Issues, Events & Ideas

Early Childhood Education Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association

No 145 October 2018

President's Message

Welcome back to school, colleagues! I hope that you all were able to take advantage of the summer months to rest and rejuvenate for the school year.

Last year, the Early Childhood Education Council (ECEC) regionals provided numerous professional development opportunities throughout the province on a variety of topics, including mathematics, outdoor education, tinkering, art and literacy. This year, the ECEC will offer fantastic PD both at our annual conference in Edmonton in November and at regional events throughout the year. Be sure to watch for e-mails from the ECEC so that you don't miss any announcements about upcoming events.

The ECEC has also set aside funding for members to attend workshops around the province. If you hear of a PD opportunity that you would love to attend but that is not in your area, you can apply for funding to travel to attend. Check with your regional president for an application form. More information about all the regionals can be found on the ECEC website (www.ecec-ata.com).

I wish you all a fabulous start to the school year, and I look forward to meeting many of you at the ECEC conference, to be held November 1–3 at the Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton.

Lisa Schoeler

Mission Statement: To improve the practice of teaching young children by increasing member knowledge and understanding of this specialty. The ECEC acts on behalf of young children and their teachers to promote excellence in education.

Visit our website at www.ecec-ata.com.

In This Issue

Literacy-Rich Math: Three-Day Learning Series

In April, the South Peace Regional had the pleasure of hosting Geri Lorway from Thinking 101. Focusing on weaving literacy and numeracy together, we spent three days investigating ideas and tasks to help teach mathematical concepts in kindergarten through Grade 3. We explored topics such as geometry, number, patterns and measurement. Here, I will highlight some of the literature, math ideas and tasks we explored during the three-day series.

Math and literacy link to help develop oral language. You wouldn't expect students to write words if they had not spoken them first and then had writing modelled for them by the teacher. The same holds for math. Students should be doing most of their communicating orally and then transitioning toward writing their thinking down—but only after the teacher has modelled how to communicate math. Here's an excellent example. The teacher holds up five fingers on one hand and two fingers on the other. The student says, "5 and 2," so the teacher should write, "5 and 2." If the teacher writes, "5 + 2 = 7," the teacher is not communicating what the student said orally. As teachers, we need to be conscious about writing what students say. Equations are our final communication, not the beginning.

FIGURE 1

Another important point made throughout the day was to focus on finding 5 in a dot collection. Students are good at finding the parts within a number, especially when you begin with 2s and 3s. Eventually, move students toward finding 5 in a collection. This will help to build on the harder facts of 5 and 2, 5 and 3, and 5 and 4.

Ideas for Literacy-Rich Math Teaching

Storytelling with a Fact

How can you tell a story about 3 + 2 = 5? Do you think about the 5 or the 3 + 2 first?

Here is an example of a story I might model to my class. I would write the equation on the board and then say, "I'm going to tell you a story about this equation. I was looking through a box and came across three Pokémon cards. As I kept looking, I found another two cards. Altogether, I ended up having five cards."

Here is another example, with 7 – 2 = 5. You could say, "I have seven cookies and I ate two of them" or "I am two years older than my brother, who is five." The last story seems strange, but it is referring to subtraction being a comparison and getting at the idea that students could use addition to solve this subtraction problem.

Under the Snow

Read Melissa Stewart's book *Under the Snow* (Peachtree, 2009) with students.

Collect dirt in the wintertime and put it into a clear plastic container (Figure 1). As the winter progresses, watch to see what happens in the container. You'll be amazed at what will grow. Write about what students are noticing and wondering about. Perhaps the book can

provide some insight into what is happening. Things don't grow only in the summertime.

Keep track of the number of grass shoots or other things students see growing.

"Band-Aids"

Shel Silverstein's poem "Band-Aids," from *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (Evil Eye Music, 1974), is a terrific poem about a child who puts on bandages everywhere but does not have a cut or a sore, as the last line of the poem reveals. Various math activities can be designed around this poem.

Give each student a box of bandages (I buy these at the dollar store). Have them look at the language and the math on the box. Students come up with some terrific ideas just by looking at these words and numbers.

Another idea is to examine the box itself. Ask students, "Does the box have rectangular faces? What does this mean?" Another idea is to describe your box of bandages: "It has six rectangles." Then, ask students to explain what that means. Have them trace all the faces or outline them to demonstrate their thinking.

Get students to use descriptive language about the bandages (for example, *parallel, straight, curved, transparent, with holes, without holes, bump, padding, curved edge, horizontal, vertical*). Students come up with several words to describe their bandages.

For Grade 3 students, ask them to use the bandages to build a bandage tool that is three units long. Use the tool to practise counting by threes. Do the same with units of five and counting by fives. Use the tool to measure length, height, distance around and so on, and use the unit to then figure out the number of bandages.

Give students the following problem: "If there are 80 bandages in the box and my brother uses three bandages each day, in how many days will the bandages be gone?"

FIGURE 2

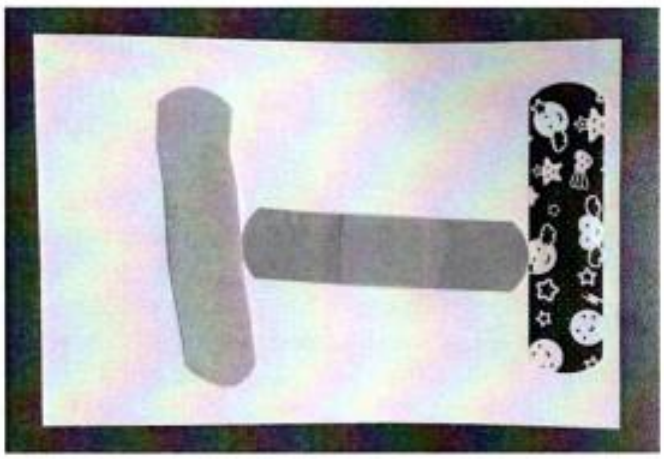


FIGURE 3

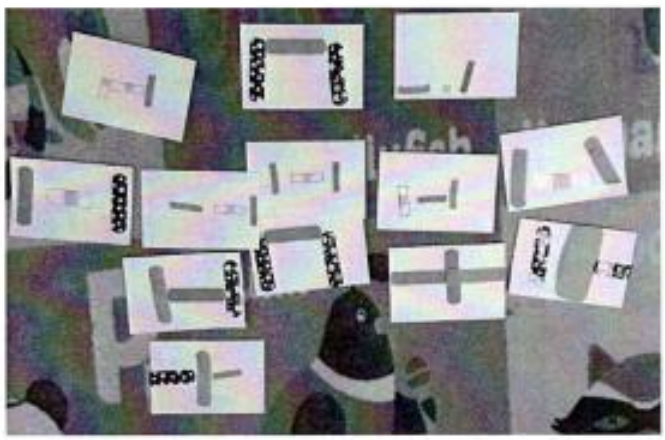


FIGURE 4

Create core cards using three bandages. In Figures 2, 3 and 4, students were using the attributes of horizontal (h) and vertical (v) to create core cards with a three-element pattern. Figure 3 shows a three-element pattern. The students described it as vertical–horizontal–vertical (v–h–v).

FIGURE 5

Once students have created their core cards, they all go to the centre of the carpet and do some sorting. Ask, "Where do you see a card with v–h–v on it? What about h–v–v?" These core cards and the attributes could then be used in a sorting centre. Students have the words to match up to the sorts they can create.

On the second day, students can make four more core cards and then create patterns (Figures 5 and 6). Students should build a pattern in all four directions and name the pattern as they build. As a class, we discussed using different bandages in the core cards. This was not a problem with the students after we discussed what was more important—the bandages or the attributes being used in the pattern.

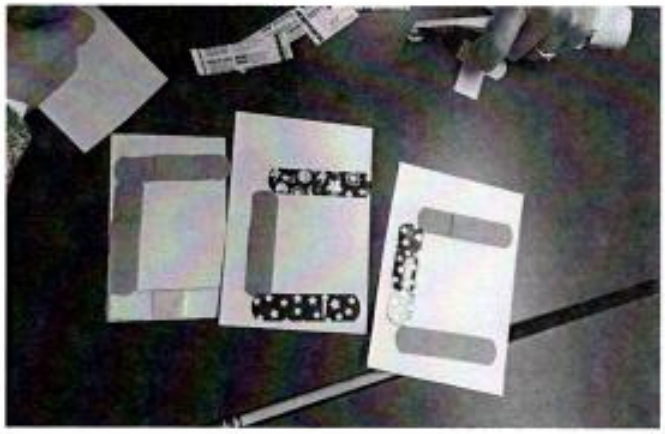


FIGURE 6

King Hugo's Huge Ego

Read Chris Van Dusen's *King Hugo's Huge Ego* (Candlewick, 2011) with students. King Hugo has a large ego, and after a sorceress casts a spell on him, his head begins to get bigger and bigger. From here, you can lead students into an exploration of measurement.

When beginning to measure, students need to see the top and the bottom of an object. As shown in Figure 7, an index card can be used to establish the top of the object. When working on measurement, consider measuring the whole object first rather than using units to measure it. In the picture, one person is using the index card to establish where the water bottle starts and stops. The other person is using adding machine tape to establish the height of the water bottle.

The adding machine tape was then cut to the length of the water bottle's height, labelled and pinned to a bulletin board so that we could then compare all the measurements of various objects. These

FIGURE 7

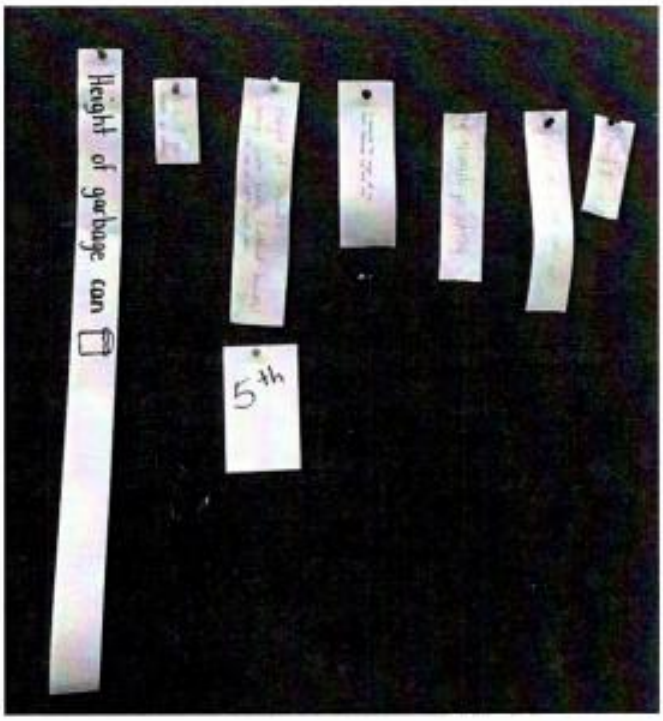


FIGURE 8

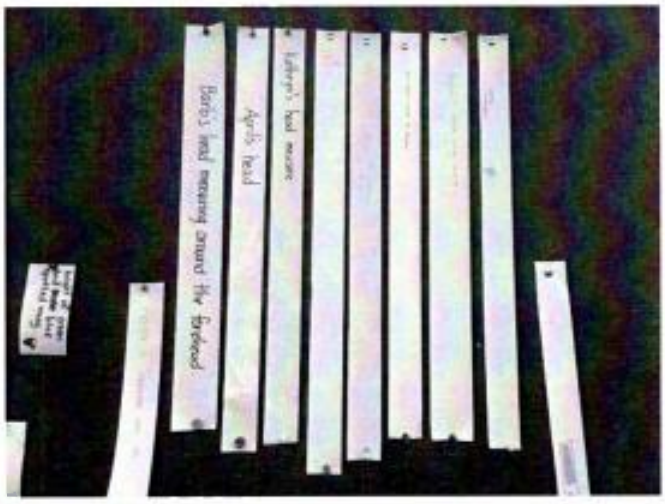


FIGURE 9

strips were not put in order in terms of length initially, but you could do so afterward. You'll see "5th" written on an index card in Figure 8. The teacher asked, "Which object is fifth from the right?" We want kids to use directional language to help them explain where objects are in relation to one another.

We then used adding machine tape to measure the distance around our heads. Students used these strips to find other objects that were the same length, height or distance around. We also put those measurements up on the bulletin board, as shown in Figure 9.

Another idea is to build a measuring tool between five and ten units long, as shown in Figure 10. Let students decide. Using bandages for this purpose brings up some problems. Kids leave spaces between the bandages, or the bandages buckle. However, the fun part of this activity is discussing what worked and what didn't and then going back and redoing it to make it better.

These ideas can be expanded upon, depending on your class and your willingness to explore ideas. If you would like more information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at aprilbrown013@gmail.com.

April Brown

FIGURE 10

Making an Outdoor Play Kit

There is no bad weather, just bad clothing choices. This saying is so true, especially during our cold winter months. How often do we have our students huddled around us, asking when they can go inside?

Recently, I attended an afternoon PD session called "Outdoor Play in the Early Years: Connections for Learning, Well-Being and Nature," hosted by Christina Pickles, an environmental educator and program manager with the Alberta Council for Environmental Education (ACEE).

Christina outlined four benefits of outdoor play:

- Physical literacy and overall health
- Connection to community and place
- Connection to nature
- Curiosity and learning

My favourite part of the session was when we all got to go outside and play. Christina brought an outdoor play kit with us. I thought that this was an ingenious idea and one worth sharing.

How to Build an Outdoor Play Kit

You will need the following items for your outdoor play kit:

- *A backpack or reusable bag.* Use a bag that can get wet and dirty and that is easy to clean.
- *A plastic tablecloth.* This can be used as a gathering focus point for found materials.
- *Strips of fabric.* These can be used to play warm-up games such as fox tag (which encourages students to run around and stay warm) or as blindfolds.
- *Egg cartons.* Use these for collecting your nature treasures. Fantastic for little hands!
- *Roll of good duct tape.* Use this to make duct tape bracelets or nature badges. Give students a strip of tape that they can wear (with the sticky side out) around their wrist or as a badge on their coat. When they find something they want to bring back to the group, they can stick it onto their bracelet or badge.
- *Paint swatches.* Cut the swatches up and put the pieces in a resealable plastic bag. Have students find something in the environment that matches the paint swatch.
- *Balls of yarn.* The more colourful the better! These can be used to decorate tree trunks or to make shelters or play areas between trees.
- *Twine cut into lengths of about one metre.* Wrap these into balls and put them in a resealable plastic bag. Christina gave us two great ideas for this. One was to have students imagine that they are an insect of some kind (for example, an ant). They then lay out the twine in a straight line and build an insect walk using loose parts found in nature. The second idea was to have children use the twine as a boundary when building a playground or habitat out of found loose parts from nature.

What will you add to your outdoor play kit?

Melanie Lee
Edmonton Regional President

Technology in the Early Childhood Classroom

There are a lot of positive and developmentally appropriate ways to engage young learners with technology.

When working in kindergarten, I was required to fill out the Early Years Evaluation (EYE) testing data. I found the task daunting, with a full classroom of busy little people and not a lot of time to complete the one-on-one interviews for testing. A great strategy I found was to simply record a video of students, using an iPhone or a classroom iPad. This way, you can record a group of 10 or more students all skipping across the gym and then go back later to analyze the recording for the key features required for the EYE test. This really helped me, especially with the gross motor testing.

Another way you can use basic video is by allowing students in Grades 2 and 3 to write a script for their own simple readers theatre, or to read an existing story. Once students feel comfortable with the script, another student or an adult can film them in front of a green screen to create a "real movie." This allows students to rewatch their performances and critique aspects such as fluency, tone and expression in their oral performance. Plus, who doesn't think it's cool to rescue a prisoner in a tower from a dragon while standing in front of the dragon on screen! At our school, the green screen is just an inexpensive piece of green fabric hanging on the wall. The kids can stand in front of it and record themselves. WeVideo is the app we use for Grades 2–6. It is user friendly and gives the kids an easy entry point for using this new technology.

I hope you find these ideas useful. Feel free to share any exciting tech ideas or ways you use technology in your early childhood classroom on the ECEC Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ececata/).

Sarjenka Kuryliw
Web Manager

PD Page

New Teaching Quality Standard

A lot is happening in our province for K–3/4 teachers. The new professional practice standards have been approved and will be put into effect in September 2019. An overview of the new Teaching Quality Standard is available at https://education.alberta.ca/professional-practice-standards/teaching-quality-standard/everyone/overview-of-revised-teaching-quality-standard/.

The new Teaching Quality Standard identifies six competencies:

- Fostering effective relationships
- Engaging in career-long learning
- Demonstrating a professional body of knowledge
- Establishing inclusive learning environments
- Applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit
- Adhering to legal frameworks and policies

Draft K–4 Provincial Curriculum

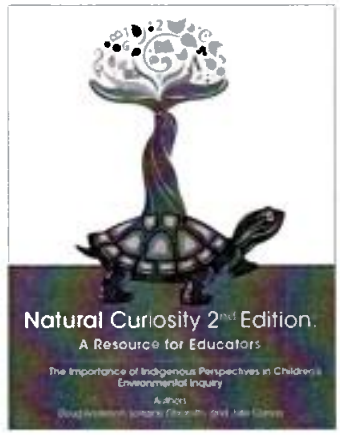
The Alberta government has also released the draft K–4 curriculum. I believe that the way the curriculum is framed and structured will support teachers in understanding the essence of the concepts and the importance of particular procedures to ensure that students come to the essential understandings. Alberta is also leading the way in ensuring that there are implicit or explicit curriculum connections in every subject and every grade to First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives. The CDI, which is the online computer platform where the curriculum will live, will also provide teachers with supportive documents and vocabulary content and will support interdisciplinary connections.

As we move forward, the ECEC will do its best as a council to support members with the transition to the new curriculum. We encourage all teachers to take the time to look at the draft curriculum and, if possible, to get involved in providing feedback.

For more information, go to https://education.alberta.ca/curriculum-development/what-will-students-learn/everyone/curriculum/draft-k-4-curriculum-as-of-april-2018/.

New Resources and Books

Natural Curiosity



For those who are interested in environmental place-based learning, the second edition of *Natural Curiosity* has been published. This resource focuses on Indigenous perspectives in children's environmental inquiry. It can be ordered in either print or digital format at www.naturalcuriosity.ca.

Children's Books by Indigenous Writers

Back in June, CBC published a great list of Canadian children's books written by Indigenous authors. Support our Canadian Indigenous writers by ensuring that your school library has these books in its collection. The list is available at www.cbc.ca/books/9-beautiful-children-s-books-by-indigenous-writers-to-read-1.4700933.

Elan LaMontagne
PD Chair

Transforming Today For Tomorrow

November 1-3, 2018

Fantasyland Hotel - Edmonton, Alberta

Keynote Speakers

Fred Penner * Dr. Stuart Shanker * Dr. Phil McRae

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Maggie Shane, the ATA's privacy officer, is your resource for privacy compliance support.

780-447-9429 (direct)

780-699-9311 (cell, available any time)

The Alberta Teachers' Association

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