Building English Language Skills with Technology

New approaches to fluency through the use of creative technology tools
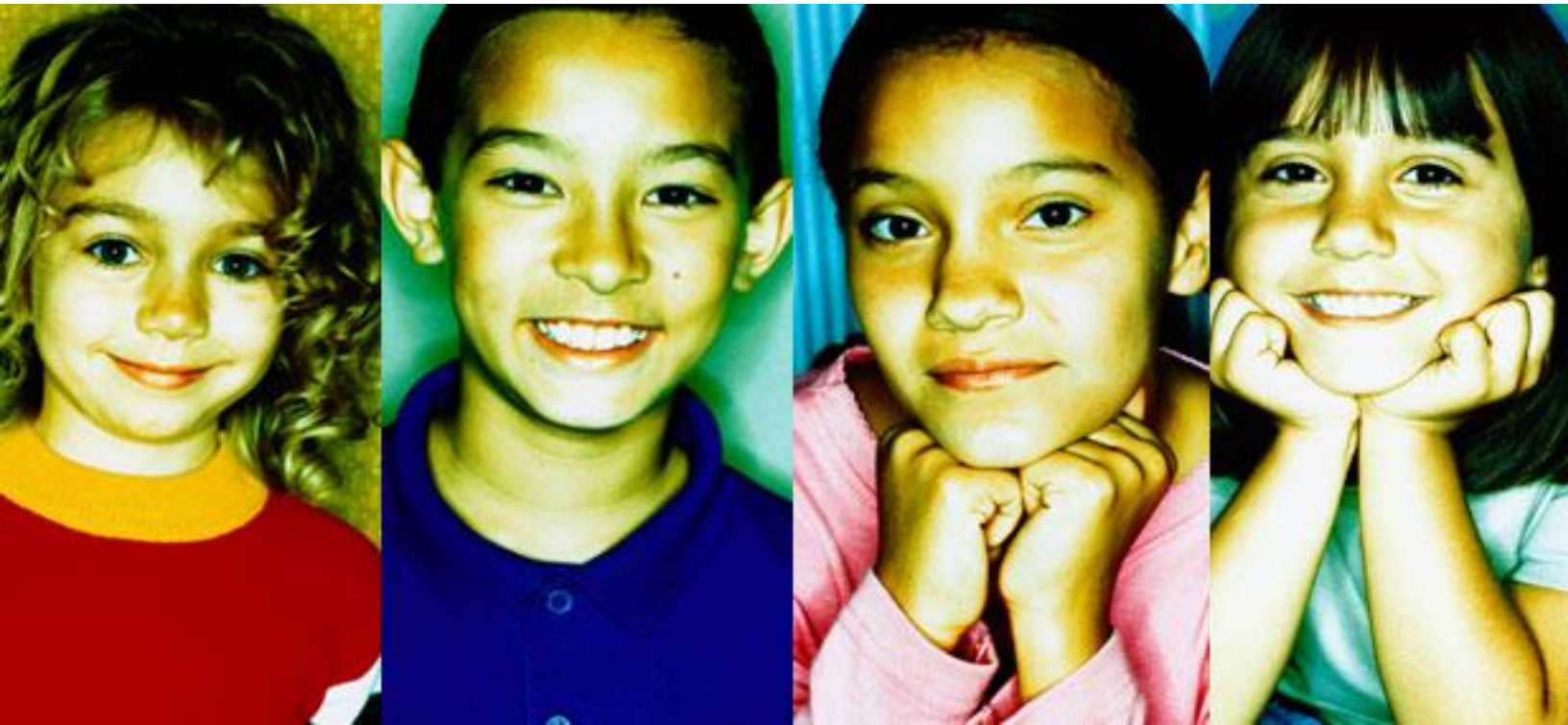
Contents

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Reach and Teach English Language Learners

Help students express their ideas and build vocabulary, and move from beginner to advanced levels of acquisition.

English Language Learning is a developmental process. It can take up to seven years for an ELL to reach native proficiency, as they proceed through three identifiable levels. Each stage of English language acquisition presents unique challenges and requires unique strategies to ensure students progress and develop native proficiency.

Approaching these stages in the most authentic and natural ways possible will be most helpful in your classroom. A parent would not expect their child to learn to speak by writing "Daddy" on a whiteboard. Infants learn words in context, seeing, hearing, and even smelling the object that corresponds to this new word. Similarly, allowing ELL students to acquire new vocabulary in context will aid them in their progression toward English mastery.

Supporting ELLs through All Levels

Wixie provides many ways for students to use words in context, express their ideas, build vocabulary, follow directions, and practice using words and their proper meaning, helping them move from beginner to advanced levels of acquisition.

Beginner

A beginner ranges from the newcomer, or low–beginner, who is adjusting to a new environment, to a high–beginner who has already acquired Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) or social language. Even though the newcomer may not yet be speaking English, they are exposed to the second language from day one.

Focusing on language arts and thematic teaching during the beginning stages is

most helpful. This provides opportunities to repeat the same words in context. Using visuals to develop vocabulary is of the utmost importance. Combining Wixie's paint tools with its extensive image library can help students build new vocabulary, allowing them to communicate understanding without worrying about a new language.

Low-Beginner

Engaging a newcomer can be difficult. Limited understanding of the new language makes them very reliant on their visual strengths and the kindness of those around them. The low-beginner:

- Responds nonverbally.
- Depends on gestures and facial expressions and uses visuals.
- Relies on translators.
- Begins to repeat language, using one word or short phrases.

Strategies:
Use the following strategies to engage low-beginners.

- Provide visuals and use gestures.
- Use daily routines in the classroom.
- Have students act as buddies.
- Repeat the same activity, lesson, or vocabulary in different ways.
- Allow sufficient response time.

How Wixie can help:
At this stage, Wixie can help you communicate and differentiate by providing tools you can use to create talking pictures to develop and reinforce vocabulary.

Begin creating a word bank file in Wixie for students to access. Record your voice, or student voices, to name the pictures.

Add photos of your students to Wixie to create a "My Class" visual seating chart, including text objects with student names.

Use the stickers to develop vocabulary. For example, invite students to use weather and holiday stickers to create a thematic picture about winter.
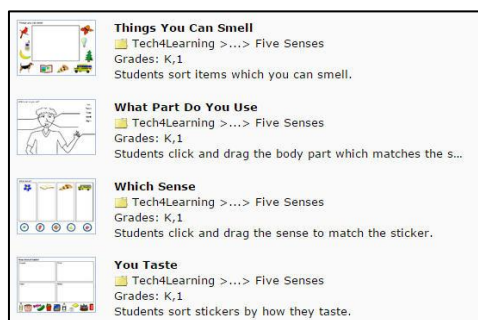
Show your ELLs how to use the paint tools and stickers in Wixie to create their own pictures. Visuals are helpful to low–beginner ELLs. All students seem able to master the Wixie interface, regardless of first language.

Wixie runs in English, Spanish, and French. Change Wixie into a student's language to help you create a matching game for general vocabulary. Or use the Notebook activity to collect vocabulary for older students.

Mid-Beginner

The mid-beginner ELL has made some adjustments to his or her new environment. However, communicating with peers and teachers remains frustrating. The mid-beginner:

- Has a social vocabulary of about 500 words.
- Begins to respond with a few words or short phrases.
- Continues to use and need gestures and expressions to communicate.
- May write words or short phrases.

Strategies:
Use the following strategies, along with those you've been using for the low-beginner ELL, to engage mid-beginners:

- When asking questions, offer visuals and word choices.
- Provide opportunities for individual, paired, and group work. Include tasks that appeal to a range of learners, like creating charts, drawing, gathering information, and presenting.
- Continue to develop vocabulary thematically.

How Wixie can help:
Pair a native language speaker with an ELL to create a picture in Wixie with dialogue or a dialogue journal.

Have the students use stickers, write, and record short sentences to create a dialogue.

Have students work in cooperative groups on Wixie projects such as mapping. The ELL can find illustrations, and the native speakers can record the vocabulary and explanations.

Wixie includes an abundance of math manipulative materials. Use the stickers as virtual manipulatives to have students learn about number operations, money, and create story problems. They can also use number activities and stickers to practice computation and number skills.

Use the tools in Wixie to create stories for your students. Record your voice on each picture to provide the expression needed for understanding.

Use Wixie to create an Alphabet Book as you begin teaching letters and letter sounds. Have students choose stickers that show the initial sound for each letter and record narration for each page.

Compare with a Venn Diagram
Compare the two different versions of The Three Little Pigs we have read.

The Three Little Pigs
house is blown down
wolf is mean
wolf coms to eat pigs

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs
pigs is mean
wolf comes to borro sugar
house is blowd down by sneeze

Have students use the Wixie Sentence Strip activity to begin to write and illustrate short phrases and, as the students advance, simple sentences.

Use the Five Senses activities to teach about the senses, helping students learn new vocabulary in context. There are enough Wixie activities on this topic to teach, repeat, and assess learning.

High-Beginner

The high-beginner ELL has developed a solid social vocabulary. While he or she may appear to show more interest in learning, academic vocabulary remains challenging. This stage may last up to two years before the student is ready to develop and use academic vocabulary. Learning a language and learning in a language require different levels of acquisition. The high–beginner:

- Has acquired 1,500–2,000 words.

- Speaks and responds in short phrases and may include grammatically incorrect sentences.
- Can be unresponsive at times.

Strategies:
Add these strategies to those described above, especially once you begin to introduce more academic vocabulary.

- Provide graphic organizers.
- Provide sentence starters.
- Model language during a discussion.

How Wixie can help:
At this stage, there are no limits to the ways you can use Wixie to enrich the vocabulary development of the ELL as well as enrich the learning of the native speakers in your classroom. Differentiation enables your teaching to connect with more of your students. One way to differentiate a lesson to reach more learners is to provide choices for how a project can be completed. For example, you might suggest students use a variety of graphic organizers in the Language Arts activity folders when retelling stories.

- Begin a lesson with the KWL chart to activate prior knowledge.
- Have two learners use a Venn diagram to compare two versions of the same story.
- Have the students use the Storyboard activity write an original story.
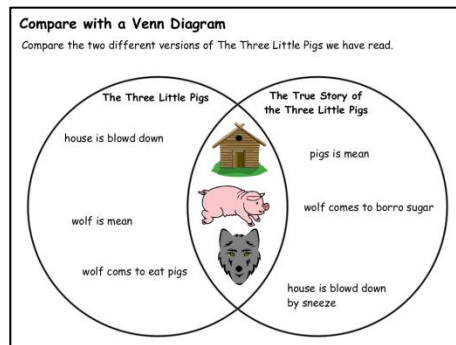
Intermediate

The intermediate ELL is becoming much more responsible for their own learning. This stage can last between one to three years before the ELL moves closer to peer-level proficiency. The intermediate ELL:

- Understands more conversations, including some with academic language.
- Can retell a story.
- Asks questions for a purpose. For example, "How do you use the stickers in Wixie?"

- Sometimes gives up if he or she is not understood.
- Begins to write independently.

Strategies:
Add these strategies to the ones you have been using for the beginner ELL:

- Provide guided practice.
- Ask questions that encourage descriptive language responses.
- Help students link new and familiar meanings of words.
- Use modeling to correct language errors.
- Introduce academic vocabulary and develop academic glossaries.

How Wixie can help:
Teachers and students can use the tools and features in Wixie to build vocabulary. Students can use the graphic organizers and activities for self expression and to share knowledge.

Begin and end a lesson with the Anticipation Guide activity.

Use the KWHL chart for questioning and follow-up.

Use templates to customize your own T-chart activities.

Have student retell a story with both text and stickers using the Flow Chart activity.

Advanced

The advanced ELL is nearing grade-level expectations, and you will see more rapid learning. While an ELL student at this stage has acquired an expressive vocabulary of 3,000–4,000 words, remember that their peers generally have a significantly larger working English vocabulary. An average fifth grader, for example, has a working vocabulary of about 10,000 words.

While reading and writing comprehension is stronger, the demands of grade level academics will remain challenging for one to three more years. Now is the

time to infuse activities with higher-level thinking skills, such as comparing, evaluating, extrapolating, and synthesizing. The advanced ELL:

- Speaks more fluently and with fewer errors.
- Understands and can respond to social and academic conversations and learning activities.
- Writes independently.
- May be reading and writing one to two years below grade-level expectations.
- May still have difficulty with idiomatic and idiosyncratic language.
- Has difficulty retaining academic vocabulary.

Strategies:
All ELL strategies are still appropriate, but you can now employ these techniques in different ways:

- Use visuals to illustrate and reinforce academic vocabulary.
- Provide a variety of texts on the same topic.
- Ask questions that require an opinion, prediction, or inferential answer.

How Wixie can help:
Wixie's paint tools, stickers, and the option to import additional images is helpful even at this stage, since the ELL's verbal expression can be misleading when it comes to academics. Graphic organizers of all kinds also continue to support learning for the advanced ELL.

FACT	OPINION

Use Wixie's Fact and Opinion, Pros and Cons, and Web organizers to help the ELL express ideas in a non-threatening way.

Use clusters to help students build vocabulary, develop the lexicon of a word, and remember academic language.

Use timelines to help students remember historical facts. Timelines also help students build a cognitive net for keeping track of events, chapter by chapter, when reading longer stories.

Engagement, Language, and Learning

Reinterpret software's role in ELL classrooms

English Language Learners (ELLs) are the fastest growing group of students in American schools today (Payàn & Nettles, 2008). Research shows that these students must make language gains of almost two years per academic year to catch up with native English learners. Producing meaningful, language-rich projects to demonstrate academic concepts and improve fluency levels can engage your ELL students and improve their English language skills.

Creative software tools provide multiple opportunities for engaging ELL students in both language and core content acquisition through original artwork, cross-curricular and cross-cultural clip art, integrated photo galleries, activity files, listening and speaking tools, and multiple methods for sharing finished work. 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.

A multimedia demonstration of learning

Tools like Wixie allow students to combine text, original artwork, clip art, and voice narration to produce meaningful work and demonstrate understanding. Wixie affords ELL students with the opportunity to provide both verbal and nonverbal responses to indicate comprehension (Guhlin, 2002). This is especially important when students are still in their silent period of language acquisition, when affective filters are at their strongest.

Creative multimedia tools allow all students to be tasked with the same assignment while providing a variety of tools to match each learner's language

acquisition stage. For example, students in the preproduction stage can use paint tools to draw pictures or add stickers to visually represent ideas and understanding, while students in the early production and speech-emergence stage can layer written work and spoken language into a project using text objects and sound recording features. In both cases, student work can be evaluated for content understanding.

Using non-verbal and non-linguistic forms of communication can strengthen understanding for ELLs and native English speakers alike. Many activities, like the pre-algebra skill of patterning, can be done using only pictures. Other activities, such as visual multiplication problems, utilize pictures as a way to build comprehension and understanding of mathematical processes.

Students can use recording features to narrate text on a page or explain the scenarios they create, giving learners an important opportunity to practice their speech and perfect their pronunciation (Egbert, 2002). Because students can record, listen, and re-record as many times as they like, ELL students at all levels have a private, non-threatening opportunity to practice fluency (Krashen, 1985).

Projects that include images, text, and recorded narration provide a performance teachers can use to assess both reading and writing fluency. Such projects also demonstrate to teachers, parents, and students how their fluency progresses throughout the year.

Building vocabulary
Systematic vocabulary development is essential to second language acquisition, since students do not learn enough vocabulary merely by listening or naturally encountering words in the world around them (Nation, 1990). Increasing a learner's vocabulary leads to improved reading comprehension, benefitting performance in all subject areas.

Effective vocabulary instruction must include structured opportunities to use words in a meaningful context

(Kinsella, 2005). While constructing definitions for new words is a start, it should be supported with examples, analogies, synonyms, and analyses.
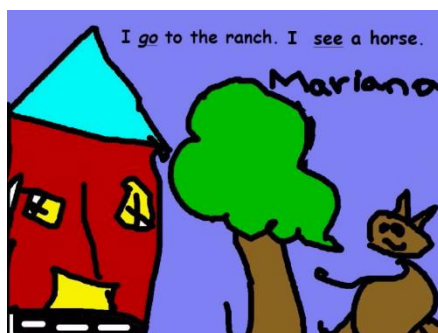
Non-linguistic representations provide an avenue of success for English Language Learners. Drawing pictures of a word's meaning helps students communicate understanding –and helps teachers identify misunderstandings – even if they do not yet have the vocabulary to produce synonyms or antonyms. The visual representation of the word also serves to better encode the word into the mind of the student.

Producing meaningful projects
Increasing students' subject matter understanding and competency are the goals of instruction; students' attention, effort, and engagement in the task at hand is the key to achieving those goals (Beck, 2000). Having students produce meaningful projects they can share with others is tremendously motivating and leads to additional risk-taking essential to additional language gains.

Products targeted for second language learners often focus on students learning from the computer by listening or repeating. To truly grasp a second language, students must spend a significant amount of their time producing authentic language. Krashen suggests that acquisition is, "an unconscious process when language is used for real communication purposes."

Creating comic books, trading cards, podcasts, and electronic stories, allows language learners to communicate in mediums they see in the world beyond the classroom. Combining these powerful publishing options with activities designed to strengthen academic and language acquisition provides opportunities for authentic work.

Collaboration
Having students work collaboratively can also greatly contribute to a successful ELL classroom. Working cooperatively with native English speakers or other English learners increases students' opportunities to

hear and produce English and to negotiate meaning with others (Cohen et al., 1990). Students can build classroom newsletters, podcasts, reports, and classroom stories, providing opportunities to produce authentic language products with the support of their classmates.

6 trees are shared by 2 gardeners.
Each gardener gets 3 trees.
6÷2 = 3 trees.
Jessica

Students can create individual pages that can be combined into a class project or collaborate in real time to develop a shared page or project. Partner strong English speakers and writers who can add text and record narration with early-stage learners who can support the text and speech with clip art and images.

Engagement

Creativity tools appeal to a wide range of learners, but there is an ever-growing body of resources for using tools like Wixie for language learning. Teachers can use activity templates that focus on learning parts of speech and other important grammatical structures to assess individual progress or as a basis for whole-group activities using an interactive whiteboard.

Graphic organizer templates support student comprehension as they use them to explore historical events, scientific processes, or passages of text. Using such non-linguistic representations helps students organize and elaborate on their thinking and writing, improving comprehension (Marzano, 2001).

Creative multimedia tools provide all students, especially second language learners a platform to take risks, be creative, and demonstrate their unique learning styles, interests, and abilities in an authentic fashion. All students need to learn to produce information instead of merely consuming content. Only when we harness the power of open-ended creativity tools will we truly know what the fastest-growing segment of our school population can produce!

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 or Bare Books.

References

Krashen, S. (1985). The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications. New York: Longman.

Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Nation, I.S.P. (1990). Teaching and Learning Vocabulary. New York: Newbury House.

Payàn, R. M., & Nettles, M. T. (2008). Current State of English-language learners in the U.S. K–12 Student Population (English-Language Learners Symposium Fact Sheet). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Cohen, E., Lotan, R., & Catanzarite, L. (1990). Treating Status Problems in the Cooperative Classroom. In S. Sharon (Ed.) Cooperative learning: theory and research (pp. 203-229). New York: Praeger.

Egbert, J (2002) A Project for Everyone: English Language Learners and Technology in Content-Area Classrooms. Learning and Teaching with Technology, 36-41.

Gughlin, M. (2002). Bilingual Education and Technology. TechEdge, 26-27.

Kinsella, K. (2005) Teaching Academic Vocabulary, an Aiming High Resource. Sonoma: Sonoma County Office of Education.

Lesson Plans

The following lesson plans provide specific, detailed examples of the ways creative technology tools can be applied in the elementary science curriculum to engage students and improve content knowledge and retention.

Each lesson includes:

- the **task** students will perform,
- ideas to **engage** students in the content,
- a description of what students will **create** with a technology tool,
- ways to **share** student work beyond the classroom walls, and
- tips for **assessing** student work.

It's ABC, As Easy As 1-2-3!

Students will explore initial sounds through the creation of a classroom ABC book.

Apps: Wixie® or Pixie®

Task

Now that you have been studying the alphabet and have become alphabet experts, it is time for you to help teach the alphabet to someone else. In this project, your class will create an electronic ABC book with letters, pictures, and sounds!

Engage

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.

Create

Have students create a page in Wixie or Wixie and add images from the Stickers Library 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.

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 Wixie button or the Projects button in Wixie.

Share

Once all of the files have been shared via the Projects button, you need to combine them together. Create a new project with a title page.

Use the Import Pages function to add in each student's file. When all pages have been inserted you can click the storyboard view from the View options on the bottom left of Wixie. Here you can rearrange the pages to place in alphabetical order.

Share the Wixie project URL or export the file as a video or HTML from Wixie and share online.

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.

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.
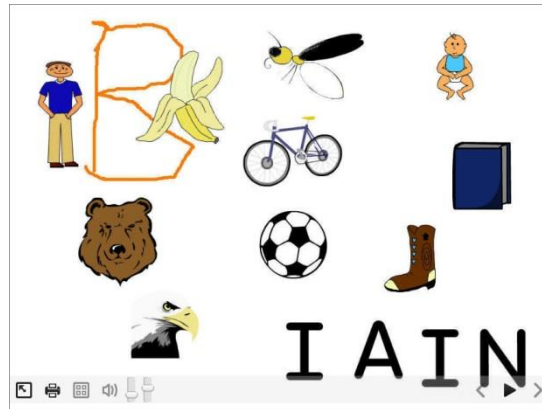
View a sample student project

Resources

Seuss, Dr. **Dr. Seuss's ABC: An Amazing Alphabet Book!** ISBN-10: 0679882812

Martin, Jr., Bill and Archambault, John. **Chicka Chicka Boom Boom**. ISBN: 068983568X

Van Allsburg, Chris. **The Z was Zapped - A Play in 26 Acts.** ISBN: 0395446120

Pics4Learning

Animated A to Z Book

Billy Bear's Alphabet Game

Amazing Animal Alliterations

Students will learn to write using alliteration. Students learn to create illustrations that support and reflect their writing.

Apps: Wixie® or Pixie®

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.

Engage

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.
> A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.

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

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 Wixie 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 Wixie page.

Create

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/ and search for "What animal begins with the letter _?"

Then, have students 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.

Next, have students use Wixie to write their sentences, illustrate the page using the paint tools, and record themselves reading the sentences. Have each student

[View a student sample on YouTube](#)

save his or her page, naming it to indicate the letter and the author (e.g., "z_alicia").

Share

Have all students Share their project by clicking on the Projects button. Create a new Wixie 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 Wixie 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

Moreton, Daniel. **Marti and the Mango**. ISBN: 1556702647.

Artell, Mike. **Giggle Fit: Zany Tongue-Twisters**. ISBN: 1402727747.
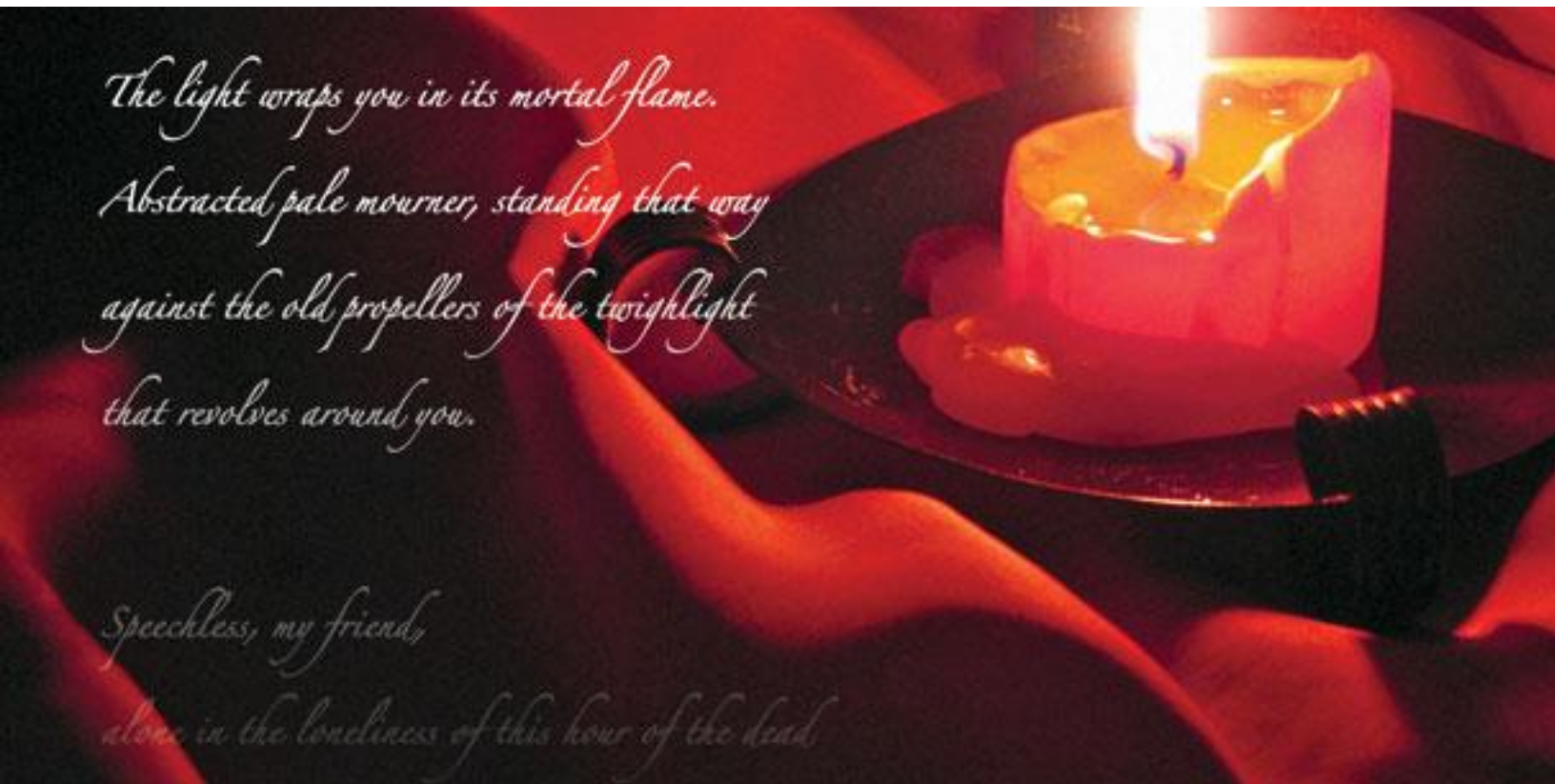
Wiki Answers: Ask "What animals begin with the letter _?"

Tongue Twisters

Create a Visual Poem

Students will analyze verse and explore meaning by creating a visual poem.

The light wraps you in its mortal flame.

Abstracted pale mourner, standing that way

against the old propellers of the twighlight

that revolves around you.

Speechless, my friend,

alone in the loneliness of this hour of the dead

Apps: Pixie®, Wixie®, or Frames™

Task

The National Poetry Council is looking for ways to promote interest in poetry. Since most homes have a television, they have decided to broadcast short poems set to music and pictures. They have asked for help to build their collection.

Engage

Explore examples of visual poems online. Search SchoolTube or YouTube for your favorite poet or a poem your class has recently read and watch the Getty Institutes how-to video.

Before having students work individually, or in small teams, develop a visual poem as a class.

Read the poem you wish to model to our class or distribute for them to read.

What does the poem mean? Work together to identify specific words that help the reader visualize the meaning or feel a certain way and discuss the intent of the author in using these specific words.

Search an image site like Pics4Learning.com to find images that support the meaning of the text in each line or stanza.

Use a tool like Wixie or Frames to combine the images and text. Have a student with strong fluency narrate the visual poem.

Work together to discuss the mood of the poem. Find music that is appropriate and matches the mood and add it as a background soundtrack.

Create

Now that you have modeled the process, task students with creating their own. Group students into small teams and assign specific poems or create a collection for students to choose from.

Teams should begin by identifying key words in the poem and discussing the mood or feeling it is meant to evoke.

Using graphic organizers like t-charts and clusters can help students focus on key words and their meanings to determine mood and better comprehend the author's intent.

Have teams focus on individual lines or verses and locate images that help the viewer better comprehend the meaning and connect to the content. Encourage students to use digital cameras to capture original photos. Tools like Wixie and Frames also have tools students can use to create illustrations.

Teams should combine the images with text, voice narration, and background music to complete their visual poem.

Share

Share students visual poems at a poetry festival or poetry event at your school. You can project the visual poems between students reciting poetry orally or showcase during a school-wide event.

To extend the learning and focus on really analyzing each poem, post them individually to your classroom web site, or on morning announcements.

Assessment

After you have read the poem as a class, you can begin assessing student understanding as they choose key words that evoke feelings or ideas. Evaluate each student's comprehension as they complete a cluster graphic organizer sheet for their part of the poem. You will want to be available for questions and discussion as they work through their analysis.

View a student sample on YouTube

You can also evaluate their choice of an image. Remember, the quality of the image reflects both their understanding and analysis of the poem, as well as their ability to complete an effective internet search, visual ability to draw, and/or skill capturing an image with a digital camera.

As they make the movie, listen to the discussions between students. They will be making observations and comments and may even change their mind about their picture. If you are adding music to the background, the musical selection may also indicate student understanding of the poem.

Resources

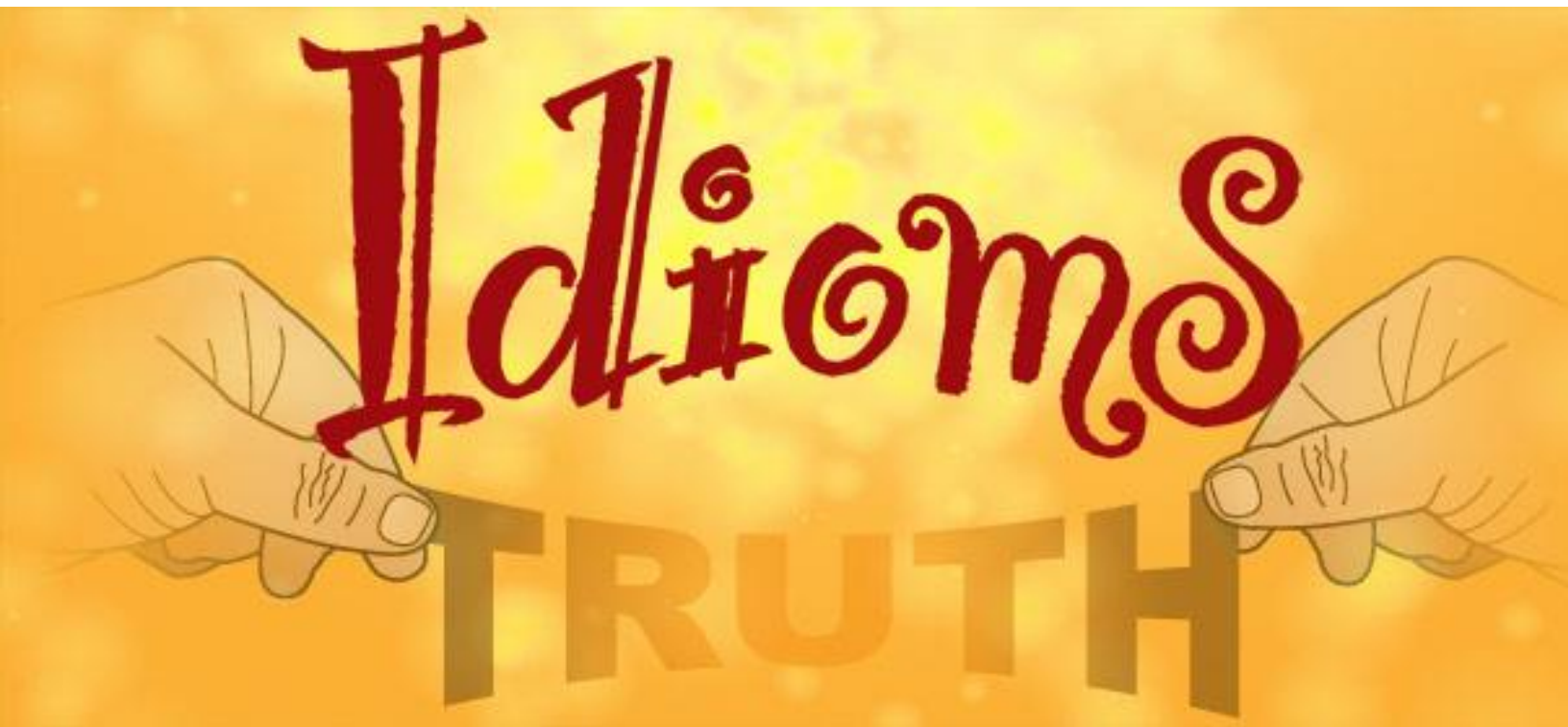Janeczko, Paul B. **Teaching 10 Fabulous Forms of Poetry**.
ISBN: 0439073464

Sweeney, Jacqueline. **Teaching Poetry: Yes You Can!**
ISBN: 0590494198

Poetry Anthologies and Thousands of Poems

Project Gutenberg

Idiomatically Speaking

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

Apps: Wixie® or Pixie®

Task

There is a new teacher at school who loves to talk in idioms. The only problem is that most kids, and especially the English Language Learners, can't understand a word this 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 what this teacher means. So "roll up your sleeves and put your noses to the grindstone (start working hard). It's time to get cracking (get started)!"

View a student sample on YouTube

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. You might want to also explore the etymology from the Greek idíōma, 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 Porzellangeschäft* (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 dent 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!

[View a student sample on YouTube](#)

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 create. For example, you can make:

- storybooks similar to the ones you read?
- 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 student's 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. 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

Arnold, Ted. **More Parts**. 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 Café

Math Terminology

Students will connect math terms with the world around them.

Apps: Wixie® or Pixie®

Task

You have been asked by the Didactic Book Company to submit a proposal for an online dictionary that teaches math terminology using the alphabet. Because of your extensive knowledge of math terms, compiling a thorough list of terms you propose for your dictionary should be a snap. Your work on this project will help students nationwide understand important math vocabulary so they can do better in school.

Engage

When students are asked to take a standardized test, they often encounter unfamiliar terminology. This activity is designed to help them. Collaborating with the Language Arts teacher to explore how context clues skills help a reader determine the meaning of words will be helpful for students as they encounter unfamiliar or challenging terminology.

Remind students that thousands of words and expressions pertain to math. For example, we use the abbreviation MPH (miles per hour) to measure speed. Discuss symbols used in mathematics and how they can be included as math words. For example, x is a symbol used to mean multiply or used in equations to represent a variable.

Work with your class to create a word wall of math terms they already know. In small groups, have students brainstorm basic math terminology. Have them write the math terms on one index card and the definitions on a separate index card. Use the index cards as a matching game for students who don't know the basic terms. Post the words and definitions together to create a math word wall.

Bring math-related objects (realia) to class to help students come up with even more terms they know. You might share geometric shapes, formulas, manipulatives, and measuring tools, such as a liter container, meter stick, tangrams, graph paper, and number lines.

As you describe each object, use terminology that is both familiar and unfamiliar to the students. Ask students to write down words that are unfamiliar to them. Make sure to include geometry words, formula words, measurement words, number sense words, and logic and probability words. When you're finished, review the unfamiliar words with your students and have them create cards to add to the word wall.

Create

Group students together into small teams. Have each team develop a list that includes a math term for every letter of the alphabet. After they have most of their list completed, provide examples of additional terms they might use.

Encourage students to use the terms from the word wall as well as new terms they find in the glossary of your math text. You could offer extra credit for using words that are not on the class list.

Share an example that includes the elements that each dictionary page should feature: a title, including the term; the definition; the word used in a sentence; and an image depicting the term.

Before working on the computer, or as homework, have team members write three sentences for each letter:

1. ___ is for _____.
   (for example: A is for area).
2. The definition of the math term.
3. A sentence that describes the image and uses the math term in context.

Next, have each team create, capture, or locate an image that explains, or helps them remember, the definition for each math term. They can use the drawing tools in Share to create their own image, use a digital

camera to capture images they find in the world around them, or search in the Share library for clip art, photos, and images from Pics4Learning.

As they create and collect images and save them into their team project folder, make sure students name the images beginning with the letter of the term corresponding term.

A is for ARC

Part of a circle. Exactly half the circle is called a semicircle. Less than half is a *minor* arc and more than half is a *major* arc.

minor arc
major arc

Share

When the dictionary is finished, each team should present their product to the rest of the class. This will help everyone review the terminology. You may want to have the class work together to choose the best terms from each team's project to create a whole-class dictionary.

Before students present, you may want to remind them that the format of their presentation should be a sales pitch to the book company "hiring" them to create the terminology dictionary.

Assessment

As the project progresses, ensure that students are choosing words slightly above their level and are choosing relevant photos and illustrations that will help them make connections to the real-world application of the math terms.

Each team's oral presentation of their dictionary and the sentences they wrote will also indicate their fluency with the terminology.
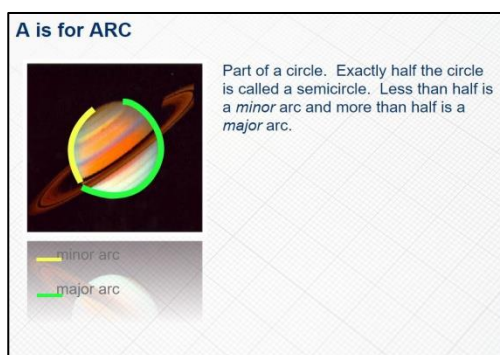
If you require the storyboard to be written before the structure of the project is designed, you can assess the writing before the dictionary is complete.

Resources

Schwartz, David M. **G Is for Googol: A Math Alphabet Book** ISBN-10: 1883672589.

Math Words

Math.com

Additional ideas from real student projects

Click the project to see the sample.
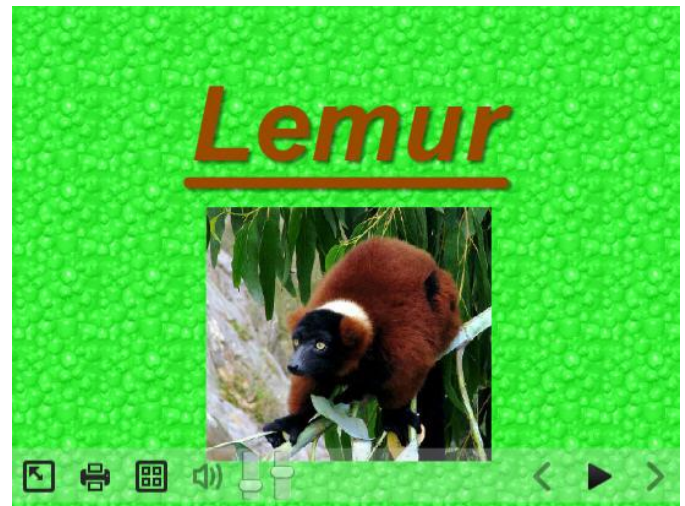
Student-Created Books

Using books with repeating patterns, create **cloze-style opportunities for** students to apply vocabulary, write and practice fluency as the**y publish real** books.
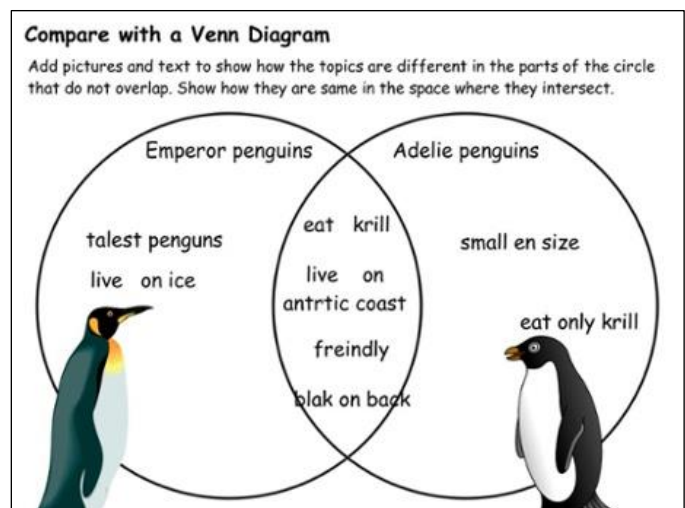
Original Drawings

Students can use Wixie's paint tools to develop vocabulary skills and show understanding without worrying about a new language.

21st Century Publishing

Using books with repeating patterns, create **cloze-style opportunities for** students to apply vocabulary, write and practice **fluency as they publish real** books.

Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizer templates and tools to help better organize and represent their learning.
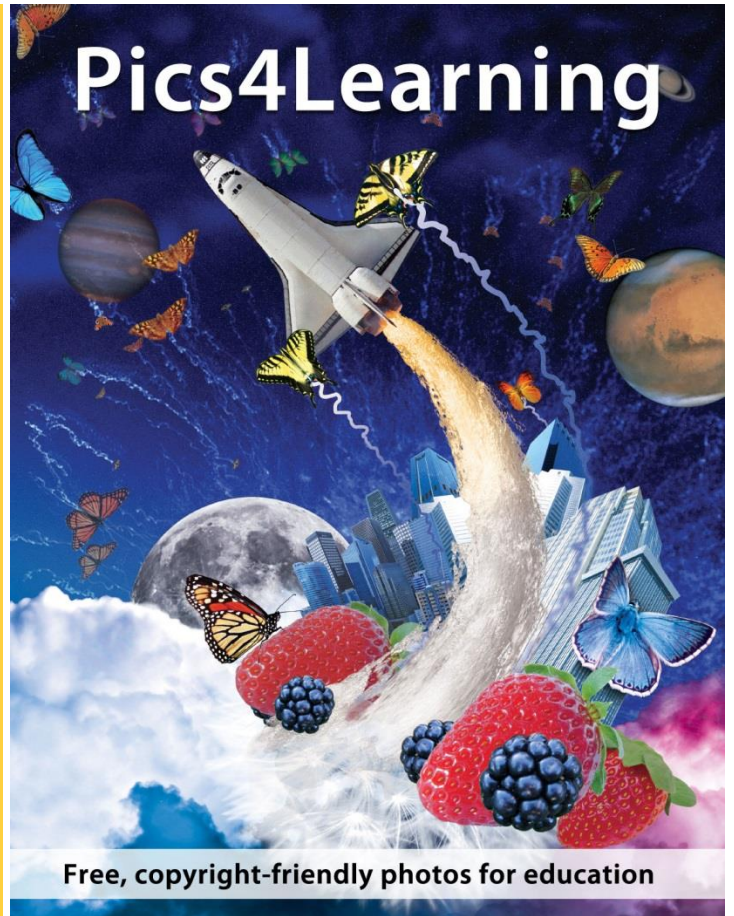
Wixie

Wixie is an online publishing and creativity platform that lets students share what they know through **their writing, their voice, and their art.**

Give Wixie a Try

Pics4Learning

Free, copyright-friendly photos for education