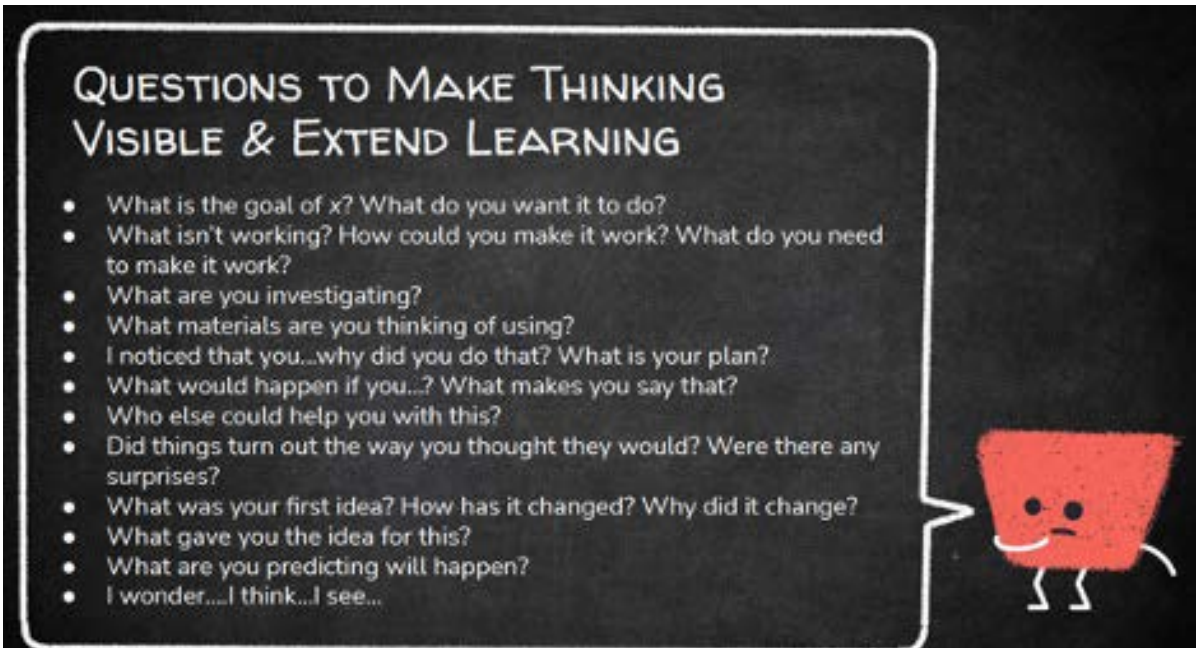
Literacy Skills Developed through Making

In addition to developing many problem-solving and innovating skills, there were numerous early literacy skills that students developed through making. Let's be clear - literacy development is multi-modal which is exemplified in our early learning classrooms, virtual or otherwise (Nicotra, 2019; Palmeri, 2012; Stockman, 2016). Writing, for example, "isn't merely text or print, and writers aren't writers

simply because they know how to form letters and words on a page" (Stockman, 2019, para. 40). Through the making process, we integrated a multimodal approach to literacy and writing by focusing on generating ideas and communicating our thinking in a way that holds meaning, honouring the multiple ways children represent their understanding as their written language and print skills develop (Stockman, 2016).

Making allowed students to explore and engage in literacy development through meaning and purpose - through authentic, hands-on learning experiences that invited and encouraged our students to want to share and do more. Grounding our making practice in a multimodal approach to literacy development, provided students with a plethora of opportunities to "write" inside and throughout the making process (Stockman, 2016). They developed phonemic awareness while creating maker plans. Their capacity for vocabulary development continued to build at their own pace and understanding, as they connected to the making process and products. For the majority of students, their listening and speaking skills dramatically improved through presentations to others and through peer feedback. Students engaged in the continual development of concepts of print, expanding their writing with details and developing writing conventions (Cunningham & Allington, 2011).

Many of the students who were part of our online classrooms were English Language Learners. Engaging in these making invitations and learning experiences allowed them to develop their literacy skills in an authentic, hands-on context. This made the learning more accessible for them. We used strategic questioning to assist students who are still developing their oral language skills to articulate their thinking and learning.



This image features some of the question prompts that we used when engaging in making with students to help make their thinking visible and extend the learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 91).

Considerations for Making in an Online Learning Environment

There are numerous considerations when engaging in making online that we will explore in this section. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather the main considerations that we have reflected on as we engage students with making in an online learning environment that includes: access to materials, the sharing of the making and learning process, and co-creating in partnership with families, educators and students.

Access to Materials

One of the greatest challenges of online learning (especially during a pandemic) is for educators to know what access to materials students have. The planning process for learning invitations took on another dimension of reflecting and considering what learning experiences could be accessible for all students, regardless of what materials they had access to within their homes. Educators carefully considered and constantly questioned whether students had

equitable access to materials while planning. This was a shift from the planning process during in-school learning, where educators had a fulsome understanding of what materials students needed and could access during making experiences. Many families were experiencing financial difficulties and stress due to the pandemic, and we wanted to make sure that we could invite students into the making process in a way that would leverage the materials they already had within their home environments by getting creative.

Sharing of the PROCESS

An important consideration during online learning is how educators are assessing the process of thinking and learning, and not solely focusing on the end products. During the initial shut down of schools in the Spring of 2020, due to COVID-19, our experience was that it was a common practice to have students and families share photo documentation of the final products of various learning experiences. What was important for us as we entered into the online classroom environment was to honour learning in a similar way that we would in the physical classroom and empower students to communicate their thinking and learning in as many ways as possible, with as much independence as possible.

Sharing the process of making became a focus for us as we noticed and named the learning that was happening. Synchronous sharing of the learning process became a valued part of our online time together. Having students share their creations provided insight into their thinking and the design process they engaged in and allowed for more meaningful feedback to be shared. It also provided an opportunity for students to engage with one another by asking questions, iterating ideas and providing feedback, which aligned more with their in-person learning experiences.

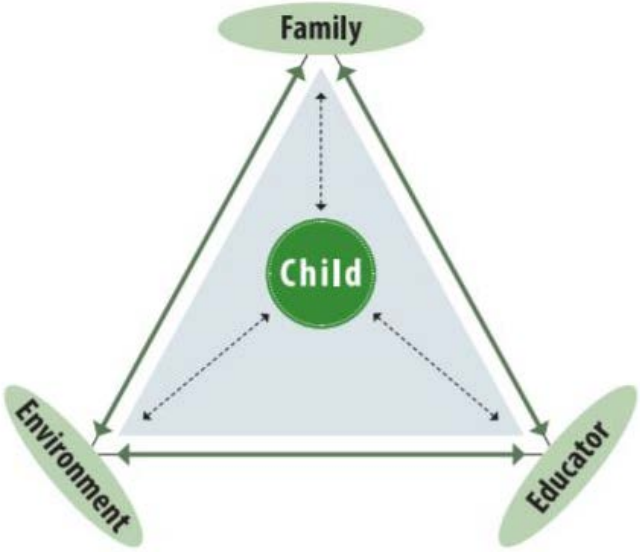
Co-creating in Partnership with Families, Educators and Students

Families have always been an essential component of the Kindergarten program, however, the shift to online learning provided an opportunity to honour this belief and practice in a new way. Many students relied on support from family members to be able to access learning experiences (e.g., Google Classroom, choice boards, videos, classroom websites) and share their thinking and learning. Although the learning environment became 'virtual' the physical settings in which students were engaged in learning transferred to their home environment and family members became an essential component of the educator team.

This shift provided a new opportunity to invite family members into the making process in a way that was responsive to their needs. Learning experiences in the form of various invitations were extended to students and their families. Families took advantage of the invitations and engaged in play and making with students allowing them to take their making in directions they may not have if they engaged in them without the support of their family members.

Stories from Practice

In this section, we will describe an example of how we used a mentor text to spark the making process in an online Kindergarten learning environment. Following this example of using a mentor text, we will explore other ways to provoke makers to think and create, including the use of video and photo invitations.



This image outlines our belief that, "learning and development happen within the context of relationships among children, families, educators, and their environments" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 9).

Fort Building

We started with a mentor text, "The Little Red Fort" by Brenda Maier to introduce students to the idea of fort building. After reading the text, students were invited to brainstorm and create a plan about the steps they could use to create their

fort and what materials they had within their home that could be used during the making process. Students created detailed plans as they began to imagine and visualize what their fort would look like. These plans varied for each student, but all included a drawing of their fort and some included written language. Written language ranged from labelling various parts of their fort structure and listing materials they would use, to instructions on how they might plan to build their fort. Before moving on to the creation stage of the making process, students shared their design plans during a synchronous learning period online with their peers. This was an excellent opportunity to develop their oral language skills and engage in the process of providing their peers with feedback.

What was inspiring to see was how students referenced these plans in the creation stage of their making process. Some students chose to build their fort independently, while others engaged in the process with siblings and other family members. Once they had collected materials from around their home, they engaged in the fort building process. Many of the forts that were built closely resembled students' plans and the most important features in their design. For example, one student had drawn her fort coming to a peak in her plan and ensured that during the making process she gathered materials from around her home to ensure that the physical fort structure had a similar peak.

Students shared their forts in various ways - some through photos and some through videos. Not all students were able to share photos or videos of the process and products of making. To honour the innovation of each student and their engagement in the making process, time and space during synchronous learning were provided for the sharing of fort designs. An agreed-upon 'fort sharing day' was determined and during this time students and educators joined the synchronous learning session from inside their forts.

The fort building making invitation was well received by students and revisited often, with various fort structures being designed and built over extended periods. Students have taken this in various directions and integrated it into play experiences with other members of their family. The forts they created became an important place within their homes to engage in other learning experiences.

This photograph represents how a child conceptualized their fort using a drawing and words and then built their fort with careful consideration as to how they would represent their drawing using materials from around their home. They paid careful attention to the peak of their tent making sure this was a part of their design.

How Else Might We Provoke Makers to Think and Create?

In addition to using mentor texts, we reflected on *how else might we provoke makers to think and create* in an online Kindergarten learning environment? We offered various invitations to students, that will be explored in this section, that sparked making through the use of creativity with common household items, as well as video design challenge invitations.

Making with Common Household Items

Leveraging common household items in the making process was an important consideration in terms of responding to the vast differences in access to materials that students had. We invited students to engage in the making process with various common household items including utensils, clothing and hangers. Invitations to engage in the making process were presented to students in the form of pictures and text that included various design ideas for creating and making.

Creating with Utensils.

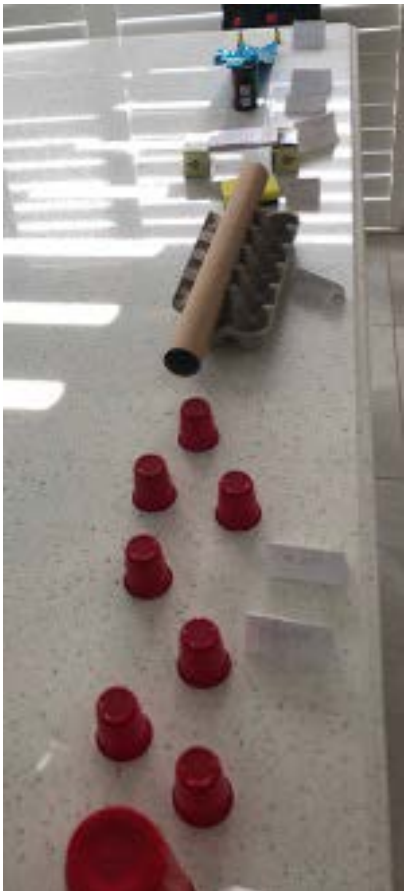
Using whatever utensils they had around their homes, students were invited to create a piece of art using utensils as loose parts, create music with different utensils, or create a unique or new type of utensil inspired by the 'spork'.

Creating with Clothing.

Another common item that we knew students would have access to would be clothing and shoes. Various invitations were provided where students could continue to create and make with clothing including: using recycled materials to create a new type of shoe, a shoe store (where they could engage in dramatic play), and creating pictures by laying clothes on the bed or floor. Some of these invitations led students to naturally want to write about their making using pictures and words. These pictures became an entry into the storytelling process where these creations 'came to life' through the storying of their creations.

Video Design Challenge Invitations.

We also created short videos that were shared with students that introduced them to various design challenges. These videos were leveraged during asynchronous learning opportunities and made the invitations accessible because students could listen to the instructions and revisit them multiple times. A video design invitation that students were very engaged with was our 'Obstacle Course Challenge'. This invitation consisted of a short (4 minute) video that challenged students to design and create an obstacle course using recycled materials found within their home. This video was used in a similar manner as a mentor text, as it modelled for students what an obstacle course is and the steps they might follow in creating one, highlighting the language and vocabulary naturally involved in the making process. The focus of this design challenge was using prepositional language to describe how a toy or stuffed animal might 'move' through the obstacle course. Alternatively, if students did not have access to recycled materials, they were invited to create an obstacle course that they could move through themselves while still developing this prepositional language. In addition, there was a focus on giving clear instructions when sharing their obstacle course with their peers so that others would understand how to move through their obstacle course. This experience connects to procedural writing and provides a further opportunity to develop oral language skills.



This is a photograph of an obstacle course a student created using recycled materials. They labeled each step of their obstacle course using words, such as 'jump, 'top', and 'under'.

Conclusion

Online teaching and learning for Kindergarten students has obviously been a challenge given that our curriculum document was never intended to be delivered in an online learning environment where inquiry and play-based pedagogies are at the core of the program. The requirement for educators to respond and pivot quickly required us to be innovators and makers ourselves as we reconceptualized what teaching and learning in Kindergarten could look

like within this new reality. Making allowed us opportunities and space to center students and what they needed during this unprecedented time - relationship building, opportunities for play and creativity and connection to our communities and the world around us. Reflective practice and a supportive educator community, including families, has enabled us to find opportunities for joyful learning during this pandemic.

Engaging students in the making process allowed them to develop a maker mindset and explore who they are as creators, thinkers and communicators through authentic and responsive maker experiences. By scaffolding the making process and using mentor texts we were able to create opportunities for students to develop an understanding of the making process and develop the various literacy skills associated with making that were outlined in this article.

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Michelle McKay is a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE/University of Toronto) in Curriculum and Pedagogy. She is also an educator with a large school board in Southern Ontario and facilitates professional learning for early years educators. Her passions include early learning, equity based work and inclusive instructional strategies. Connect with Michelle on Twitter (@MsMichelleMcKay).

Klara Redford has been an educator for over 15 years and has spent the majority of that time in the Kindergarten classroom. Klara is a professional learning facilitator and author amplifying the voices of early years educators and students. You can find Klara and Michelle presenting about the early years at various conferences and for various organizations across Ontario. Klara's passion includes integrating 21st century learning and technology as a natural part of play. Follow the learning on Twitter @kindyfriends.

Lisa Green

Unintended Outcomes: Deconstructing Student-Centered Curriculum Through a Grade Twelve Podcast Project

At the end of the 2016/17 school year the head of my high school's English department, forced to "use it or lose it", spent the remainder of the department budget on twenty studio-quality microphones. There was a movement to use more technology and media elements in the classroom, and while there was not yet a plan to put them to use, the fancy silver-ball microphones, reminiscent of retro-radio studio programming days, seemed a better use of funds than adding yet another class set of *Hamlet* or *A Catcher in the Rye*. It was the sleepy last days of the school year, when the June sun heats up the classroom to Hades like conditions and a few lingering students can be spotted clearing out scrunched up paper assignments from their lockers while teachers frantically tally final marks and input report card comments. Knowing I had the task of teaching three Grade 12 English classes the next year, and feeling personally challenged to do something worthy of the brand new microphones I had volunteered to shelve, I began to brainstorm the beginnings of a class podcast project. I had been flirting with the idea to come up with a project that could somehow use the power of story to connect the students with their community, and these microphones, that seemed to almost be challenging me to do something worthy of them, provided a shiny new tool I hoped would inspire and entice the students as much as they were enticing me.

We had just begun talks about the implementation of the new BC Curriculum. A concept-based, competency driven curriculum modelled for education in the 21st century that "enables and supports increasingly personalized learning, through quality teaching and learning, flexibility and choice, and high standards" (BC Ministry of Education). Early iterations of the new curriculum had shown a revamping of English at the high school level, allowing for student choice in specific areas of Literary Studies, Spoken Language, New Media, Composition, and Creative Writing. With a new focus on a learner-centered curriculum an announcement had just been made that the next school year would be the last for the English 12 provincial. This announcement was met with a varying mix of relief and optimism from those who wanted to see a shift away from the postcolonial practices of terminology memorization, but with concern and disapproval from those who believed in the comprehension, analysis, and writing merits of the standardardized structure.

I am not sure what made me think I could take on a project of this magnitude. I had no training in the technical side of podcast development or any idea how I was going to structure it, but I found myself bored of teaching the same things and encouraged by the opportunities of the new curriculum. With little idea of the ride I or my students were in for, I approached my principal with my initial ideas, the rationale of how the project reflected the new curriculum, and was given an enthusiastic "go ahead" to set the train in motion for the next school year.

This essay is a reflection of what transpired because of a class project in three Grade 12 English classes over the linear course of the 2017/18 school year. While this paper will comment on the merits and challenges of student-centered and place-based curriculum practices, I want to reiterate that this is only done through the lens of a

master's student who better understands these educational concepts. The inspiration for this project came because, like most teachers, I intuitively understood that my students needed and were craving something different from their learning and from me. I could feel the shift from that "sage on the stage" to the "guide on the side" occurring in real time. All teachers have a voice inside that lets them know when they are truly reaching their students and when they are not. It is what allows us to quickly pivot and refocus our efforts on something else. Listening to that voice gave me the courage to implement and follow through with the Podcast Project, which is why I now understand that in order to maximize the potential of individual students and their unique learning needs student-centered learning should be a main focus of curriculum development… but at the time, it was all just a feeling and theory.

To fully commit to what I was calling the Podcast Project I knew I was going to have to ignore some of the teacher training that had been drilled into me and let go of the safety in the routine that I had gotten so used to. I now recognize that I was slowly becoming one of the "casualties of the knowledge society", often looking to acquire standardized and proven instructional strategies that had already been preordained by others, "without contemplating the effects upon the students as distinctive cultural and emotional beings" (Kanu and Glor 110). I am a product of teacher-centered instruction and have been trained to teach in that style. Promoted by educational and developmental psychology legends John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky, I innately understand the concept of the constructivist method which "states that students learn more by doing and experiencing rather than by observing" (Brown 2008). But, like others, it was taking me time to get used to this shift towards student-centered instruction where "the teacher shares control of the classroom, and students are allowed to explore, experiment, and discover on their own" (Brown 2008).

Not letting my discomfort with the unknown deter me, I outlined the initial goals of the project: (1) to connect people and the community through story, (2) to help students develop skills they could use beyond the classroom, (3) to work collaboratively as a whole class, and perhaps the most ambitious, (4) to have a completed and published podcast series by the end of the school year. I had no idea if these were necessarily S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely) goals, but I wasn't going to let the unknowns hold me back from trying. The past few years of teaching had revealed a very real and growing fear of failure in many of my students, and while I preached to not let the fear of failure hold them back, or that valuable learning can occur through failure, I knew that to ultimately show them how to challenge it, I had to model challenging my own fear of failing with this project. From the outset, I assured the students that no matter what happened, a lot of learning would occur and they would only be graded on what we managed to accomplish over the course of the year. I reiterated the "we" to let them know that I was fully relinquishing my place on the stage to join them on this learning journey.

Despite assurances, the initial reception to the presentation of this project was mixed. Most of the students had never done a project that required the commitment of the entire school year, and many were hesitant about doing something that had never been attempted before by a teacher who did not have all the answers. One of the main areas of concern voiced by the students was the worry that this project would take away valuable time needed to prepare them for the heavily weighted (40%) English provincial. According to the 2016 Canadian Census, Oak Bay, the region my high school is situated in, contains one the most highly educated populations in the world, with 59% holding a university certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor level or above, 30% higher than the national average (Coles, 2017). Not only is education highly valued at Oak Bay, a certain kind of education, one that prepares the students for the academic world of post secondary institutions, is expected. To secure buy-in, I literally made a promise to the students that they would have adequate time to prepare for the provincial… which was nine months away.

In a linear school we have three fifty-minute classes/week. Once the initial phase of introducing the project was complete, one day a week, chosen by the students, was dedicated to working on the podcast exclusively while the other two classes were dedicated to covering course content, which included a novel study, and units dedicated to poetry, creative writing, and short story. Sticking to some of the traditional content and methods of learning and

teaching provided some reassurance and balance to students, parents, and myself. I wanted to go off the beaten path, to truly dive into 21st century educational practices, which teach that an "absence of dialogue and the subsequent lack of control by students over their own learning processes, [can result] in students' lack of intrinsic motivation with regards to their studies (Meijers 3). However, I was wary that the students, used to a certain style of learning, would only follow me so far.

This project had the potential to check off all of the Core Competencies included in the new curriculum: Communication, Creative and Critical thinking, Personal Awareness and Responsibility, Positive Personal and Cultural Identity, and Social Awareness and Responsibility; things important to educational professionals but that rarely matter to students. For this project to have any chance of succeeding, it required the students to care, to fully engage, and for that, they needed the opportunity to do something they were interested in and to have it mean something. Student-centered learning treats the students "as co-creators within the learning process and as individuals with relevant ideas about how learning takes place" (Brown 2008). However, I also wanted to make this bigger than them, to hold them accountable and to see what this extra added element would produce. With a vague idea how, I ambitiously told them that whatever we created would be published and available to the public through a major podcasting platform. This meant that the students would be officially credited and that any skills and experiences worked on during the process could be added to applications and future resumes. For the students, the potential to engage with the real world and boost their university applications was the final motivation needed. I had them hooked.

Overall the project was divided into three sections, pre-production, production, and post-production. Pre-production was focused on introducing the project, deciding on topics, assigning roles and groups, and goal setting. With a theme of connecting community through story, the classes voted on the areas they wanted to focus on. I had pre-selected three: the homeless community, the senior community, and the school community itself. Conveniently, each class united in selecting a specific and unique direction. Having gotten to know my students and their personalities, I was not surprised by which focus each class chose. Very shortly after selecting, each of the classes, through a class vote, came up with a unique series title - *Stories from the Street, Through the Years*, and *This Teen Life* - all existing under the umbrella of

The Podcast Project. While difficult to manage, the benefit of having each class take ownership over their own unique series created a sense of responsibility and healthy competition, which seemed to harness their focus.

Fig. 1 - Student designed thumbnails

The next step was assigning roles. Taking every opportunity to develop real-world skills, the students were tasked with applying, via a formal pitch-styled cover letter, for the area and position they wanted to work in.

1. Story/Creative
    a. Interviewer
    b. Story designer/editor
    c. Talent - voice of the podcast

2. Technical/Production
    a. Producer - team oversight and general manager
    b. Technician - sound, editing, publishing
3. Creative Design/Marketing
    a. Creative Design - visuals, music theme
    b. Marketing and advertising

With their pitch, the students needed to include research and information about their chosen area, clearly demonstrating their understanding of what would be required of them. Winters et al. (2013) wrote that because "educational culture is monological and focused on control by means of tests … most teachers are uncertain about their abilities to help students in developing a career narrative" (117). Helping the students to define a career path was not my goal, but I hoped that giving them the opportunity to work in different and chosen areas would give them a small taste of the vast and diverse opportunities available to them. Once selected and divided into teams, each group began the brainstorming and goal setting process.

Student-centered learning means that the teacher must let go of the "teacher" role, becoming a coach or instigator, there to assist as the students explore and teach themselves, but never give away answers (Brown 2008). In some ways it was easy to let go of the teacher role because I didn't have the answers to give, but I found that one of the most difficult components of this project was navigating student participation and effort. With each group taking on different tasks, some being reliant on the work of others, the workload was often imbalanced, requiring students to help in different areas of the project when it was needed or when they found themselves with little to do. Adding to this, each of the classes worked at a very different pace from the others, with one jumping into action from the beginning and others needing more time for preparation. From the outset, I felt that I had bitten off far more than I could chew. We had set some lofty goals with little idea of how they would be accomplished, but the not knowing how, while initially anxiety inducing for students so used to be told exactly what they needed to do in order to get the grade they desired, forced them off a narrow path, and gave them the permission to explore the unknown. Letting go of traditional teaching methods was new territory for me too. It felt like taking my hands off of the steering wheel, and it did not take long for the momentum of this project to propel me and the students in unforeseen directions.

There is a famous, overused, and often misquoted line from the film *Field of Dreams* that, "if you build it, [they] will come" (Robinson 1989). Perhaps, what is more accurate to say, is that if you have good intentions, people will feel inspired to help. At least, this is how it went for the Podcast Project. An initial district grant of $500 offered this project the funds to get started, but once the students began inquiring, we were gifted platforms for editing (TwistedWave), offered access to interviews, including an exclusive with the Mayor of Victoria, and given local media coverage. I had intended to give the students one day a week to work on this project in class, but without prompting, they began working on this project in their own time.

Jack, a student diagnosed with ADHD who struggled in the traditional classroom, found his stride with the variety of work that this project offered. He connected with Rev. Al Tysick, a man who has received countless awards for his volunteer work with the Victoria homeless community, joining him for 5am rides, to both interview and fully experience what and who Tysick deals with on a daily basis. Jack's efforts resulted in three twenty minute episodes, which connected him and others to an often overlooked part of our society. I wanted students to connect to their community through story. What I didn't realize at the time was that I was applying place-based pedagogy which, as a response to "standardized pedagogy that neglects local human and ecological communities", draws on progressive traditions of multi-disciplinary, authentic learning in order to extend education beyond the walls of the school (Graham 377). In Jack's own words, his experience made him realize that just talking to members of the homeless community "means the world to a lot of them. It's not something that should just always be a thing. It's just not something I think is acceptable in a country that is so beloved" (Coles, 2017). Other episodes that

emerged from *Stories From the Street* focused on individual stories gathered during interviews at a local homeless shelter a mere fifteen minute drive from the parking lot of Oak Bay, but a world away for many of the students. Lucy, another student working on interviews for **Stories from the Street,** commented in a final reflection that for her the first-hand experience "made homelessness the monster and not the actual homeless population, as is often done in the media". It was the exposure to these members of society that prompted Lucy, and others, to reach out for an interview with the city Mayor Lisa Helps. While I accompanied the students to the meeting at City Hall, I did not participate in setting-up this completely student driven interview. Not only would this prove to be a lesson in dealing with public authority figures, it demonstrated the ongoing and frustrating political struggles behind the issue. Placed-based education seeks to connect learning to real-world experiences, where "students can construct meaningful connections among cultural, political, and social issues" (Graham 377). This opportunity was certainly giving the students an experience that no text book could provide. From Lucy's point of view, "Helps talked about how they (the city) were working to provide affordable housing, while the people at the shelter were talking about how it's usually the homeless that help the homeless and how they are the ones looking out for each other". During the editing process a few of the students came to me, conflicted about including sections of the interview with Lisa Helps that contradicted research and information gathered from interviews with the homeless. They were concerned that including parts of the interview would reflect badly on the Mayor. This completely unintended obstacle provided a valuable opportunity for me to reinforce the importance of the students trusting their process and perspective as gained through their research and experiences. Ultimately, the authorship was theirs. Where a typical class lesson may have had the students reading and examining an article in order to "identify bias, contradictions, distortions, and omissions", this project was providing a real-life experiential lesson (B.C. English 12 Curriculum).

Similar learning outcomes were seen in the other two groups. The *Through the Years* team reached out to local care homes and senior community centers looking for stories and lessons that seniors in the community wanted to share with graduating seniors. After conducting interviews with two seniors, both of whom shared their personal stories of immigrating to Canada at a young age, Claire, one of my students, reflected that "listening to how important their family background and heritage is to them made me think about my heritage and where I come from. After this project, I now see the importance of knowing where I come from and being able to discuss my heritage with my parents and grandparents". Maddy, another one of my students, created such an impactful bond with her senior interviewee Carmen, that Carmen ended up attending Maddy's graduation. Those working on *This Teen Life* took on topics ranging from the difficulties of fitting in, which included an interview with a teenage Syrian refugee, to gun control and lockdown drills, and issues that students living in the LGBTQ community face. About halfway into the school year, still unsure of whether or not we were going to be able to produce a viable podcast, I felt reassured by all of the lessons and skills the students were learning and the impact it was having on them. During the winter months, again unprompted by me, the class working on Stories from the Street started a school sock and jacket drive, and convinced the grad class to donate $300 towards gift cards for the homeless. Not to be outdone, the class working on Through the Years, started a Christmas card campaign, creating cards with messages from the graduating seniors to be given to those living in care homes that may be feeling lonely or depressed at that time of the year.

Feeling fairly smug about what this project had already accomplished, the reality of the work involved in the post-production phase and the steepness of the learning curve, abruptly knocked the wind from our sails. My technological ignorance became painfully evident and demanded that the students take the lead to a noticeable degree, switching the power balance in the classroom. The post-production phase, which included splicing the episodes together with voice recording, music and sound effects, and eventually uploading to a podcasting platform, as well as marketing and design, required a huge amount of effort, patience and research. I share some of the concerns from those who worry that with student-centered approaches, teachers "are being pushed to go deep without equipping students with the breadth of background knowledge needed to succeed" (Krahenbuhl 102). However, this experience forced me to trust the process and the resourcefulness of my students. Together, teaching each other what we knew and were learning as we went, the classes began piecing together a final product. Those

starting to wonder if this podcast project would actually come to fruition were given renewed faith when, on May 8th, they heard the first four minute preview episode of *Through the Years*. Six more episodes were published on May 22nd and by the time the last microphone was shelved, the Podcast Project had yielded seventeen episodes, all available for public access through major podcasting platforms.

One of the last and crucial pieces to this Podcast Project puzzle was the assessment. With the implementation of the new curriculum, the BC ministry of education has stood behind the idea that "curriculum should drive evaluation, or assessment, and assessment should not drive curriculum" (Gacoin 26). However, concern has been expressed that the "lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment", combined with a lack of information, has resulted in an increased workload for many teachers (Gacoin 13). I knew going into this project that assessment would be difficult, but with the belief that curriculum should drive assessment and not the other way around, I did not want the potential difficulties or workload of assessing this project to get in the way or lessen the value of what could be learned. I had been keeping track of the process and knew who had stepped-up more than others, but providing a fair and balanced assessment was not something I could do alone. The Communication competency of the BC curriculum "enables the student to become an active part in the assessment process so as to exchange information, experiences and ideas, to explore the world around them" (Fu et al. 280). Drawing on the freedom in assessment that this competency allows, and wanting the students to acknowledge what they had learned during the project, I tasked them with writing a mark defense, that included reporting on five of the Core Competencies. The reflection and mark they assigned themselves heavily influenced their final project grade and turned out to be one of the most meaningful learning moments (at least for me) of the entire project. In my experience, especially at this academically focused high school, "grading and ranking is often grounded on norm-based criteria that lead to harmful competition among learners, which weighs down on true learning for all and genuine collaborative learning" (Fu et al. 274). At some point, I am not sure exactly when, the students stopped asking me about how this project was going to be graded and started focusing solely on the final product. As a final exclamation point highlighting what this project meant to the students, the very last episode, a six-minute piece reflecting on the students' experience during the project, was sent to me a week after the school had closed its doors and reports cards had been handed out. The students were technically free, there were no grades on the line or pressure to add anything else, they simply wanted to see the episode complete and uploaded.

Teachers should follow their intuition and do what they feel is right for their teaching style and their students' learning needs. I went into the Podcast Project with the confidence of a seasoned teacher, ready to adapt or yield where necessary. The students involved in this project were in Grade 12, already equipped with background knowledge and many of the skills needed for the project. I do believe that student-centered curriculum practices should be approached with proper scaffolding and consideration of the learning outcomes; however, I write this paper with the intention of encouraging others, especially those with hesitations about student-centered education, to not let the confines of traditional teacher-centred practices or worry about the unknown challenges get in the way of attempting something that could lead to valuable learning outcomes for the students. While there are things I would change if given the opportunity to do this project again, I can confidently report that the skills attained, the relationships fostered and the memorable learning journey this project afforded, will undoubtedly have a longer lasting impact than any score achieved on a standardized test.

Link to the Podcast Project
https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-podcast-project/id1378505711

*Student quotes were collected from the reflection of their learning journey using the Core Competencies.

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Lisa Green is an English and Spanish teacher at Oak Bay High School in Victoria, BC. She has three published young adult novels under the name Dawn Green and is currently pursuing an Interdisciplinary Masters in Work Organization and Leadership through Athabasca University.

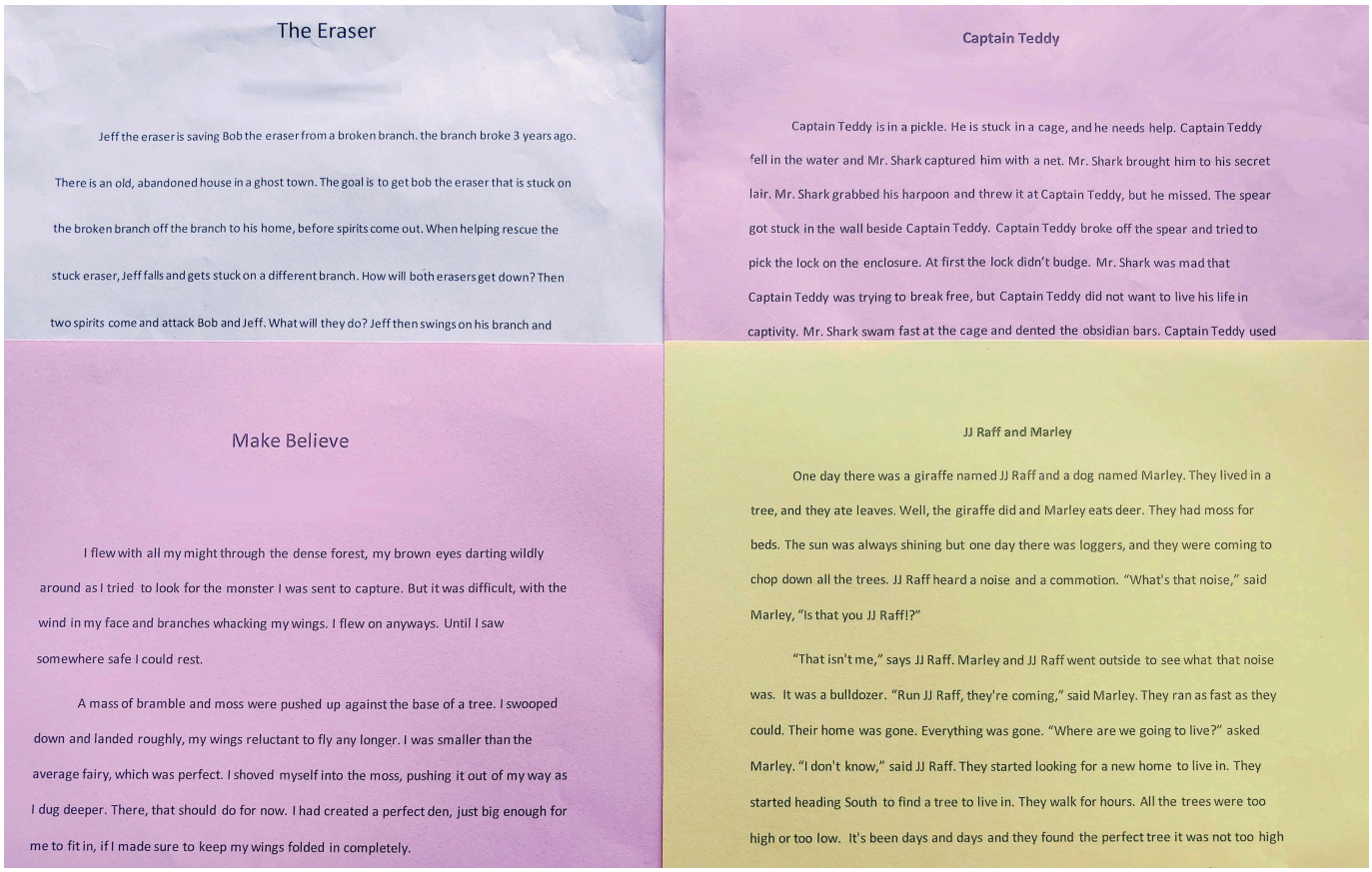
Nicole "Chinook" McLean

Character Scene Creations and Stories

Character Scene Creations
Using characters brought from home or created, students in two grade 6 and 7 Humanities classes - in pairs and individually - created scenes in our school forest that were to portray a frozen moment in a greater story. They then directed the class *cinematographer* – teacher (me) – to capture the perfect shot from the perfect angle. Students were not shy in their demands and many a pine needle and leaf became lodged in my hair and cardigan.

Story Drafts
Back in class – over the course of a week or so – students hand-wrote a total of 3 creative stories in their classroom journals. These drafts were based on their own *character scene* and two other arbitrarily assigned scenes. In general, each draft was written in one sitting and took students 20 to 30 minutes to compose. After re-reading all 3 of their own drafts, students were prompted to select one story to expand, refine, and edit.

Editing Process
In mini-circles of 3 or 4 students out on the soccer pitch, writers read aloud their favourite draft and then fielded questions and received compliments and constructive criticisms for their circle buddies. After this, students typed up, analyzed, and reviewed their own stories using plot diagrams. We then engaged in many iterations of blind, blitz, peer editing:



The Eraser

Jeff the eraser is saving Bob the eraser from a broken branch. the branch broke 3 years ago. There is an old, abandoned house in a ghost town. The goal is to get bob the eraser that is stuck on the broken branch off the branch to his home, before spirits come out. When helping rescue the stuck eraser, Jeff falls and gets stuck on a different branch. How will both erasers get down? Then two spirits come and attack Bob and Jeff. What will they do? Jeff then swings on his branch and

Captain Teddy

Captain Teddy is in a pickle. He is stuck in a cage, and he needs help. Captain Teddy fell in the water and Mr. Shark captured him with a net. Mr. Shark brought him to his secret lair. Mr. Shark grabbed his harpoon and threw it at Captain Teddy, but he missed. The spear got stuck in the wall beside Captain Teddy. Captain Teddy broke off the spear and tried to pick the lock on the enclosure. At first the lock didn't budge. Mr. Shark was mad that Captain Teddy was trying to break free, but Captain Teddy did not want to live his life in captivity. Mr. Shark swam fast at the cage and dented the obsidian bars. Captain Teddy used

Make Believe

I flew with all my might through the dense forest, my brown eyes darting wildly around as I tried to look for the monster I was sent to capture. But it was difficult, with the wind in my face and branches whacking my wings. I flew on anyways. Until I saw somewhere safe I could rest.

A mass of bramble and moss were pushed up against the base of a tree. I swooped down and landed roughly, my wings reluctant to fly any longer. I was smaller than the average fairy, which was perfect. I shoved myself into the moss, pushing it out of my way as I dug deeper. There, that should do for now. I had created a perfect den, just big enough for me to fit in, if I made sure to keep my wings folded in completely.

JJ Raff and Marley

One day there was a giraffe named JJ Raff and a dog named Marley. They lived in a tree, and they ate leaves. Well, the giraffe did and Marley eats deer. They had moss for beds. The sun was always shining but one day there was loggers, and they were coming to chop down all the trees. JJ Raff heard a noise and a commotion. "What's that noise," said Marley, "Is that you JJ Raff!?"

"That isn't me," says JJ Raff. Marley and JJ Raff went outside to see what that noise was. It was a bulldozer. "Run JJ Raff, they're coming," said Marley. They ran as fast as they could. Their home was gone. Everything was gone. "Where are we going to live?" asked Marley. "I don't know," said JJ Raff. They started looking for a new home to live in. They started heading South to find a tree to live in. They walk for hours. All the trees were too high or too low. It's been days and days and they found the perfect tree it was not too high

Blind: To ensure anonymity for student writers during the peer-editing processes, typed stories were printed out one-sided, author names were written lightly in pencil on the back, and pages were taped face-up to random desks around the classroom.

Blitz editing: Students stood along the back wall of the class, ready with their pencils, and when given the go ahead, dashed to stand in front of an unoccupied story that was not theirs, or one they had already read. Student editors then read the story in its entirety and penciled a constructive criticism in the margin. They could also write suggestions, add compliments, or offering spelling or grammar advice. After 5 minutes – or when most students appeared to be done – the students would head to the back wall again and get ready for another round of editing.

Each class engaged in approximately 6 rounds of blind, blitz peer-editing before peeling their stories off the desks to read and digest their peer suggestions. Finally, incorporating peer feedback, writers expanded upon and revised their electronic draft copy. If a student requested teacher or *CEA* (Certified Education Assistant) assistance with a particular story element (eg. spelling, grammar, or punctuation, and particularly quotation marks), specific feedback would be offered. Unless glaring errors were spotted during printing, most stories were not educator-reviewed before they were submitted and posted in the gallery.

Gallery Walk

From the beginning of the editing process, students knew that they would have to put their name on their finalized stories, and that these would be posted alongside their associated character scene creation photos in the hallways outside our class as a gallery walk for the whole school community to read and appreciate. Students knew they were expected to create work that they would be "proud to put their name on." The whole school community was invited to browse our gallery walk and write feedback on sticky notes to place next to any of the stories or images. In our classes, each student participant in the gallery walk received 3 sticky notes so as to offer feedback on 2 stories from the other classes and one character scene image. At least a third of my students requested more sticky notes to offer additional feedback.

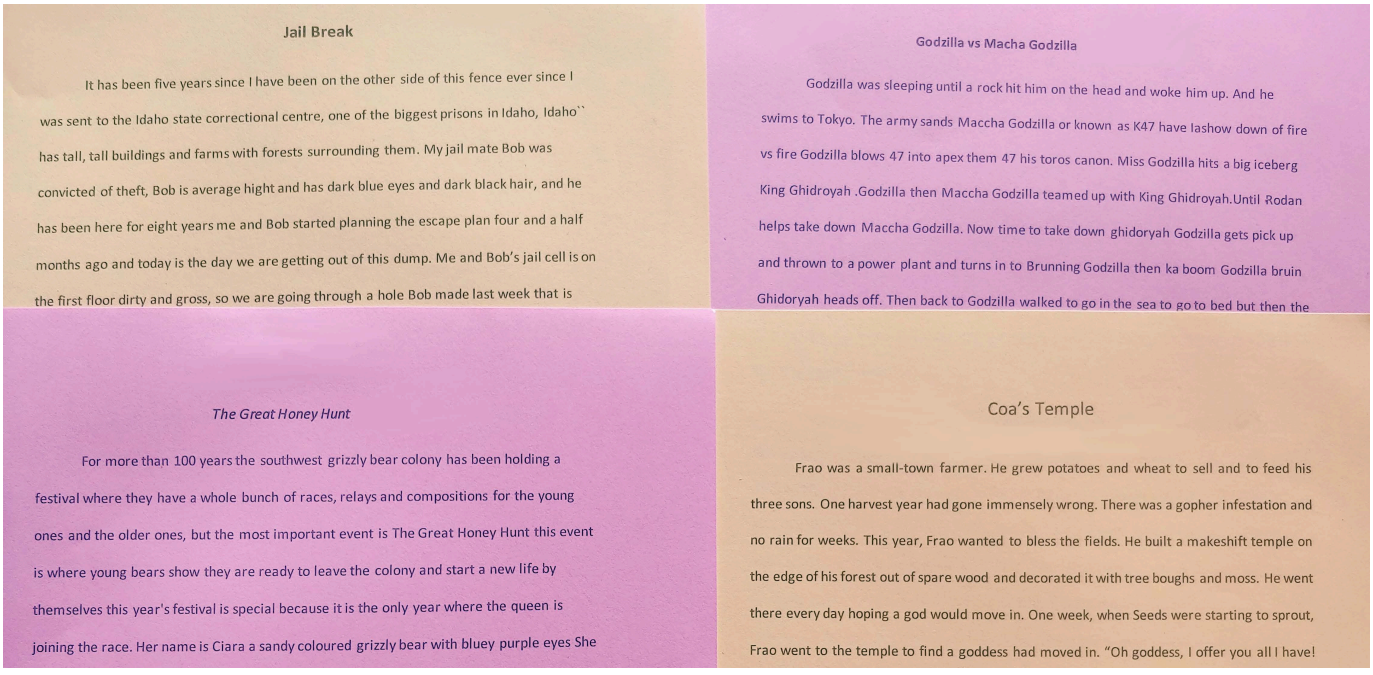
[1] https://www.nytimes.com/column/learning-whats-going-on-in-this-picture

Student Reflections

Students considered their experience throughout the entire character scene experience – from the creation of the scenes in the forest, through the writing and editing process, to their participation in the gallery walk. Students wrote these reflections in their classroom journals as *3 stars and 1 wish.* The stars were their highlights, and the wish could be something they wished they had done differently, or something they would have preferred was different about the actual process itself.

Background

This unit began long before I asked each of my students to bring a character to school from home. From the beginning of the year, each Thursday morning Humanities class began with students engaging in SSW (Sustained Silent Writing) in their classroom journals for about 15-20 minutes. The provocations varied from a topic or starting sentence prompts to images such as New York Times' "What's Going on in this Picture[1] " or those drawn on the board in 20 seconds by a couple of enthusiastic students – the latter being a definitive class favourite. I emphasized creativity and regularly reminded students that their goal should be to get the words out and not stress about spelling. I discouraged the use of erasers and suggested a single strikethrough instead - you never know what ideas will spring from something originally perceived as a fault. Oftentimes, students would beg for more



Jail Break

It has been five years since I have been on the other side of this fence ever since I was sent to the Idaho state correctional centre, one of the biggest prisons in Idaho, Idaho`` has tall, tall buildings and farms with forests surrounding them. My jail mate Bob was convicted of theft, Bob is average hight and has dark blue eyes and dark black hair, and he has been here for eight years me and Bob started planning the escape plan four and a half months ago and today is the day we are getting out of this dump. Me and Bob's jail cell is on the first floor dirty and gross, so we are going through a hole Bob made last week that is

Godzilla vs Macha Godzilla

Godzilla was sleeping until a rock hit him on the head and woke him up. And he swims to Tokyo. The army sands Maccha Godzilla or known as K47 have lashow down of fire vs fire Godzilla blows 47 into apex them 47 his toros canon. Miss Godzilla hits a big iceberg King Ghidroyah .Godzilla then Maccha Godzilla teamed up with King Ghidroyah.Until Rodan helps take down Maccha Godzilla. Now time to take down ghidoryah Godzilla gets pick up and thrown to a power plant and turns in to Brunning Godzilla then ka boom Godzilla bruin Ghidoryah heads off. Then back to Godzilla walked to go in the sea to go to bed but then the

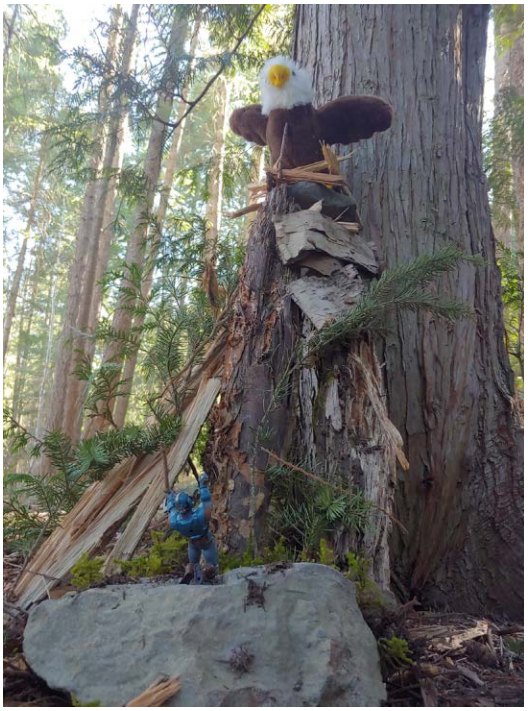
The Great Honey Hunt

For more than 100 years the southwest grizzly bear colony has been holding a festival where they have a whole bunch of races, relays and compositions for the young ones and the older ones, but the most important event is The Great Honey Hunt this event is where young bears show they are ready to leave the colony and start a new life by themselves this year's festival is special because it is the only year where the queen is joining the race. Her name is Ciara a sandy coloured grizzly bear with bluey purple eyes She

Coa's Temple

Frao was a small-town farmer. He grew potatoes and wheat to sell and to feed his three sons. One harvest year had gone immensely wrong. There was a gopher infestation and no rain for weeks. This year, Frao wanted to bless the fields. He built a makeshift temple on the edge of his forest out of spare wood and decorated it with tree boughs and moss. He went there every day hoping a god would move in. One week, when Seeds were starting to sprout, Frao went to the temple to find a goddess had moved in. "Oh goddess, I offer you all I have!

[2]pseudonym for student anonymity



time to finish their stories and what started as 15 minutes of writing became 30. Students would often ask to read their stories aloud. Some who were not confident readers or speakers would request that I read their stories for the class. Afterwards listeners would offer a balance of constructive criticism and compliments, and always applause. As in most classrooms, the confidence and capabilities of writers in my class was diverse. Some struggled to print a single sentence without assistance, while others filled reams of notebooks with cursive. A common theme I noticed was that very few would choose to refine any earlier work. Once the words were out, they were done and moved their attention onwards. I had the kernel of this character scene concept in my mind from an outdoor-themed pro-D day before the start of the school year, but the actual implementation and timing of this unit arose from the natural strengths and stretches I observed in my Humanities classrooms.

Teacher Reflection: 3 stars & a wish

Star 1: I wasn't excited to see that half a dozen students in each class forgot to bring a character from home but watching them create characters and strategically ask to borrow classroom supplies was entertaining and inspiring. I never knew a make-up brush with paper eyes and cape could evoke such deep affection.

Star 2: It was heartening to see students willing to ask peers and adults for assistance during the editing process, and observe others step into leadership roles. Care for each other's, and for one's own, quality of work was evident.

Star 3: Calling Jason[2] and his mom after reading his 13-sentence story about the adventures of two eraser men based on a mossy forest scene was a huge highlight. As Jason was an extremely reluctant writer, we all admitted that we would never have imagined that he would produce such a funny, in-depth story. It was remarkable to see such growth in his self-confidence and perseverance, and we celebrated his efforts that enabled him to display his writing with pride in the gallery walk.

Wish: If I had given more advance warning, I wonder if more students, teachers, and admin in our school community – especially the other middle school folks – would have taken the time to walk our gallery and offer feedback to my students during the 3 weeks that it was posted.

Chinook McLean teaches on unceded Secwepemc land, and recently defended her master's dissertation on circle and walking pedagogies, restorative practices, and transformative education. A former development worker, white water guide and helicopter pilot, Chinook teeters on the verge of the most vital adventure of her life: motherhood.