Building Literacy with Technology in Primary Grades
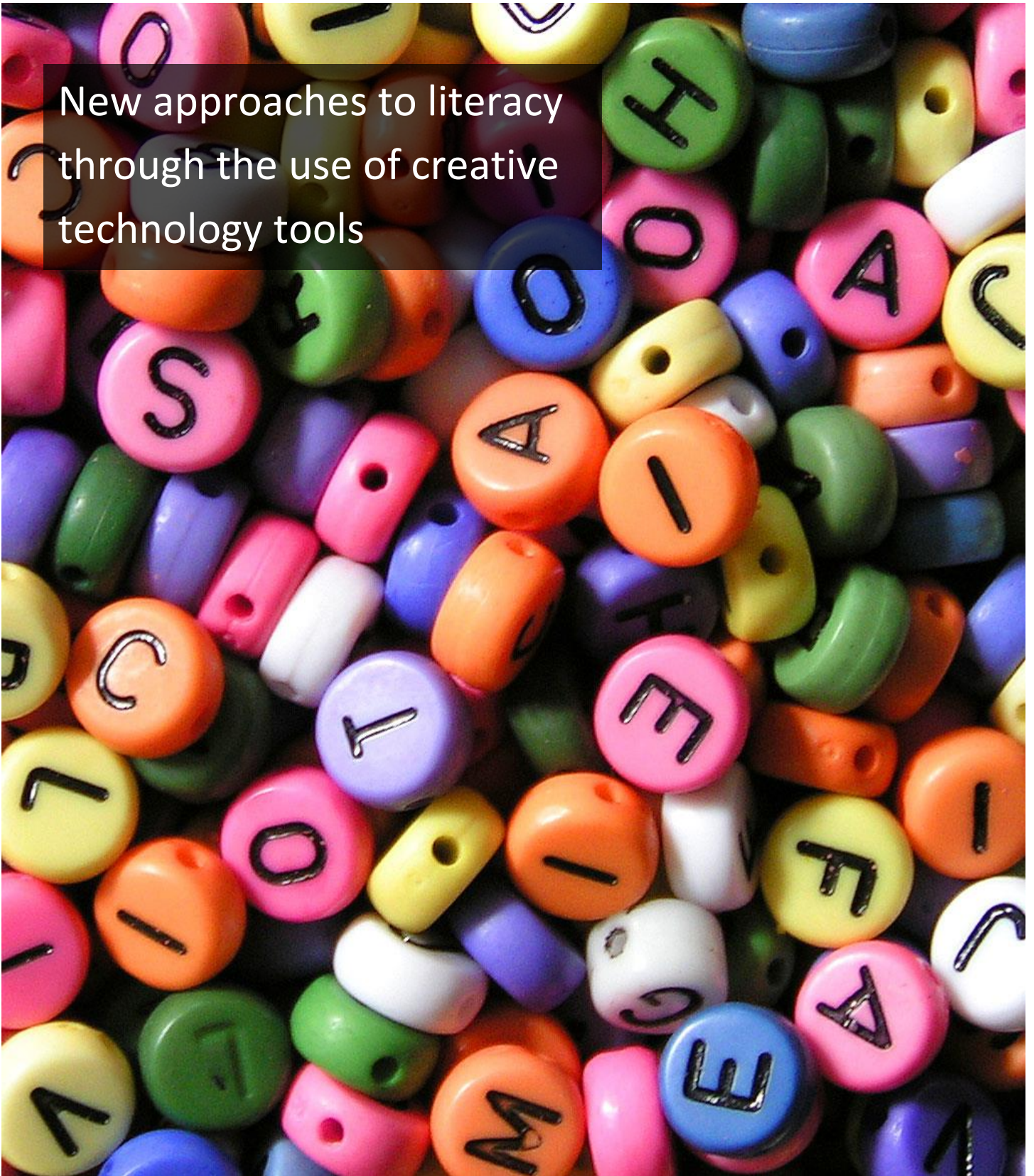
New approaches to literacy through the use of creative technology tools

Contents

This kit is provided by:

Tech4Learning
10981 San Diego Mission Rd.
Suite 120
San Diego, CA 92116

tech4learning.com

Build Early Literacy Skills

Technology activities and projects to support the five essential elements of a successful reading program.


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.
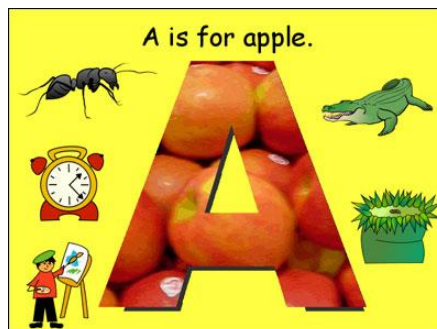
Most students have seen and read a book with an ABC structure and are eager to be authors on their own. Your students can add images to represents words that begin with this letter sound

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.
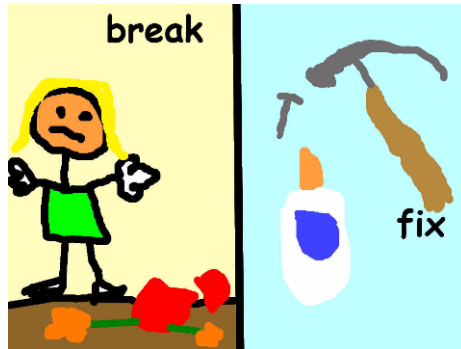
Phonics

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 the sentence, 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 to 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 unintimidating practice they need to become successful readers.

Vocabulary

Activities on topics like synonyms and antonyms or prefixes and suffixes provide 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 of a story they have read. For example, 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.

[View the student project](#)

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.

[View the student project](#)

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, they also 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.

Digital Storytelling in the Primary Classroom

Use this powerful form of communication to build literacy for emerging readers and writers

Digital storytelling is a powerful way to connect young learners to reading, writing, and digital literacy. While students in the primary grades may be more likely to watch stories than read and write their own, today's digital tools make it easy for these emerging writers to create and publish their own stories.

Digital storytelling tools provide opportunities for primary learners to begin communicating their ideas by simply adding pictures and recording their narration to describe what they've drawn, providing an opportunity to practice retelling before they begin writing. Digital storytelling relies on showing as much as telling, exemplifying that 21st-century literacy is more than just words on paper.

For students who aren't yet strong readers or confident speakers, or are new to the English language, creating digital stories provides an authentic opportunity to practice fluency. Digital stories are meant to be shown and shared; if you give your young learners headset microphones, they can record, listen, and rerecord until they are comfortable with their fluency and ready to incorporate their narration into the digital story.

Digital storytelling develops strong foundations in the craft of writing

The process of developing a digital story provides opportunities for students at all competency levels to develop and improve their writing craft. Many digital storytelling tools include a storyboard view of the pages in a project, helping students see how their writing is organized and providing an easy way to change the order events and ideas. Students can also look at the visual details in the pictures they have added to their stories and then enhance the story with additional descriptive writing.

Digital storytelling provides a compelling need to read and listen carefully and to write and edit effectively. Writing, adding images, writing more, rearranging the order of a project, and changing specific details helps

students see that effective storytelling requires time, reflection, and editing.

Digital storytelling establishes the relevance of school work

Creating digital stories, like the ones they are watching on YouTube and Netflix, help young learners see how the skills they are learning in school connect to the world around them. "Why do we have to do this?" isn't heard that often in a room of eager primary learners, but crafting digital stories firmly answers this question and establishes that what is learned in school is relevant to their world outside of it.

The Cow With Out a Maf!

View the student project

What can primary students create?

While digital storytelling requires skill in narrative writing, it isn't limited to this form of writing. In fact, the most powerful writing often combines informational, narrative, and opinion writing to inform and entertain, to raise awareness, or to change behavior.

Original Stories

Many young students love to tell stories, and some of them are even interested in writing them down. But for others, getting the ideas in their head down onto paper is a struggle. Because effective digital stories, show, not tell; images and sounds are as integral to effective storytelling as the text itself, easing the stress many young students feel when asked to write.

You might choose to have reluctant writers brainstorm ideas and begin "writing" by finding and adding them to their story. Tools for digital storytelling, like Wixie, make it easy for students to change the order of pages and then use the recording feature to narrate their story without having to write at all. You could also have them record their ideas as a first draft, find a parent or assistant to type the words into a word

How-To Make Grilled Cheese

View the student project

processing document and then have them work to edit the printed version before recording again.

Pattern Story Adaptations

Emerging readers love pattern stories because they "know" what is coming next and can "read" the story without having to know how to read the words. You can also use patterns to build the confidence of your emerging writers by asking them to add just a few words to complete a pattern for a class adaption of your favorite story.

After reading your favorite pattern story, use its pattern, or develop your own version, and ask your students to complete it. If the pattern requires just one or two words to complete, students may be able to type on their own or with you at a station or interactive white board. Have students use paint and imaging tools to add supporting illustrations.

There are many great children's literature titles that are easy and fun to adapt. Many digital publishing tools, like Wixie, even let you create your own template that makes it easy for students to begin creating their page as well as tools that make it easy to collect, combine, and share their work as a class book.

How-to Instructions

While not a traditional narrative, how-to instructions make for a great digital storytelling project. How-to writing helps teach students the importance of organization and sequencing. Using digital tools to create a short series of pages that each contain a simple sentence or two along with supporting visuals and illustrations, allows emerging writers to create products that effectively communicate an idea or process.

Many young students have already used a YouTube video to learn how to make glitter slime, do simple card tricks, or complete holiday crafts. Some of them even know how to search and find a video on their own when they want to learn
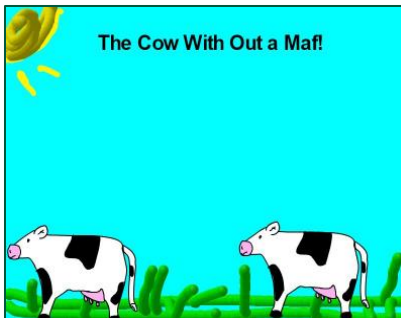
something. Developing and publishing their own how-to digital stories connects the work students are doing in school to the world they encounter outside of it.

Passion Projects

Everyone likes to be an expert and many young students have high-interest and high-expertise in a specific area. Create a learning culture that shows students you expect them to share their expertise with other learners, by challenging them to create informational texts that teach others about the topics they are passionate about.

When you ask young students to develop informational texts, the added benefit is that you end up with informational texts written at the level of your learners. While the Web contains a wealth of information on just about any topic, the content and reading level of the information is often way above the ability of primary students.

If you share student work online, or export as PDFs or eBooks, you let students know that their work is important. Your digital library can be full of literature and informational texts that were written and published by your students!

Raising Awareness and Inspiring Action

Stories inspire action. Use digital storytelling projects like opinion pieces or public service announcements to let learners know that their writing and publishing can change the world. Students use their growing writing and digital communication skills to raise awareness and educate others about issues for which they are passionate.

[View the student project](#)

When first-grade teacher Barbara Fairchild's students were studying families, she asked them to create stories that shared their opinions as to why a special someone was their favorite relative. She supported her writers by structuring the project so students created pages that:

1. stated their opinion,
2. shared two or three reasons or examples to explain why, and
3. finished with a concluding statement

When several of the people mentioned in the stories cried after viewing them, students saw the power that their words and stories could have.

Let your emerging writers know you believe in them!

Not only are emerging writers and primary learners able to create digital stories, the process of creating them develops strong foundations for digital-age communication. Digital storytelling also provides a powerful opportunity for students to practice authentic digital literacy skills through work that is shared with the world beyond the classroom.

Help Every Student be an Author

Inspire young authors with creative tools

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.

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 studies concept and a great way to further explore a chapter 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 (Here are some great [literature titles for student adaptation](#)). You'll notice that some emphasize particular parts of speech or a particular rhythm.

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.

[View a sample student project](#)

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.

21st-Century Publishing

Today's digital kids love publishing for an authentic audience. Publishing electronically gives the added dimension of sound. With tools like Pixie or Wixie, 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 example of their reading fluency, perfect for a digital portfolio.

Let's Print!

Even with all of the digital options out there, my students still enjoy creating printed publications. 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-—2 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](#) or [Bare Books](#).

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.

Lesson Plans

The following lesson plans provide specific, detailed examples of the ways creative technology tools can be applied in the early literacy 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 Pixie 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 Pixie.

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 Pixie. 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 Pixie 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.

[View a sample student project](#)

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!** 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 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

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 Pixie 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 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

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

Animal Riddles

Students will research an animal and create a riddle to showcase their knowledge and engage other students in the natural world.

Apps: Pixie® or Wixie®

Task

Kids love jokes and riddles! Your class will create a series of riddles that other students can use to learn about animals.

Engage

In this lesson, students will complete research about an animal and demonstrate their knowledge about the animal by creating riddles in Pixie or Wixie.

Introduce your students to animal riddles by reading ABC Animal Riddles (rhyming verse) by Susan Joyce or If Not for the Cat (haiku) by Jack Prelutsky. These books will engage your students in the process and demonstrate various ways that riddles can be written.

Discuss the riddles you have read with your students. You might ask:

- What was your favorite riddle? Why?
- What clues helped you figure out the answer?
- What types of words did the author use?
- What makes a good riddle?

As a class, explore the steps at the Read, Write, Think website for Riddle Writing which includes great ideas for finding descriptive words, using a thesaurus, and writing in perspective.

Let your students know that they will be creating their own animal riddles. Each student will choose an animal and create two pages for the riddle.

Page 1 will be the riddle. For example:

I have beautiful black spots. I am a carnivore. I live on the savanna. I am the fastest land animal on the planet.

Page 2 will be an illustration of the animal.

Brainstorm a list of different animals with the entire class. Depending on your current science focus, you may want to narrow your brainstorm to types of animals, such as mammals, or animals that live in a particular habitat like the desert.

Students should choose one animal from the list and write down what they already know about the animal using a cluster map or other graphic organizer.

In order to formulate the riddle, students will write clues based on the following questions:

- What does this animal look like?
- Where does it live?
- What does it eat?
- What makes it unique?

Give students time in the library or online to research the answers to these questions. Students should add their research notes to their existing cluster organizer. You can find a free graphic organizer worksheet maker at: https://graphicorganizer.net

Create

When their research is complete, students should write a draft of the riddle. The riddle should contain four sentences:

- Sentence 1: how the animal looks
- Sentence 2: what the animal eats
- Sentence 3: where the animal can be found
- Sentence 4: a unique fact or distinguishing characteristic

Use the Text tool to add the text of the riddle to page 1 and use the Options panel to adjust the size and font. Use the paint tools to illustrate the animal.
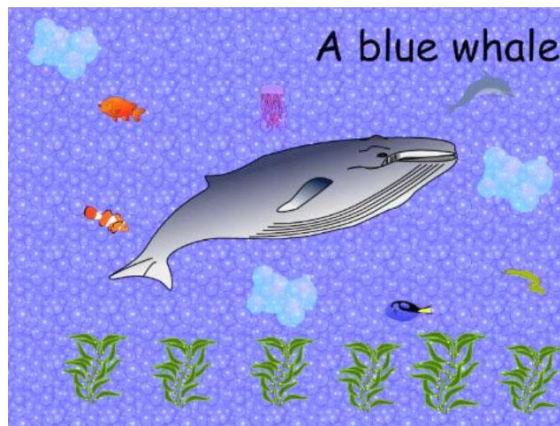
If they have time, students can record their voice reading the riddle on page 1 and add illustrations or images that support the words in the riddle.

Students can print their two-page project as a table tent or greeting card. You can also collect all students' files into one folder, combine them into one file in Pixie with each riddle followed by its illustrated answer, and export the project as HTML or a movie.

Share

Celebrate and present the student riddles! If students print table tents or greeting cards, have them place the printed projects on their desks and encourage students move around the room to read and guess at other students' riddles. If you choose to create a whole-class HTML file, project the exported riddles in front of the class and have each student read their riddle and facilitate class discussion and guesses. You might even want your class to share this with another class.

Assessment

In the beginning stages, the cluster map organizer can be used to assess each student's prior knowledge. You can continue to monitor progress as students complete and add their research notes and write their riddles. As students begin illustrating, prompt them with questions about their animals to encourage them to add more details and create more complete and specific illustrations.

Resources

Joyce, Susan. **ABC Animal Riddles**. ISBN: 0939217511

Yolen, Jane. **Least Things: Poems About Small Creatures.** ISBN: 1590780981

Prelutsky, Jack. **If Not for the Cat**. ISBN: 0060596775

Animal Planet

Fact Monster

Riddle Writing

Adapt a Pattern Story

Students practice writing and illustrating as they create a page in your class's adaptation of their favorite pattern story.

Apps: Pixie® or Wixie®

Task

Young students love picture books, but how do authors and illustrators create them? Now that your class has begun reading, it's time for them to learn how to be writers too.

After reading several stories with repeating patterns, your class will use their budding literacy skills to create their own version. Students will add their own variations to the pattern, draw pictures to support the words, and record narration to an individual page that will be combined and published as a class book!

Engage

You have likely read your students many books that contain patterns, such as The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle and Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr. If not, read your favorite book with a repeating pattern.

You can also watch Eric Carle read The Hungry Caterpillar at: https://youtu.be/vkYmvxP0AJI

Picture books that include patterns help emerging readers predict what will happen next as they read. These books often use rhyme and repeat words and phrases making it easier for students to connect printed text with sounds and words they know verbally. The patterned cadence of these books not only make them fun to read aloud, it also helps build an emerging reader's confidence as they "know" what is coming next before they even read the words.

Begin this project by reading, or rereading, some of your class's favorite pattern stories. Work with your students to identify the patterns found in several examples of these books. Ask your class which ones they like the best and why.

Listen to their ideas and then choose a title you will have your class adapt.

Create

After reading several pattern books, ask your class which ones they like the best and why. Listen to their ideas and then choose the title you will have your class adapt.

Create a template that includes the pattern you want students to adapt, as well as space for the words they are supposed to add to complete it. Wixie includes several templates in the curriculum library, like this one from It Looked Like Spilt Milk by Charles G. Shaw, that you can simply assign to each student in your class.

The pattern you use, doesn't have to be exactly the same as the book either. For example, if you read Denise Flemings In the Tall, Tall Grass, which uses wonderful sounds and onomatopoeia to help readers visualize themselves in the garden, you can modify to support emerging writers with a sentence starter like:

"In the tall, tall grass _____ (noun) _____ (verb)."

Have students first write their text to complete the pattern sentence you have provided. Then, ask them to use a program's paint tools, or crayons, to add a picture that supports the words they have chosen. If you are using a program like Wixie that includes voice recording, have students practice fluency by recording an oral version of the sentence on their page.

Share

Print out each student's page and bind them together to create a printed version you can keep in your classroom library. If students created individual pages using Wixie, combine them together using Wixie's Import Pages feature.

If you want a more professional looking published product, export student work as JPG files and upload to a photo-sharing site. Then, use the site's features to publish the book. If you can't get funding to create a book for each student, share the link to the finished "photo" book for individual parents to purchase.

Have your class read and share their book with younger students at your school or at a local preschool. You can use this opportunity to let your stronger readers shine, but because of the predictability of a pattern book, you may be able to use this opportunity to boost the confidence of your emerging readers.

If students included voice recording on their page, share the URL to the online version of the class book so viewers can both read and listen to the story. You can also export the class book as an ePub, so students can read and enjoy on their iPads at home.

Assessment

As students work to complete the pattern sentence, you will be able to assess their knowledge of vocabulary. If they are struggling, work with them to visualize and describe orally. You can let them use inventive, or phonetic, spelling to product original language, or work correctly spelling sight words, depending on their development and your project goals.

You can evaluate their comprehension (and fine motor skills!) through the illustrations they create to support their sentence. Their final recording, and practice before recording, will help build and assess reading fluency.

You may want to create a checklist for the things they need to include: such as completed sentence, picture to support text, and narration that is clear.
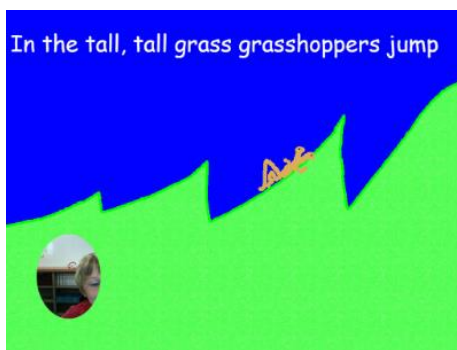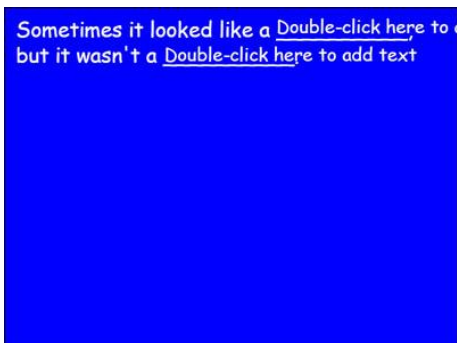
Resources

Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle. **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?** ISBN: 0805047905

Charles G. Shaw. **It Looked Like Spilt Milk**. ISBN: 0064431592

Predictable Pattern Books: Ohio Literacy Resource Center

Literature Suggestions for Student Adaptation

Harmonious Haiku

After reading haiku and learning about this short form of Japanese poetry, students will write and illustrate their own haiku poems.

Apps: Pixie® or Wixie®

Task

Writing haiku poems can help make you a great author. Haiku poems are short, so they really make you to think about choosing "just right" words. Show off your burgeoning vocabulary by writing and illustrating your own haiku poem.

Engage

Due to their short length, haiku poems are an ideal writing format for hesitant writers and/or students with a language barrier. Writing great haiku is also a great exercise in concise, purposeful word choice, which often prompts rich vocabulary discussions, as students debate author's word choice and explore multiple meanings and nuance.

Kick off this writing lesson with fun examples of haiku, such as the ones written for boys in Bob Raczka's Guyku. You might also share examples of entire stories written in haiku, such as Andrew Clements's Dogku or Lee Wardlaw's Won Ton: A Cat Tale Told in Haiku.

Ask students what other knowledge and experiences they have with haiku. Clarify that a haiku is a 17-syllable verse form consisting of three metrical units of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. Share an example of a traditional haiku, such as this one from Matsuo Basho, a famous Japanese poet.

An old pond!

A frog jumps in-

The sound of water.

Traditional haiku also contain a kigo, or season word, to indicate in which season the Haiku is set. For example, cherry blossoms would indicate spring and snow would indicate winter.

Work together to count syllables and locate any kigo words in the samples you share.

Wikipedia has a page with a list of Japanese kigo words. While you may not choose to share this list with your students, you may want to explore it on your own and work as a class to create a similar list for each season.

When the robins come,
crocus pop up purple heads,
and jasmine smells sweet.
Alma

Create

Have individual students choose a season for their poem, and begin by brainstorming at least 6 words connected to this season. If you created a list of kigo together, students can refer to your class list. You might also consider grouping students together according to season to come up with their own list of kigo words for their particular season.

Have students refer to the anchor chart you created with key elements of the haiku form, or create a worksheet that reminds them of the 5-7-5 syllable pattern, such as the Haiku activity in Wixie.

Clear skies and crisp air,
The damp smell of departure,
Awash in color.

Word choice is a key element of successful poetry writing. To help build student's vocabulary and get them thinking about this important part of writing, teach them how to use a thesaurus.

Start by asking students to define synonym. Share a common word like "run" and have students come up with synonyms like: race, jog, skip, or sprint. Use a print or online thesaurus and look up run to see if any additional words are included there.

"The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."

--Mark Twain quoted by George Bainton, The Art of Authorship, 1890.

Have students share the first draft of their haiku with another student. Peer reviewers should identify the kigo or season word, if appropriate, and circle unfamiliar vocabulary words. Student reviewers should also highlight or underline words and phrases that they feel do an excellent job connecting the reader to the meaning of the poem. The intention is to prompt close reading, explanations, and clarifications that the authors can use to improve their poem.

Once students have finished editing their haiku, they can use an authoring tool, such as Wixie, to type their haiku and create support illustrations using the paint tools, photographs, and clip art. Students should also record themselves reading their haiku for intonation and effect.

Share

Print each student's haiku page in color to display in your classroom. Reach out to a local tea shop or even small business to see if they might be interested in showcasing student work at their site.

Combine individual student pages into one class project. Print the images and bind them into a class book you can share in your library or school media center.

Many photo sharing sites let you easily print coffee-table style books; simply export each students page as a JPG, upload, and choose your print options.

You might also want to host a family or community night where you serve Japanese tea and project the combined student's haiku pages on a large screen.

Assessment

Evaluate prior knowledge about haiku as poetry form as you read a haiku book or share other samples with the class. Evaluate their understanding of syllables as you clap and read the haiku, as well as in one-on-one

conversations as students write their own haiku. You will be able to use these conversations to get a sense of the size of a student's vocabulary and word choice writing skills.

Share a rubric or checklist to clarify your expectations for their work. You can find a free rubric maker at: https://rubric-maker.com

As they develop the backgrounds and supporting artwork in Wixie, ask questions and engage in additional one-on-one dialog that gets students to explain their choices, helping you evaluate comprehension. Their recording, and practice before recording, will help build and assess reading fluency.

Resources

Bob Raczka. **GUYKU: A Year of Haiku for Boys**. ISBN: 0547240031

Andrew Clements. **Dogku**. ISBN: 068985823X

Lee Wardlaw. **Won Ton: A Cat Tale Told in Haiku**. ISBN: 0805089950

Laya Steinberg. **Thesaurus Rex**. ISBN: 1841481807

Haikus by kids

Writing Information Texts: How-To's

Students will write how-to stories about getting ready for school and publish them to share with their families and to use at home.
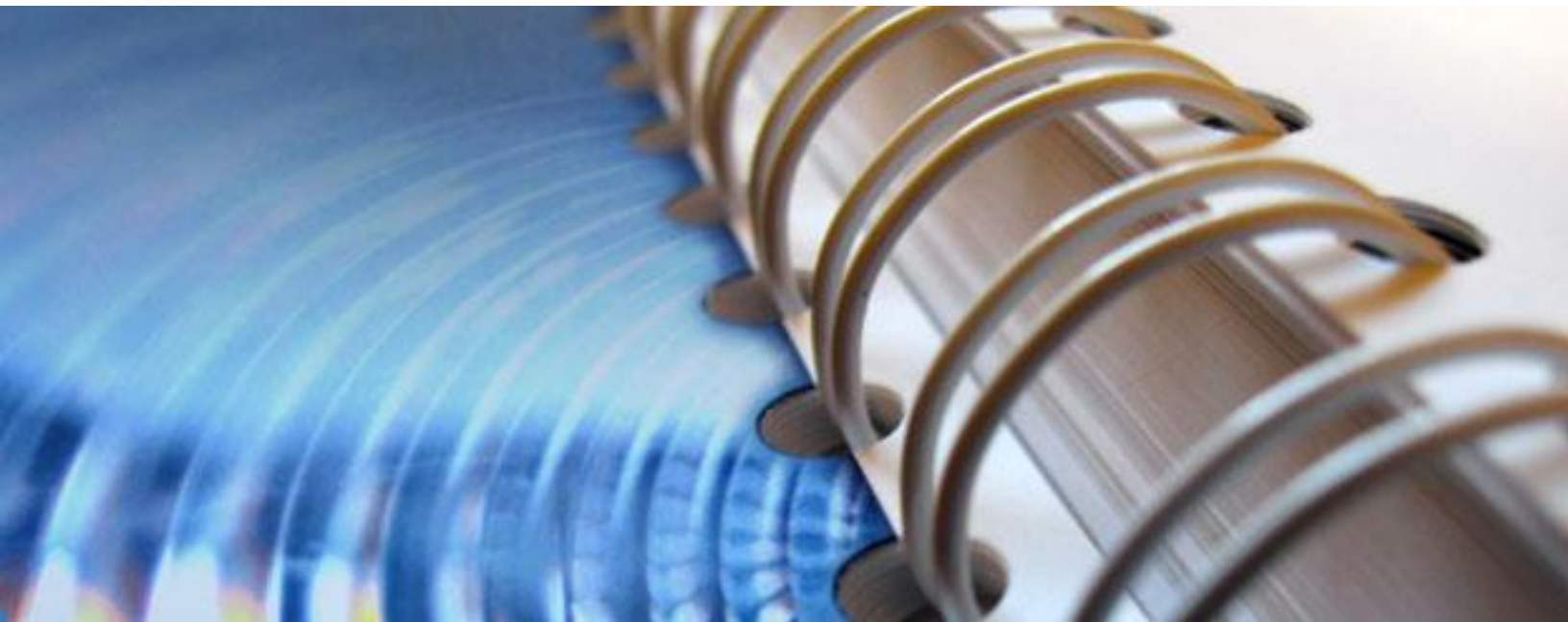
Apps: Wixie® or Pixie®

Task

Everyone in your class is unique. Help them explore how they are similar and different by having them write how- to books that describe how to get ready for school in the morning. This activity will help them find connections through shared activities and actions and give them a taste of creating their own informational text resources.

Engage

Read, or reread, Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst. Focus on Alexander's problems as he gets ready for school. You may even choose to simply focus on this section or revisit it when students are preparing to write their own "Getting Ready for School" how-to

informational texts.

As a class, create a list of some of the things your students do when they get ready for school. Your students may come up with ideas like brush teeth, eat breakfast, get dressed, and feed the dog. It may take a while to get students to come up with specific steps, but once a few ideas are on the list, it will be easier for students to come up with them on their own.

Using the class ideas as a foundation, have each student create a list the things they think should be included in a how-to get ready for school book. Have students use a beginning, middle, and end organizer to group together similar actions and establish a basic timeline.

If students are struggling with events and order, have them write ideas on

sticky notes. This will make it easy to change order and group things together, before working on a more official organizer.

Create

Once the students have completed their organizer, have them write complete sentences for each part of the how-to book. What should happen first? Next? Last?

Talk to students about their writing to make sure they have included capital letters at the beginning and periods at the end. Ask them what they will draw on each page. Will their illustration support their writing? What can they add or change? How can they add to or change the picture?

Have each student write and illustrate their story. If you have Wixie, students can use the Begin and End Book activity which includes a cover and 3 pages with a text box and room for a picture. You may want to have an older student buddy or aide help students type their stories.

Share

Print out each student's book. If you are using Wixie, click the Send button on the toolbar, choose Print, and select the Booklet option to print all four pages in the project on one sheet of paper students can folder into a small booklet. Ask students to read their book to a buddy and then again to someone in their family when they return home.

How-To Make Lemonade
By Charlotte

[View the student project](#)

You can also publish student how-to books online. This is especially great if they have recorded their instructions. Link to each student's how-to book from your classroom web site to create your own how-to library. This way student work has a real-world audience in your family and community.

Assessment

Begin by evaluating student responses in your initial class discussion of things they do in the morning. How well are they able to break distinct actions apart? How many different things can they come up with? This will help you work with students who will need additional help creating their own list of actions and grouping them into beginning, middle, and end.

Share a rubric or checklist to clarify your expectations for their work. You can find a free rubric maker at: https://rubric-maker.com

You can evaluate student writing and grammar as they develop their list of actions into sentences for each section of their how-to. You can assess the final booklet for organization, grammar, use of illustrations to support text, and reading fluency if they have recorded narration.

Resources

Viorst, Judith. **Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day**. ISBN: 1416985956.
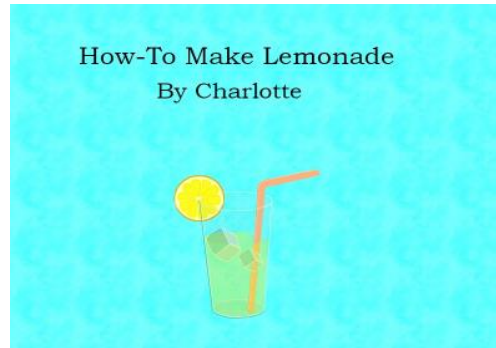
Five-Star Book Reviews

Students create a book review on a card or 3D cube to help other students better choose books they will enjoy.

Apps: Pixie® or Wixie®

Task

While some emerging readers love any book, others struggle to find books they enjoy reading. In this project, students think about books they have enjoyed reading and why they liked them. They then create a review of one of the books on a card or 3D cube to help others better select a book they will enjoy reading.

Engage

Common Core State Standards for primary grades use book reviews as a performance task for primary grade opinion writing. In Kindergarten, emerging writers simply write a sentence to name a favorite book, but first- and second-grade students also supply reasons to support their opinion.

Many emerging readers struggle to find books they like when faced with a library filled with options. Book reviews are a product you can ask young learners to create that not only meets academic goals, but has value to their peers as well.

Begin this project by asking your students to name their favorite book that you have read to them this year. As they share their favorites, ask each student to try to articulate specific reasons that made the story great. You can also open this question up to other students who agree that a particular book was enjoyable.

Now, ask students if they have ever had trouble finding a book they like. Then, ask students if they have ever had a friend tell them "You are going to love this book!"

but when they read it themselves, they didn't really enjoy it.

Be sure to acknowledge that not every student likes the same book. Reading is personal and will depend on your interests more than your reading ability. You will also want to try to help students understand that sharing an opinion that is not supported with specific reasons does not provide a reader with a lot of information to make their own decision.

Make your students aware that even adults have problems finding books they enjoy reading. This is why many of them use book reviews as a tool to help them better choose the next book they will read.

Show students an example of a book review, such as ones you find online or print examples from your local paper. These reviews are written for adults, so share an example or two of book reviews written by students as well.
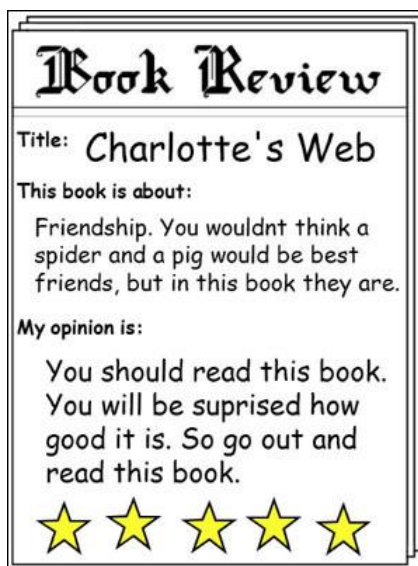
Create

Let students know that they will be writing a review of a book they have enjoyed to help other students learn more about the story and decide if it is a book that they might enjoy reading too.

Have students think of a book they enjoyed reading on their own this year. After students have chosen a title, the next step is to help them move beyond a simple identification of a favorite book, to supplying an opinion about it backed up by reasons and examples in the book.

Provide students with an OREO opinion organizer to help students develop their ideas before they start writing. In this graphic organizer, students state their opinion, such as Mercy Watson to the Rescue is my favorite book. The next part of the organizer asks them

to supply a reason for their opinion, followed by an example or two from the book.

Decide as a class if you want to create reviews you share as posters you will hang on the wall, postcards you will print and share or even 3D cubes students can print on card stock, cut, fold, glue and display.

Provide your students with a book review template they can use to share the ideas they have developed in their OREO organizer.

A digital creativity tool, like Wixie, includes several templates for book reviews, including several that work to print as postcards and trading cards, as well as several 3D cube templates specifically designed for book reviews.

To get your students thinking, you may want to work together to create a list of common elements found in all of the reviews, such as the title of the book, the author's name, a summary, and an opinion. Then, work with students to decide what should be in their review and design your own Wixie template together for students to use.
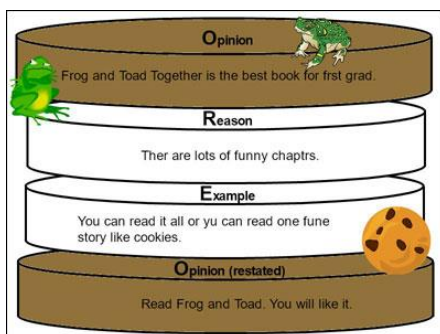
Share

Celebrating the work of your emerging writers encourages them to continue their efforts. While displaying their writing is great, show students their writing has value by sharing it with other young learners who will use it to choose their next book to read.

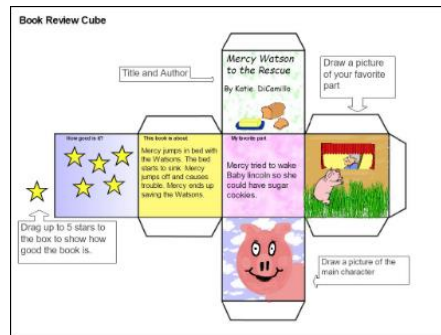Print two copies of each student's card or 3D Cube. Share one copy in the reading area or book nook in your classroom and the other in the library media center at your school.

Give student work an even larger audience by reaching out to your local library or independent bookstore to

see if they would be willing to share them with their visitors to help them find that just right book.

If your learners are up for more involvement and thinking, ask them to help determine the size and shape their reviews should be shared. While there aren't a lot of options for a 3D cube, if students wrote single-page reviews, they can print at full-page size and display around school. They can also print multiple copies on a single page at postcard, or even trading card, size.

No matter what format they choose for publishing, ask students to also consider how they will organize the reviews for students to use most effectively. In other words, would sorting the reviews by genre, rating, or theme make the right title even easier for students to find? Instead of giving options for sorting, see if students can come up with these on their own.

Assessment

You can assess student's prior experience with opinion writing as you work together to evaluate what makes a good book review.

You may want to create a checklist for the things students need to include in their review, to clearly define the content their review should include.

You can create a free assessment checklist at: https://rubric-maker.com

The OREO opinion organizer provides a great formative assessment opportunity you can use before they begin writing to ensure they understand how to support an opinion with reasons and examples, not simply restate it. Their final book review serves as a summative assessment of their opinion writing progress.

If you involved students in thinking about the product format they should use as well as how they should sort, display, and share their work, be sure to record your conversations and observations to make it easier to describe their thinking in your evaluation.

Resources

The Horn Book: Reviews of 2017 Caldecott Award Winners

Spaghetti Book Club: Book Reviews Written by Students

Read Brightly: 30 Books for Early Readers

Persuade for a Pet

Students write a letter to their parents, or classroom teacher, to persuade them to get a new pet, supporting their opinion with reasons and examples.

Apps: Wixie® or Pixie®

Task

Most young students love animals and many even have a pet at home. To help students think about the care a pet needs to survive and thrive, have them choose a pet they want to add to their family or your classroom.

After students learn more about the pet, ask them to write a letter to convince you, or their parents, to get this new pet. Their letter should include reasons why the pet would make a great addition to their classroom or family, as well as demonstrate that they understand what needs to be done to take care of it.

Engage

While it isn't very hard to get most young students interested in animals, especially puppies and kittens, kick off the project with an event. For example, if you know your students have pets at home, ask them to

bring in pictures of their pet or have parents share videos with you. Then, have students show these images and videos to the class and share a story or more information about their pet.

To add a bit of math into the project, ask students to share the types of pets they have at home. Write these on the board and add a tally mark for each student who has this type. You might even have them create a bar graph or pictograph of the information.

If you have the time and resources, have a guest speaker come to your class from a local veterinary clinic or humane society, or better yet, schedule a field trip!

Once you talked about animals that students already have as pets, push students to think more deeply about pets with questions like:

- What makes a good pet?
- What would not be a good pet?
- Are some breeds better than other?
- Why doesn't everybody have a pet?

Ask questions that push students to share an opinion about pets. To prepare them for the persuasive part of this lesson, prompt students to support their answers with reasons and examples by asking "Why?"

Pets are not wild animals that survive on their own. Pet owners need to provide water, food and shelter, making it a lot of work to own and care for a pet. This is a big reason many people do not own pets.

Read a story like **I Wanna Iguana**. to get students thinking about what it takes to care for a pet. Follow-up the story with an informational text or video, like the one below.

Spend time with students thinking and talking about their experiences and ideas for giving pets the care they need.

Next, let students know that they are going to have an opportunity to try to convince you, or their family, to get a new pet.

Have students choose a pet they would like to have at home or in the classroom. Provide leveled reading materials for them to find out more about their pet and provide time and support for them to learn more about it.

If several students choose the same pet, you can have them work as a team to learn more about the animal or share the information they find individually with other students interested in the same animal.

Have students document the facts they have learned and things they like about this pet using a cluster graphic organizer.

Create

Ask your students what they think will happen if they say, "I want a puppy!" to their parents. Will their parents just get one for the family? Why? Why not? See if you can help your students connect the idea of wanting to the idea of convincing or arguing, using words like "reason" and "because."

"I want a puppy" is a statement, and for some students, a fact. "Our family should get a pet" is an opinion. Let students know that if you want someone else to agree with your opinion, or act on it, you need to persuade them. Talk to your students about what it means to persuade someone?

Have students craft their opinion clearly. Use an O-R-E-O organizer to clearly craft the opinion they will share in their letters, as well as the reasons and examples they can use to persuade their parents to agree with their opinion.

If you have Wixie, you can assign a template like the OREO (opinion, reason, example, opinion) to the students in your class to help them organize their writing.
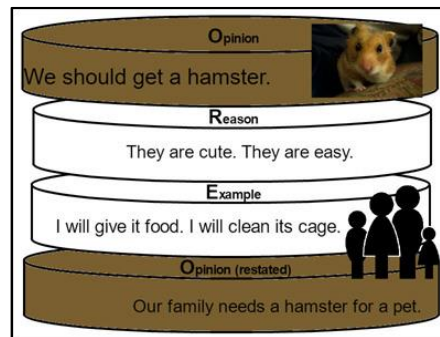
Once students have finished organizing their ideas, introduce the parts of a friendly letter: greeting, body, closing, and signature. Have students write a rough draft of their letter based on their O-R-E-O organizer.

If you want to utilize technology to motivate your writers, use a tool like Wixie to assign a template like the Friendly Letter or make your own template using the Stationary backgrounds in the Library>Backgrounds folder.

Students can type their letter and then use paint tools and clip art to illustrate life with their new pet.

Consider having students write additional persuasive sentences to overcome the objection that pets are too much work. For example, students could describe how they will help care for the animal.

Share

Print letters to hang in your classroom and/or send to parents. Have students read their letters to both practice fluency and give everyone additional ways to use reasons and samples to support opinions and ideas.

If students chose to persuade you to get a class pet, read all the letters together and then vote on which pet would be best for the classroom. If you aren't going to actually get a new classroom pet, let students know ahead of time.

Assessment

You can evaluate prior knowledge about the needs of living things, as well as student's experiences with pet animals, during your initial discussions. Use the cluster and OREO graphic organizers and initial writing drafts for formative assessment purposes.

The Persuade for a Pet letter works great as a performance task you can use to evaluate students understanding.

Create a rubric or checklist to help students remember and consider the elements their letter should include. You can find a free rubric maker at: https://rubric-maker.com

Resources

Mercer Mayer. **Just Me and My Puppy**. ISBN: 0307119378
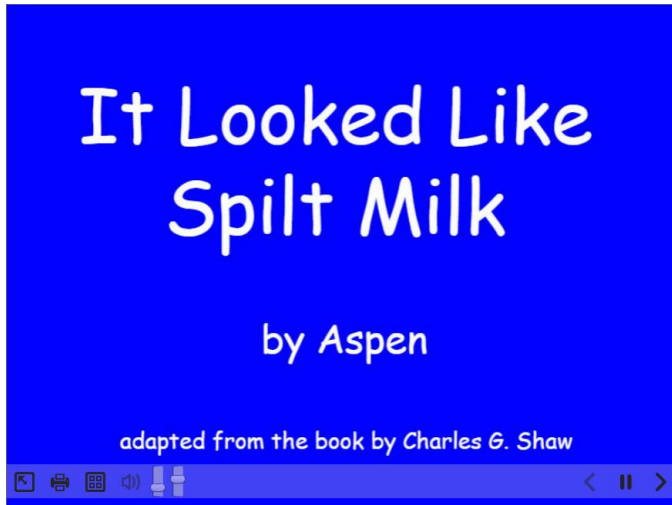
Marc Brown. **Arthur's Pet Business**. ISBN: 0316113166

Karen Kaufman Orloff. **I Wanna Iguana**. ISBN: 0399237178

Pet Care Basics

Additional ideas from real student projects

Click the project to see the sample.

Literary Adaptations

Students create their own versions of your favorite books with repeating patterns.

Informational Texts

Students create and share eBooks about a classroom project or topic they have researched.

Animal Interviews

Students interview animals to demonstrate knowledge of physical characteristics, habitat, diet, and more.

Illustrated Poetry

Students create visual poetry by combining images that portray the meaning of text.
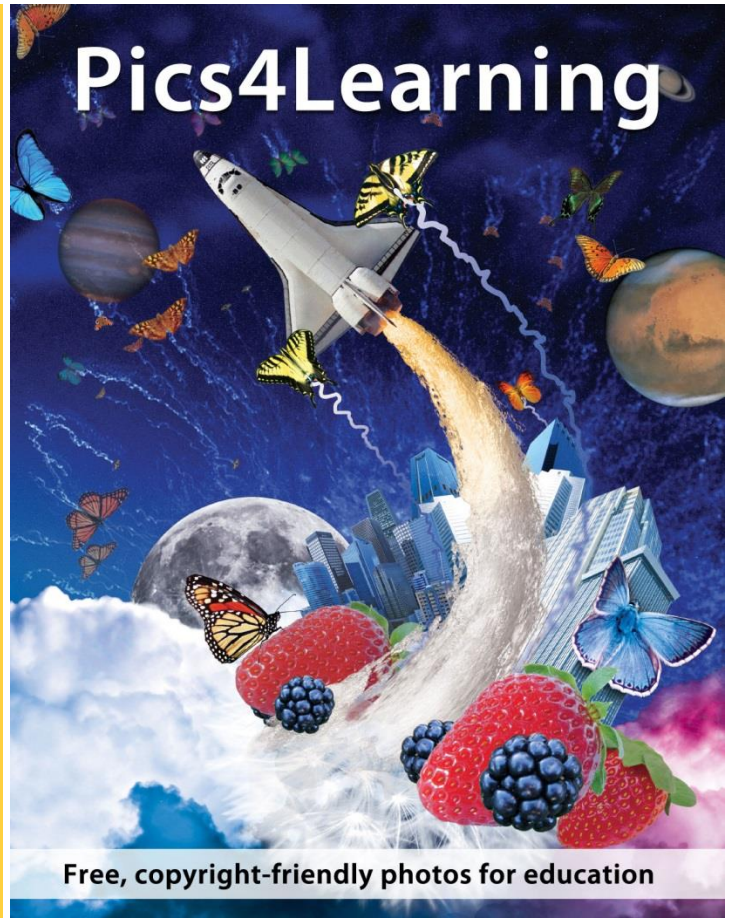
Wixie is an online publishing and creativity platform that lets students share what they know through **their writing, their voice, and their art.**

Give Wixie a Try

Free, copyright-friendly photos for education