Building Literacy in Elementary

New approaches through creative technology
In 2002, the National Early Literacy Panel’s released a report on the Five Elements of a Successful Reading Program. These included phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. A combination of activities and open-ended project work in creative tools like Pixie and Wixie can help you assess basic literacy skills as well as engage students in the practice necessary to build these skills.

Alphabetic Principle

You can use a variety of activities to help readers learn that speech can be segmented into small sounds (phonemic awareness) and that the segmented units of speech can be represented by printed forms (phonics). Pixie and Wixie include an Alphabet Principle folder that includes activities like Initial Sounds, ABC Word Order, and Vowel Sounds which require students to identify initial sounds in a word or categorize them by initial or medial sounds. Activities are great for practice and assessing student understanding, but they aren’t motivating for many students. You can give students more voice and choice in their work, even at this young stage, by developing alphabet projects that start from a blank screen.

Most students have seen and read a book with an ABC structure and are eager to be authors on their own. You students can add images to represents words that begin with this letter sound and then type the words and read them into a microphone.

You might decide to complete a project like this a number of ways. You could build each page as your class explores new letters (and letter sounds) using an interactive whiteboard for whole class discussion. You might start a page at a center in your classroom and give students time to find and add images that begin with this letter and then complete as a class. Depending on your access to technology and the experience of your students, you could assign a different letter to each student based on their abilities.

Strengthen these same skills for older students through writing projects that incorporate rhyming words or alliteration. Julie McCoy and Jan Tell of Grand Island, Nebraska had students write an alliterative sentence for each letter of the alphabet, use paint tools illustrate it, and then combined the pages into an animated class movie.

Fluency

When students develop the ability to read text quickly and accurately, they can more rapidly comprehend what they are reading. Pre-record your voice reading a text selection in a Pixie or Wixie project so students can listen to a model of fluency. Then, have them practice reading the passage and create their own recording. Students can use playback features listen to what they have recorded, practice the passage again, and record a final version of the passage.

When students record text they have written in Pixie, they provide a demonstration of their current fluency.
ability. Recording, listening, and rerecording also provides an opportunity for practice without the worry about reading aloud in front of their peers, providing them with the unimitating practice they need to become successful readers.

Vocabulary
Activities on topics like synonyms and antonyms or prefixes and suffixes provide structures opportunities to build vocabulary skills. Cloze Activities can help students learn to use word context clues sentence structure to develop understanding of new words. Use ABC-style books, like those mentioned above, not to address letter sounds, but new terminology within a particular topic such as transportation or biomes.

When a vocabulary word is associated with something you can visualize, it is easier to remember. Creating visual vocabulary words using the Cool Word feature helps students more quickly connect a word with its meaning. The effectiveness of this approach is consistent with the findings of Robert Marzano and his team whose research shows that “the more we use both systems of representation – linguistic and nonlinguistic – the better we are able to think about and recall knowledge.”

Great literature can also help you support vocabulary acquisition, especially if you have students develop their own versions after reading. After reading Judi Barrett’s Things That Are Most in the World, 2nd-grade students in Miss Alia’s class at Woodward Academy wanted to create their own book. As a class they brainstormed all of the superlatives they could think of. Then, each student chose their favorite and wrote a sentence that provided a context clue to the meaning of the word. They used Pixie to type the sentence, draw their own illustrations and record a reading. All student pages were then combined into one class book.

Comprehension
Traditionally, educators often ask students to complete activity worksheets that ask students to identify key details like character, setting, and events, or describe a main character using a character traits organizer. These are great ways to begin the process and for you to evaluate student comprehension, but they aren’t exactly engaging for students or examples of authentic practice.

Rather than asking students to tell you what they know, ask them to show you what they know. This can be as simple as retelling a story, creating a condensed version that provides a textual summary of the beginning, middle, and end along with supporting illustrations. If students add a title page these summaries, creating a 4-page project, they can easily publish that work from Pixie or Wixie as a 4-panel comic or booklet they can fold and read. They could also combine analytical and creative thinking skills to design new book covers that demonstrate understanding of events and key details.

You can also make student work on comprehension skills more authentic by expanding the audience for their work. Rather than turning in a book report or summary that only the teacher sees, ask students to write a book review that will also be shared in the school library to help other students find books they will enjoy reading.

A review should not only demonstrate understanding of character, setting, and events, but be written with the intent to inform and persuade others to read, important skills in the Common Core standards. Older students can also persuade through the creation of video trailers that persuade others to read in the style of the movie trailers they watch before heading to the theater.

Creative tools like Pixie and Wixie not only help you assess literacy skills, but provide a powerful platform for students to practice and apply these skills in ways that give them a voice and ownership of the learning process.

Biography
Melinda Kolk has been helping educators implement project-based learning and creative technologies into classroom teaching and learning for the past 15 years.

Melinda Kolk
A strong vocabulary is essential for learning about new concepts, retrieving information, expressing ideas, and effective communication. Creative software tools like Pixie and Wixie support a variety of vocabulary acquisition techniques, giving students a platform to create meaningful relationships with new terms and review and reinforce existing vocabulary knowledge.

The Pixie activities library includes several templates that combine traditional approaches with new twists and learning opportunities. Students can activate prior knowledge of a topic, organize knowledge into categories, and apply new knowledge to the Frayer Model vocabulary template. This template is based on the graphic organizer designed by Dorothy Frayer and colleagues at the University of Wisconsin designed to help student better understand new words.

Once students have learned how to utilize the Frayer Model for understanding topics in depth, the model can be used at the beginning of a lesson as a brainstorming activity and/or at the end of a lesson. This instructional strategy promotes critical thinking and helps students identify and understand unfamiliar vocabulary. Drawing on a student’s prior knowledge helps build connections between new concepts and creates a visual reference by which students learn to compare attributes and examples.

Typing a word, writing the definition, and using a word in a sentence is a rudimentary vocabulary-building technique. Creative software tools make it possible for students to store and retrieve meaning in a variety of ways, including paint tools for creating non-linguistic representations and voice recording options that allow students to hear the definition in their own voice or the voice of a classmate. Students can build on text-only definitions and approaches and supplement with original illustrations and voice narration that provide opportunities to articulate and practice saying and showing the word.

The meanings of many words vary from context to context and from subject to subject, making vocabulary difficult to acquire, especially for English language learners. When text becomes more technical and abstract, such as in content areas like math and science, an insufficient vocabulary can become especially problematic for struggling readers. Having students express the differences in meaning with visuals and text strengthens their understanding with using words in a variety of context. For example, students can create a digital multimedia dictionary of terms being studied, explaining multiple meanings by adding visual components for each meaning. Students can also record an original narrative using words with multiple meanings and share the project as a video.

Homophones and idioms are another trouble spot for second-language Learners. Students who have developed large social vocabularies and even those beginning to develop academic vocabularies still need explicit explanations and instructions where idioms and homophones are concerned. Asking students to illustrate homophones and idioms makes the process of learning these words and phrases fun, as well as provides a nonlinguistic or visual support for their vocabulary acquisition.

Rather than asking students to learn long lists of seemingly random words, assign them just a few words for each unit or let them identify the new words they don’t understand. Assigning students just a few words each for the unit of study and empowering students to become an expert of those words in the context of the subject being studied results in deeper understanding and quicker mastery of the terms. Students can create their own personal set of flash cards, using synonyms, antonyms, definitions, and image they can understand, because they chose them. If there isn’t time to have each student develop their own vocabulary supports, print and share the flash cards or trading cards with other students in the class.

Making creative technology tools an essential part of your vocabulary instruction can help you reach students who are struggling readers, have limited vocabulary, are second-language learners, or who have learning disabilities.
Making Literature Connections

Inspiring young authors with Pixie
by Linda Oaks

Can every student be an author? You bet! Whether they’re just starting to write or are already accomplished writers, the motivation to write better and write more grows exponentially with the promise of a published product. Luckily, your students don’t have to wait for a publishing house to come calling. They can use creative software tools like Pixie or Wixie to publish original works of literature.

As adults, we seem to shy away from things with blank pages, whether in a journal, a notebook, or on a computer screen. The blankness requires us to provide the input and our first response is “What do I do now?” Kids, on the other hand, view the blankness as an opportunity—no rules, no numbered sequences, just a vast area to explore, create, and show us what they really know and understand.

Your first decision when creating a book is whether the finished product will be a class book, where each member or group contributes a page or a section, or a book with individual authorship. Individual books can use the same rubric and instructions for each student. You can make desired content and length decisions based on your time and instructional requirements. Class books will necessitate a division of labor and topics, and more time for collaboration. Here are a few of my favorite projects.

A-B-C Books
You can use an ABC book for learning and reinforcing the sounds of the alphabet, of course. Beyond that, alphabet books are a great way to reinforce vocabulary for any science or social

book. For example, after studying the ocean and marine habitat, each student in my class created a letter page explaining one topic we had covered in the unit.

Adapt Your Favorite Book
If your class has a favorite book, especially those with a repeating pattern, challenge your students to come up with their own variations (see sidebar on page 22 for suggestions). You’ll notice that some emphasize particular parts of speech or a particular rhythm. Part of the challenge is in having students recognize the various aspects to determine how they can create their own. This is the fun of playing with language and is also a terrific activity for English Language Learners. As a class, students can generate lists of possibilities, so everyone has the opportunity to contribute to every page. It is also very important to credit the original author, which opens discussions about copyright, even at a young age.

Life Isn’t All Fiction
Your classroom books can also be the culmination of nonfiction studies. Your students’ writing and illustrations will demonstrate the depth of their learning and show any gaps they may have in their knowledge. With very large topics, it will be necessary to split the content up between individuals or groups to ensure you cover all content standards for that topic.

Time to Take a Test
Perhaps your classroom or school uses a structured reading program such as Reading Counts (Scholastic) or Accelerated Reader (Renaissance). If so, you have the ability to write your own test questions for books, including books your class has written. It is unbelievably empowering for young authors to have a student earn points for reading his or her book! Just imagine the question “Who is the author of this book” and seeing his or her name on the screen along with Dr. Seuss and J. K. Rowling!

21st-Century Publishing
Today’s digital kids love the idea of creating their own podcasts. With tools like Pixie or Wixie, students can share their original literature as an electronic book, a podcast, or a video to share with parents or other classes. Publishing electronically gives the added dimension of sound. Students can add music to set the mood, sound effects to provide suspense, and even record their own narration. Recording their own voices for their books is yet another way to motivate even the most reluctant learners. It also provides an excellent
Let’s Print!

Even with all of the digital options out there, my students still enjoy creating printed publications. My students have printed their stories in booklet form to simply fold up and share. When students have written more than four pages, we have also cut the images out and placed them in 4 x 6 photo sleeves and bound them together into more formal books. To avoid using too much ink when their stories are really long, students print their stories as thumbnails—12 pictures to 1 printed page. Then, they cut out the pictures and share them in credit card sleeves and Altoid® tins!

The trading card format produces a size that will fit into the sleeves used for baseball-card collectors. These sleeves act as lamination, making the books durable, so they can be used again the next year with a new group of students. Other ways of binding includes stapling, brass fasteners, plastic sheet protectors and binders, duct tape, electrical tape, yarn, and ribbon. More professional looking binding can be achieved with self-binding kits such as those available from Lintor Publishing (lintorpublishing.com) or Bare Books (barebooks.com).

A Book of Words

Before and during units of study, we generate class lists of writing words to be used both for spelling and inspiration. The word list is printed, and students can place it in their own vocabulary folders. I share an ocean example as an introduction to guide words. My students need to place this page in the correct place in their folders, a good practice for the use of guide words. We also create single-page illustrations and definitions for new vocabulary words and then print them as trading cards.

By having your students write, illustrate, and publish their own books, you can tap into their innate desire for recognition as they learn to connect to literature, play with language, and beam with pride at their accomplishments.

Biography

With 25 years of experience, Linda Oaks brings a creative view to the integration of technology to meet educational standards. A 2008 Tech4Learning Innovative Educator and CUE Gold Disk Award winner, Linda also writes the Tips and Tricks column for OnCUE Magazine.

Curriculum Connections

Literature suggestions for student adaptation

Brown Bear, Brown Bear/Polar Bear, Polar Bear by Eric Carle
Use the repetitive text to describe an environment, habitat, community, or holiday.

Caps, Hats, Socks and Mittens by Louise Borden
“Winter is caps, hats, socks and mittens” could be “Math is..., Desert is..., America is...”

Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin
Make up a diary of an animal, a famous person, a life cycle, or a landmark. Tell from first-person narrative.

It Looked Like Spilt Milk by Charles G. Shaw
Fill the background with color and paint shapes. “It looked like a cat but it wasn’t” At the end, “It was just a cloud.”

This is the Way We Go To School by Edith Baer
This is the way we (do an activity). Show drawings or photos of the correct way to do something.

The Important Book by Margaret Wise Brown
Practice descriptive writing. “The important thing about grass is that it is green. It’s soft and feels squishy. But the important thing...”

Mary Wore Her Red Dress by Merle Peek
Students draw pictures of themselves and write descriptively about their Halloween costumes and more.

Things That Are Most in the World by Judi Barrett
Use imaginative adjectives to define superlatives. “The smelliest thing in the world is a skunk convention.”

Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs by Judi Barrett and Ron Barrett
Forecast the weather with strange items falling from the sky, such as elephants or candy bars.
New Approaches to Literacy
Splat... Pow... Wow

While comics, cartoons, and graphic novels have been around for years, recent movie blockbusters based on comics and graphic novels, including Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, 300, and Watchmen, have fueled even more interest in the genre. Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel memoir of the Holocaust, Maus: A Survivor’s Tale, has also helped to elevate the graphic novel to a more respected genre.

As educators, we’re always on the lookout for ways to use popular culture to engage our students. The creative application of comics, cartoons, and graphic novels provides an opportunity to connect our classrooms to the world outside, making learning relevant to students’ lives.

Finding ways to motivate students to read is crucial in our quest to build student literacy. Integrating graphic novels into your reading program is a great way to reach out to reluctant readers and help them view reading as a pleasurable activity. Nearly every teacher can tell you a story about a student whose interest in reading soared after being introduced to stories in comic or graphic novel form.

The comic book genre can help us engage students, improving literacy skills as they explore content in new ways. Kids think that comics are fun... so let’s capitalize on that interest to promote learning and improve comprehension and thinking skills!

Brain-based teaching tells us that students learn by doing. Having them create their own comics as a form of expression and communication will provide additional opportunities for learning.

Increasing Achievement with Comics
A comic book is a combination of pictures and text that tell a story through a series of panels. When developing their own comic books and graphic novels, students practice summarizing and creating non-linguistic representations—two of the instructional strategies proven to boost student achievement. (Marzano et al., 2001)

Creating nonlinguistic representations of knowledge requires students to organize and elaborate on the information. Marzano and team state, “the more we use both systems of representation – linguistic and non-linguistic – the better we are able to think about and recall knowledge.” Comics are a natural marriage of these two forms of representation.

Because comics require illustration, they validate the learning needs and strengths of visual learners who may need more than words to convey meaning. The illustrations required by the comic genre also support second-language learners in our classroom, allowing them to demonstrate knowledge even when they don’t know the words.

Summarizing involves deleting, substituting, and evaluating which information is most crucial for meaning, requiring students to engage in detailed analysis of the content. The limited amount of space in a comic’s panels requires students to choose the most significant points in a text or story. Their completed comic then provides a vehicle for assessing each student’s comprehension of the ideas in the content they are reading.
Comics also provide an opportunity to explore tense. Since dialogue is viewed as present tense, students need to be creative in demonstrating events that occur in the past. A simple caption may suffice, but age differences, dream sequences, and remote settings can also achieve this effect. As students brainstorm strategies for showing events in the past, they build stronger vocabularies and skills that will help them establish mood in their non-comic writing.

The pace of action in a comic is real-time—it happens as fast the reader progresses. Students need to determine how they want to structure their story within the panels so that it progresses at the pace they intend. Using many panels leads the reader to believe that the action is occurring at a rapid pace. A single, highly detailed panel slows the reader down while providing lots of information that can help set up a future scene.

Sequencing and logic are crucial to good storytelling, and students quickly learn that they can’t simply jump forward in time or around in space. Grouping different scenes together leads to non sequiturs, confusing the reader. A series of events that do not include the important elements of plot can lead the viewer to the wrong conclusion.

Successful comic authors also employ point of view in both images and text. When developing their comics, students need to choose between first and third person. The first-person perspective helps them connect with the reader; the third-person perspective is often more versatile. Developing illustrations that show perspective helps students create a richer mental picture of “I felt...” or “I jumped at...” This gives them more information to draw on when adding descriptions and detail to other narratives.

As students learn skills and techniques to tell their stories, they will also start to realize how the media uses those same techniques to capture viewer interest and lead viewers to specific conclusions. As they learn to succeed as media producers, students also naturally become more savvy media consumers.

Having students showcase their ideas using comics and graphic novels is yet another tool you can add to your bag of tricks to make learning relevant and fun!

References and Resources


Biography

Melinda Kolk has been helping educators implement project-based learning and creative technologies like clay animation into classroom teaching and learning for the past 15 years.
New Approaches to Literacy
Idiomatically Speaking Lesson

Identifiers

Grade Level
4–5
Subject
Language Arts
Duration
2 days
Objective
Students will learn the definition of “idiom” and be able to recognize and understand the meaning of common idioms.

Description
Students will illustrate and translate the meaning of an idiom to help others learn these examples of figurative language.

Application
Pixie®, Wixie®, or Share™

Process

Authentic Task
There is a new teacher at school who just loves to talk in idioms. The only problem is that most kids, and especially the English Language Learners, can’t understand a word this new teacher says! The Principal has asked your class to illustrate and translate the meaning of phrases like, “Rick Riordan’s latest series took second period by storm,” and “Today’s homework is going to be a piece of cake” so students can understand just what this teacher means. So “roll up your sleeves (get ready for a job) and put your noses to the grindstone (start working hard). It’s time to get cracking (get started)”!

Engage
Begin reading a book like Ted Arnold’s More Parts, Loren Leedy’s There’s a Frog in My Throat, or Marvin Terban’s In a Pickle. Ask the students to describe what they are seeing as you are reading. Then, share the illustrations from the book. Discuss with your students.

Introduce the word idiom to your students as well as its definition. Idioms are colorful and help convey a lot of information in a small number of words. Idioms are more often used in speech than in writing, probably because you may need to know a bit about the background of a speaker to help you decode the meaning of the words. In fact, you can often recognize a word or phrase as an idiom because the literal meaning doesn’t make sense.

You might want to also explore the etymology from the Greek idomía, which means ‘peculiarity.’ The idea is that the phrase is “one of a kind” or has a meaning different from the literal translation.

The English language includes over 15,000 idioms, but idioms are not unique to English, they are found in almost every language. For example, the English idiom a bull in a china shop is similar to the German ein Elefant in einem Porzellantisch (an elephant in a china shop). The English idiom make a mountain out of a molehill is similar to the French la montagne accouche d’une souris (the mountain gives birth to a mouse).

But similar combinations of words in different languages can also have very different meanings. For example, to be long in the tooth means to be old or out of date in English. But in French, avoir les dents longues (to have long teeth) means to be ambitious.

If your class or school includes students and teachers who speak languages other than English, ask them to share idioms they know in these languages!

Create
Decide whether you want to address the problem as an entire class or work in small teams. Then, reintroduce the problem or task to your students.

The first step is to determine what the group wants to make to solve the problem. For example, will you create:

• storybooks similar to the ones you read?
• posters to help language learners avoid feeling silly?
• an illustrated idiom dictionary?
• School House Rock-style animated shorts?
This may work as a great opportunity to brainstorm products students could create as a class and then let individual teams decide which one they think will work best.

If you want individual students to follow the same process and complete the same steps, an illustrated dictionary should meet your needs. You can even create an animated book in Share. Then, you can assign idioms to each student who then contributes a single page you can combine into a class dictionary.

Have students explore the Scholastic Idiom Dictionary, or idiom web sites, like Dave’s ESL Cafe to find the idiom, or idioms, they wish to address and illustrate.

Talk with students as they work to illustrate idiomatic language. Encourage them to add more details and create more complete and specific illustrations. This is a great time to catch misconceptions early and help students learn to love language as they explore etymology, history, and visual play.

**Share**

If you are working together on one story, book, or dictionary, collect each students page into one file and export to PDF or HTML to share with a wider audience. Print student work to share with classmates, families, and even language specialists at your school. Post the work to your classroom or school website or even iTunes channel!

Have each team present their product to the rest of the class or another class at your school. Depending on the products, you can hang posters around the school, share animations during morning announcements, or publish a book for the school media center.

**Assessment**

Assess prior knowledge as you discuss the stories you have read and ask students to share idioms they already know. You can also get a sense of their fluency with idiomatic language by the choice of idiom they wish to tackle. As they develop their diagrams and illustrations, ask questions and engage in one-on-one dialog to catch misconceptions early and help them make connections between the concepts and ideas expresses through the idioms.

The final products will help you evaluate how well students are able to translate what they have learned about idiomatic language into teaching materials to help others better understand them.

**Resources**

ISBN: 0142501492

Leedy, Loren. *There’s a Frog in My Throat!*  
ISBN: 0823418197

Terban, Marvin. *In a Pickle: And Other Funny Idioms.*  
ISBN: 0618830014

Terban, Marvin. *Scholastic’s Dictionary of Idioms.*  
ISBN: 0439770831

ESL Idiom Page at Dave’s ESL Cafe  
www.eslcafe.com idioms id-list.html

**Standards**

Common Core Anchor Standards for English Language Arts - Grade 4-5  
Language Theme  
Key Ideas and Details  
4.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationship and nuances in word meanings.  
   b. Recognize and explain the meanings of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.

5.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationship and nuances in word meanings.  
   b. Recognize and explain the meanings of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.

**NETS for Students:**

1. Creativity and Innovation  
Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology.

2. Communication and Collaboration  
Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others.
New Approaches to Literacy
Amazing Animal Alliterations Lesson

Step 1: Introduce Alliteration.
Read *Marti and the Mango* to set the stage for recognizing and utilizing alliteration as a tool to entertain readers. As you read, identify alliteration and how it is used in the story. This will prepare students for how to use alliteration when they create their own original sentence.

Tongue twisters often use alliteration. Share a few tongue twisters with your students. You might try nursery rhyme favorites like Betty Botter Bought Some Butter or Peter Piper:

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

Step 2: Practice Writing Alliterative Sentences.
Before students work on creating their own pages, write a sentence together to practice. Choose a letter from the alphabet. Select a hard or an easy letter depending on the ability level of your class. Begin by brainstorming with the class all the animals that begin with this letter. For example, if you choose B, students will brainstorm examples such as bear, beaver, bunny, bobcat, bird, buffalo.

As a class, write an original sentence using alliteration. A great place to start is by creating a short sentence in the noun–verb–noun format, starting with the animal. As students suggest new verbs and nouns, write them on the board and then choose the ones you want to use. An example might be, “Birds build bubbles.”

Now, have the class brainstorm all of the adjectives and adverbs they can think of for this letter. For example, blue, bounce, bravely, build, break, big, and bubble. Then, see where you can add them into the sentence. For example, Blue birds build big bubbles.

Open Pixie and ask a student volunteer to draw a picture depicting the sentence. If you have an interactive whiteboard, work together as a class to take turns using the paint tools to illustrate the sentence. Have a strong reader read the sentence as you record it on the Pixie page.

Create
Step 3: Begin Student Work.
Have students draw a letter out of a bag or assign letters based on student academic ability. Each student should begin by brainstorming animals that begin with this letter. If students get stuck, head to [http://wiki.answers.com/](http://wiki.answers.com/) and search for "What animal begins with the letter _?"

Then, have them brainstorm all of the verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs they can think of that begin with their letter. If students are struggling, have them ask their classmates for help. You might also want to assign this project for homework to involve the entire family.

Have students follow the noun–verb–noun model to begin writing their sentences. Then, add in additional adjectives and adverbs.

Once students have written their alliterative sentences, have them think about how they might create an illustration that supports their writing. Have them look at the adjectives to develop details they will include in their drawings.

Identifiers
Grade Level 1–3
Subject Language Arts
Duration 1 week
Objective Students learn to write using alliteration. Students learn to create illustrations that support and reflect their writing.

Description Students contribute a single page to a class Alliteration Alphabet book as they write an alliterative sentence, create an illustration that supports and explains it, and read the sentence.

Application Pixie® or Wixie®

Special thanks to Julie McCoy and Jan Tell of Grand Island, Nebraska, for sharing this fantastic lesson!

Process
Authentic Task
Alliteration is a powerful way to attract and entertain a reader. In this project, your class will use their writing skills to create their own Amazing Animal Alliteration book.
Steps for Students

Animal Alliteration in Pixie™

Students can use Pixie to create a storybook page with text and original artwork.

1. Open Pixie
2. Click the Text tool on the tool palette to add a text box.
3. Click inside the text box and type your sentence.
4. Use the Paint tools on the tool palette to paint a picture that represents your sentence.
5. Make sure a microphone is plugged into the computer.
6. Click the Arrow tool on the tool palette.
7. Click the Record button on the Options panel.
8. Read your sentence clearly into the microphone.
9. Click the Save button on the toolbar.
10. Name your file beginning with the letter you chose: e.g., a_sarah or b_steven.

Next, have students use Pixie to write their sentences, illustrate the page using the paint tools, and record themselves reading the sentences. Have each student save his or her page, naming it to indicate the letter and the author (e.g., “z_alicia”).

Share

Step 4: Create a Class Book and Share.

Have all students share their project by clicking on the Projects button. Create a new Pixie project and make a title page. Import each student page by clicking on the Projects button and scrolling to Import Pages. Save the class book as an online storybook, or export it as a podcast or video. If students recorded their voices on each page, this will be included automatically. You can also use the Print features in Pixie to print the pages as a booklet, comic strip, or as trading cards.

Get your school together for a formal presentation of your class’s Amazing Animal Alliterations book! You will also want to share electronic and print copies in your school’s media center.

Assessment

Even if they are unfamiliar with the term alliteration, as you read Marti and the Mango and several tongue twisters, you can begin to assess whether students understand how it can be used to make writing interesting and enjoyable. As you write an alliterative sentence as a class, you will be able to assess the vocabulary skills of your students and assign letters that match their ability levels. Their final alliteration pages will allow you to assess their ability to write with alliteration, their current reading fluency, and their ability to represent words and ideas visually.

Resources


Wiki Answers: Ask “What animals begin with the letter _?”

http://wiki.answers.com

Tongue Twisters

http://www.uebersetzung.at/twister/

Standards

Common Core Anchor Standards for English Language Arts - Grade K-5

Writing Standards

Production and Distribution of Writing

6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Speaking and Listening Standards

Comprehension and Collaboration

2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Language Standards

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

NETS for Students

1. Creativity and Innovation

Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology. Students:

a. apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes.
Create
Before you Begin
Download pictures of things which begin with the letters A-Z from Pics4Learning.com and put them in a folder. The students will use these pictures to create their cool word letter.

Step 1: Introduce the Unit and Project
You have probably been sharing books on the alphabet like *Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom* and *Dr. Seuss's ABC*. These help make learning and using the alphabet fun and help students begin thinking about how letters associate with sounds and words.

Once students have developed some expertise with the alphabet, let them know that they will be creating a book to teach other students. Share the A to Z book in the online resources and then read Chris Van Allsburg's book, “The Z was Zapped.”

Explain to the class that to finish your Classroom ABC book, each student will be responsible for one letter of the alphabet (or more if your class size is small). Allow the students to choose their letter, or assign them based on student ability.

Step 2: Create a Cool Letter
Have each student choose one picture from the folder of A-Z pictures you downloaded from Pics4Learning to represent their letter. Help them use Pixie’s Cool Word feature to create a cool letter. Save their letter file to a common alphabet folder, using the letter as the name of the file.

Engage
Step 3: Add More Pictures
Next, have students add stickers from the Stickers tab of additional objects that begin with this letter. Show students how to open different folders and how to add a sticker to their page. Save their letter file.

Step 4: Record a Sentence
Finally, have each student record a sentence about their letter and things that begin with the letter. Save their letter file and have them Share Team Project from the Projects button.

Share
Step 5: Create the ABC Book
Once all of the files have been shared via the Projects button create a new project with a title page. Click the Projects button and scroll to Import Pages and insert the student pages. When all pages have been inserted you can click the storyboard view from the View options on the bottom left of Pixie. Here you can rearrange the pages to place in alphabetical order. Click on the Projects button and scroll to Export. Select the HTML option and Save your published class ABC book.

Share the ABC book in its interactive form on a classroom web site or present it from a local computer. Have students discuss the page they created and share how they chose each sticker to match the letter.
Steps for Students
Creating an Alphabet Page in Pixie®
To make your page in the ABC Book:

1. Launch Pixie.
2. Click the Open button on the toolbar. Find the image you have chosen for your cool letter. Click the image to select it and click the Open button.
3. Click the Text tool on the tool bar.
4. Type the letter. You will see the letter in the text box.
5. Click and drag across the letter to select it.
6. Go to the Options panel and select the following font; Arial Black.
7. Click and drag the Size bar to the right.
8. Click the Cool Word button on the Options panel. You will see the picture fill the letter.
9. If you want the letter to be even larger, go to the Options menu and choose Convert to Sticker. Use the handles to resize.
10. Click the Stickers tab.
11. Browse the Clip Art folders to find Stickers which match your letter.
12. Click and drag four to six stickers onto the page.
13. Click the Save button on the toolbar. Use your letter as the name of the file. Share your page by clicking on the Projects button and choosing Share Team Project.

Assessment
By the time you start this project, you will have already introduced each letter of the alphabet. Creating an alphabet book will require students to apply what they know about a letter.

Your first opportunity to assess comprehension is with their choice of a picture for their cool letter. As students look for art and stickers with the same initial sound, ask them about their choices to help determine comprehension and identify misconceptions. Each student’s voice narration about their choices will give you insight into oral proficiency and reading fluency.

Resources
Seuss, Dr. Dr. Seuss's ABC: An Amazing Alphabet Book! Random House ISBN-10: 0679882812
Pics4Learning www.pics4learning.com
Animated A to Z Book www.primarygames.com/storybooks/abc/a.htm
Billy Bear’s Alphabet Game www.billybear4kids.com/games/online/alphabet/abc.htm

Standards
Common Core Anchor Standards for English Language Arts - Kindergarten
Speaking and Listening Standards
Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Language Standards
Conventions of Writing
1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

NETS K-2 Performance Standards:
1. Use input devices (e.g., mouse, keyboard, remote control) and output devices (e.g., monitor, printer) to successfully operate computers, VCRs, audiotapes, and other technologies. (1)
2. Use a variety of media and technology resources for directed and independent learning activities. (1, 3)
3. Work cooperatively and collaboratively with peers, family members, and others when using technology in the classroom. (2)
4. Demonstrate positive social and ethical behaviors when using technology. (2)
5. Practice responsible use of technology systems and software. (2)
6. Create developmentally appropriate multimedia products with support from teachers, family members, or student partners. (3)
Legends and Tall Tales

Have the teams begin with a research session to see what they can learn about the factual history of their person or place.

After completing a first round of research, have them use a cluster-style diagram to write down facts and adjectives that describe this person or place. Student teams should then turn their initial cluster diagram into a larger web showing which characteristics, events, and actions they want to use in their story and explain how they might do so.

Create
Discuss the structure of an effective tall tale with your students. The beginning of the story needs to draw interest and set the theme. The rest of the story needs to support the theme in a logical order and must include carefully exaggerated points to qualify it as a tall tale or legend. The closing should wrap up the story and share why this topic is important to the history of your state.

Before they begin writing, ask each team to clearly define:
1. characters and setting
2. Point of view
3. Order of events
4. Unifying theme

The members of each team can work together to write the story or divide it into beginning, middle, and end to work individually before combining their ideas. Creativity will be key in this writing experience, requiring students to choose which facts to exploit and exaggerate for the purpose of the tale. Have each team submit a rough draft for your review, or have teams swap their stories for peer review.

When edits have been made and a final draft of the story is complete, have students write and produce their own animated tall tale about a historical figure or location.

Resource for locating stories students at your level will love

Share the historical, factual biographies of some of the characters in the tall tales you are reading. What differences are there between the historical information and the tall tale? Work together to compare the stories and record your findings on a Venn diagram. Make a class list of characteristics that make up a tall tale, such as:
1. feats of daring, strength, or cunning
2. lots of exaggeration
3. use of humor
4. problems with people, nature, or progress
5. the hero has a helpful partner (may be an animal)

Reflect on what you already know about the history of your area and brainstorm a list of people and places in your region that have these qualities. Which ones might serve as the focal point of a local history tall tale? Why? What makes this person or place a candidate for a tall tale? What elements could be exaggerated to help build this into a legend or tall tale?

Work with your students to create a list of possible topics. You may also want to create a list ahead of time to get students started brainstorming.

Allow students to form teams of 3–5 around a topic that interests them.

Legends and Tall Tales Lesson

Identifiers

Grade Level
4–6

Subject
Language Arts, Social Studies

Duration
1 week

Description
After exploring local history and discussing the characteristics and traits of tall tales and legends, students write their own tales, then transform their tale into a script and create an illustrated or animated version using Pixie or Frames.

Application
Pixie®, Wixie®, or Frames™

Process

Authentic Task
Legends and tall tales are stories filled with unbelievable events or exaggerations that explain a person's character or how something came to be. In this project, you will write and produce your own animated tall tale about a historical figure or location.

Engage
Tall tales are filled with larger-than-life characters and places. Begin by sharing some familiar tall tales, such as John Henry, Johnny Appleseed, and Pecos Bill with your students. Your librarian or media specialist is a great resource for locating stories students at your level will love.

Have the teams begin with a research session to see what they can learn about the factual history of their person or place.

After completing a first round of research, have them use a cluster-style diagram to write down facts and adjectives that describe this person or place. Student teams should then turn their initial cluster diagram into a larger web showing which characteristics, events, and actions they want to use in their story and explain how they might do so.

Create
Discuss the structure of an effective tall tale with your students. The beginning of the story needs to draw interest and set the theme. The rest of the story needs to support the theme in a logical order and must include carefully exaggerated points to qualify it as a tall tale or legend. The closing should wrap up the story and share why this topic is important to the history of your state.

Before they begin writing, ask each team to clearly define:
1. characters and setting
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3. Order of events
4. Unifying theme

The members of each team can work together to write the story or divide it into beginning, middle, and end to work individually before combining their ideas. Creativity will be key in this writing experience, requiring students to choose which facts to exploit and exaggerate for the purpose of the tale. Have each team submit a rough draft for your review, or have teams swap their stories for peer review.

When edits have been made and a final draft of the story is complete, have
Steps for Students
Creating an Illustrated Video in Pixie™

Students can use Pixie to combine text, narration, sound, illustrations, and images into an exciting video.

1. Launch Pixie. It will open to a single blank page.
2. Click the New button on the toolbar to add more pages.
3. To create your own illustrations, click the Paint or Shapes button on the tool palette.
4. To add a Pix4Learning image as the background, click the Open button and navigate to the Pix4Learning folder. Once you have an image selected, click it and choose Open.
5. Click the Library tab to locate clip art or to insert an image using the Browse for a File option.
6. Click the Text button to add text to a page.
7. Use the formatting options in the Options panel to change how the text looks.
8. Click the Record button at the bottom of the Options panel.
9. To use a sound effect instead of narration for a page in Pixie click Options from the menu bar and select Choose Sound File. Reminder: Pixie can only have one sound file per page, whether that be narration or a sound file.
10. Click the Save button to save the output.
11. You can add music to the background of your booktalk by choosing the storyboard view from the View options at the bottom left of the screen. Then check the Background Sound box on the Options panel.
12. Click the Edit button next to Background Sound to select the music file you want. Use the Volume slider to adjust the volume of the song.
13. Click the Projects button on the toolbar and choose Export. Then select the desired video output.
14. Click Create and choose your video output.

Export the finished student work as movies for the Web or for podcast playback.

Share
Present each team’s illustrated/animated tall tale to the rest of the class or at a school assembly. Be sure to discuss the audience’s favorite characters or scenes. What was memorable? What did they like best? Use of language? Humor? Hyperbole?

Create a page on your website to host the student tales as a collection and curate their work. Reach out to your local history society and your local library to join you for the presentations or even to host student work on-site using a kiosk or event.

Assessment
Begin by evaluating your initial class discussion about tall tales and the characters and events you are learning about. Do they understand what makes a tall tale unique? Can they distinguish between fact and fiction? Their ability to apply this knowledge to identify people and places from history that might qualify for a tall tale will also help to indicate their understanding.

You can use the teams’ cluster and web diagrams, rough draft, final written story, storyboard, and finished movie as both checkpoints and performances to assess. You can assess writing for creativity, organization, and voice, and judge the final video for organization, effective visual communication, and voice.

If students worked together to write the story, evaluate the notes and drafts from individual contributors to get a clearer picture of the effort and work of each student. Students should include documentation of resources and notes with their written story. A peer assessment from each team member as well as a self-assessment not only helps you clarify work, it requires students to analyze their performance and determine what actions are necessary for success.

Be sure to evaluate the project process for skills such as teamwork, time management, problem solving, and collaboration.

Resources
Perry, Phyllis. Ten Tall Tales.
ISBN: 1579500692

West, Tracy. Teaching Tall Tales, Grades 3-5. ISBN: 0590365118

Tall Tales at American Folklore
http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/tall-tales/

Standards
Common Core Anchor Standards for English Language Arts - Grade K-5
Reading Standards
Key Ideas and Details
RL.3.2. Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text

Writing Standards
Production and Distribution of Writing
W.4.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
New Approaches to Literacy
Modernize a Fairytale

Modernize a Fairy Tale

While younger children dream of being knights and princesses, older students no longer find fairy tales exciting. Your task is to modernize one of these stories so that it has meaning to today's students. You can even add yourself to the story!

Engage
Read a fairy tale to your students, like Hansel and Gretel. Discuss the key elements of the story, such as setting, characters, problems and solutions.

Ask students to share names of other fairy tales they have read. Most students will be familiar with stories like Cinderella, Rapunzel, and Sleeping Beauty. Work together to identify common elements between the stories. You might find commonalities like princes and princesses, forests, royalty, and castles as they retell and recreate a fairy tale in modern times.

Create
Tell students that they are going to modernize a fairy tale. You may want to provide a list of examples and share print versions at a variety of reading levels.

Once students have chosen a fairy tale, have them read it and create a list of characters, setting, and plot. Have them complete their own Past and Present Venn Diagram, starting with a list of objects or things that are from the past, to help them come up with specific ideas for making their tale more modern. You might also want them to create a list of character traits for the main character and villain as well as complete a plot diagram.

Using the ideas on their Venn diagrams, have students sketch out the character, setting, and plot for their modern version. Have them share their ideas with a peer and make changes and additions.

Then, have students work on writing the story. To simplify, ask students to write a single paragraph for beginning, middle, and end. To expand or extend the project, have students practice descriptive writing or add conversation to practice conversational grammar.

• Would you want to live in this time period? Why or why not?
• How are the character's clothes different from clothes today?
• Do the characters have similar toys?

As a class, discuss how things are different now. For example, few students live deep in the woods, or are allowed to walk long distances by themselves. To prepare students to modernize their own story, ask them questions like:

• How is this time period different from modern times?
• How would the story be different if it were written today?

Identifiers
Grade Level
3–5

Subject
Language Arts

Duration
1 Week

Objective
Students learn about key elements and themes of a fairy tale as they retell and recreate a fairy tale in modern times.

Description
Students learn about key elements of a fairy tale such as setting, characters, problems, and resolution as well as themes like magic, threes and sevens, fairies, forests, royalty, and castles as they retell and recreate a fairy tale in modern times.

Application
Wixie®, Pixie®, Frames™, or Share™

Process
Authentic Task
The land of fairy tales is filled with beasts and beauty. It is a land where a kiss from a princess can turn a frog into a prince. It is also a land where few dare to venture because of the fearsome challenges that lay ahead.

Many of the most common fairy tales date from long ago. Talk with your students about the fairy tale you read to them. Create a Venn diagram or open one on your computer and project it for students to see. Label the circles Past and Present.

Brainstorm a list of objects or things in the story, like the location, homes, food, clothing, and other objects and add them to the past circle. As they start to identify things specific to the past, ask them questions like:
Have students translate their written story into a visual map or project storyboard. This will help them determine how best to convey the story using individual pages or scenes.

Assessment
You can use the students’ character/plot/setting, Venn diagrams, character traits, and/or plot diagrams to evaluate comprehension and help students work through misconceptions before the modern version is written. Their modern character/setting/plot and storyboard will help you determine if they are ready to convert their written story into a video or online story.

The final written fairy tale will help you assess their ability to analyze and compare. You can use their narration as a sample of reading fluency. The final illustrated and narrated fairy tale will help you assess their ability to tell a story using multimedia elements.

Resources


Community Learning Network – Fairy Tale Resources
www.cln.org/themes/fairytales.html

Collected Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Andersen
hca.gilead.org.il

Standards
Common Core Anchor Standards for English Language Arts - K-5

Writing Theme
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Range of Writing
10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Speaking and Listening Theme
4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

NETS for Students:
1. Creativity and Innovation: Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology.

2. Communication and Collaboration: Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others.
New Approaches to Literacy

Cool Word Vocabulary Lesson

When you are reading or learning new vocabulary, creating a picture in your mind can help you remember the meaning of the words. But the picture has to indicate the meaning of the word. To help students at your school better remember new vocabulary, your class will create a set of visual vocabulary trading cards.

Engage
Let your students know they are going to create their own set of Visual Vocabulary trading cards for a unit vocabulary list. Share a sample you have created in Pixie or visit the Inside Story web site listed in the resources for examples. You can even print some of these at no charge.

Share the vocabulary list with your students. As a class, explore the meaning and spelling of each word. Provide definitions or have students research them on their own. Have students practice their fluency by writing sentences that contain the word. You may also want to find examples in the texts the students are currently reading.

Work together to explore the sentences the students have written for key words that can help you determine the meaning of the word. This models the strategy of using the context of a sentence to help decode unfamiliar vocabulary terms.

Create
Depending on the level of your students, distribute vocabulary words to each student or divide them into small teams and assign terms. Each student, or team, should write, or locate, a definition for their assigned vocabulary word and brainstorm synonyms, and antonyms for it. Next have them write a sentence that uses the word in context.

Looking back at their definition and sentence, have students brainstorm ideas for pictures that represent the meaning of the word, or provide a visual clue to its meaning. Have students use a digital camera to try to capture their favorite image idea or search the Web to locate an appropriate image. Encourage them to use the copyright-friendly images at Pics4Learning.com.

Have students open their images in Pixie and use the Text tool to type the vocabulary term on the page. Be sure they choose a wide font and large size. Then, have them use the Cool Word tool to display the image through the text! Once this is complete, there should still be room on the page to add a definition, sentence, and even synonyms, and antonyms.

Share
Print the Pixie page so that multiple print on the same sheet of paper. Pixie includes options for 4, 6, 9, and 12 on a page. How many you choose to print will be determined by the age of your students and the amount of textual information you asked them to include on the page. Have students cut out the cards and trade them with the rest of the class so that you have a complete set.

You may also want to print the page in color and full size to make it part of a word wall, or classroom vocabulary list. You can also use Pixie’s Import page function to collect all finished terms into one project that you can run as a slide show students can watch when they arrive at class in the morning.
New Approaches to Literacy
Cool Word Vocabulary Lesson p2

Steps for Students
Creating a Cool Word in Pixie®

Students can use the Cool Word feature in Pixie to show a picture through a word.

1. Launch Pixie.
2. Click the Project button and choose Open. Navigate to the image you want to use and click the OK button.
3. Click the Text tool on the toolbar to add a text box to a page.
4. Type the vocabulary word in the text box.
5. Adjust the font settings for the text box in the Options panel.
6. Choose a thick, wide font like Arial Black, Impact, or Market Product from the Font pull-down menu.
7. Click and drag the Size slider so that the text stretches across the image.
8. Click and drag the text box (vocabulary term) so that it is positioned over the part of the image you want to show through the text.
9. Click the Cool Word button next to the color palette at the bottom of the Options panel. You will see the image show through the text.
10. Click and drag the word to position it on your page.
11. Click the Text tool on the toolbar to add more text boxes and type a definition for the term and use it in a sentence.
12. Click the Save button on the toolbar to save the site as you work.
13. Click the Print button on the toolbar to print out trading cards. Be sure to check the Repeat Page check box.

This is probably too time consuming to do for each vocabulary word you cover, so be sure to save the CoolWords you create for future use to teach new vocabulary words. However, the power is in students brainstorming, writing, and creating the Cool Words themselves. They will internalize the meanings of the new words as they complete the process.

You could also make this exercise part of a center activity in your classroom. Each week, post the new vocabulary by the computer and let students work independently to create the Cool Word.

Assessment

Finding appropriate images will be easy for some terms and difficult for others. Use the time you spend introducing the terms assessing student knowledge and comprehension, so you can distribute terms appropriately and differentiate.

You can also check for understanding as students, or teams, write definitions and sentences. This will also help you identify any misconceptions and correct student thinking before it becomes ingrained. Their brainstorm of image ideas and their final choice will also provide opportunities for assessing fluency with the new terms.

Discuss the words together as a class. Ask for class feedback on which examples really work. You may also want students to reflect and self-assess on the success of their Cool Word to help them determine the meaning of the new vocabulary words.

Standards

Common Core Anchor Standards for English Language Arts - Grade 6-12

Reading Standards

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases (grades 3-7).

NETS for Students:
1. Creativity and Innovation

Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology.

Students:

a. apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes.

2. Communication and Collaboration

Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others.

Students:

a. interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts or others employing a variety of digital environments and media.
b. communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.

Resources

Online Dictionary
www.dictionary.com

Copyright-friendly Photographs
http://www.pics4learning.com/

Great Visual Vocabulary Flashcards
http://insidestoryflashcards.com

The mesa loomed above the plain like a giant table.
New Approaches to Literacy
Entice Your Reader Lesson

Entice Your Reader

 identifiers

Grade Level
5–12
Subject
Language Arts
Duration
2 Weeks
Objective
Students explore character, plot, and theme and learn to write persuasively.
Description
Students write a compelling script and use Pixie to create a booktalk in the form of a movie trailer to promote a book they have read.
Application
Pixie®, Wixie®, or Frames™

Engage
Getting students to read isn’t always easy. Choose one of your favorite books and share it with your students in a way you think will get them excited about reading it. Then, tell why it was your favorite book.

Ask students what gets them excited about reading. Is it the characters? Is it the setting, an exciting plot, interesting themes, or a personal connection with the story?

Let your students know they will be using Pixie to create a booktalk in the form of a movie trailer to promote one of their favorite books.

First, have students determine which book they want to promote. Then, have them answer the following questions:

- Have I read another book by the same author?
- Did I like it as much as this book?
- What genre is this book?
- Is this a book part of a series?
- Do I have a personal connection to this book?

To better advertise their book, students need to be able to identify the theme. Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work. They are BIG ideas, like friendship, love and courage. For example, when a character stands up for a friend in a story, we can infer from their actions that friendship and courage are themes in the story.

Common themes your students can look for in their books include:
- friendship
- love
- cooperation
- courage
- loyalty
- determination
- fairness
- anger
- being different

As a class, explore how authors use themes to guide their writing. Ask students to reread important parts of the book and take notes as they analyze the book’s characters, setting, and plot to determine the theme. The actions of the main character are a great place to look for the theme.

To gather information students can use to develop their booktalk, use graphic organizers like thought webs and the 5 W’s to show the central theme of the book as well as events in the story that relate to the theme.

Create
Next, have students prepare a script for their booktalk. An exciting script should include:

- An interesting hook.
- A vivid description of an event that supports the theme.
- The title and name of the author at the conclusion.
- A call to action.

Remind students that showing the story is more effective than trying to retell the story. As they write the script, have them think of the booktalk as a movie trailer. Their goal is to leave the viewer with a compelling reason for checking out that book!

To transform the script into a video, it is helpful to have a storyboard or map of each student’s vision. The storyboard should include information about which
Steps for Students
Creating a Booktalk in Pixie™

Students can use Pixie to combine text, narration, sound, illustrations, and images into an exciting multi-page booktalk.

1. Launch Pixie. It will open to a single blank page.
2. Click the New button on the toolbar to add more pages.
3. To create your own illustrations, click the Paint or Shapes button on the tool palette.
4. To add a Picts4Learning image as the background, click the Open button and navigate to the Picts4Learning folder. Once you have an image selected, click it and choose Open.
5. Click the Library tab to locate clip art or to insert an image using the Browse for a File option.
6. Click the Text button to add text to a page.
7. Use the formatting options in the Options panel to change how the text looks.
8. Click the Record button at the bottom of the Options panel.
9. To use a sound effect instead of narration for a page in Pixie click Options from the menu bar and select Choose Sound File. Reminder, Pixie can only have one sound file per page, whether that be narration or a sound file.
10. Click the Save button to save the booktalk as you work.
11. You can add music to the background of your booktalk by choosing the storyboard view from the View options at the bottom left of the screen. Then check the Background Sound box on the Options panel.
12. Click the Edit button next to Background Sound to select the music file you want. Use the Volume slider to adjust the volume of the song.
13. Click the Projects button on the toolbar and choose Export. Then select the desired video output.
14. Click Create and choose your video output.

portion of the script each scene will include and what images and sound files will be used to support it. When the storyboard is complete, have students begin gathering images, music, and sound effects to support their vision.

Have students use Pixie to build their booktalk. They can use images from Picts4Learning, or illustrate using the paint tools to create their own images. They should record their script, add sound effects, or background music to match the tone and purpose of the booktalk.

Share
Share the book trailers with the rest of the class or play them on the morning announcements to encourage others to read the books. The librarian may choose to show the trailers in the library as other classes come in for their scheduled library time. If your district or community has public access television, try to get your students' booktalks aired. This is a great way to encourage the entire community to read!

Assessment

The final booktalk is a great summative assessment of student skill communicating in a visual medium. During the process, you can assess progress using students’ notes and thought webs. Having students turn in their scripts and storyboards prior to creating the booktalk animation will help ensure that they are on the right track.

You may also want to look at time management strategies and help students develop a project calendar.

Resources

Littlejohn, Carol. *Talk That Book: Booktalks to Promote Reading*  
ISBN: 0938865757

Scholastic  

Children and Student Book Reviews  
http://www.buildingrainbows.com/

Mount Saint Vincent University Library  
http://www.msvu.ca/library/bookrev2.asp

Standards

Common Core Anchor Standards for English Language Arts - Grade 5-12

Reading Standards

Key Ideas and Details
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Craft and Structure
4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity
10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently

Writing Standards

Text Type and Purposes
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, reworking, or trying a new approach.