

# JR IDEAS

THE NEWSLETTER  
OF  
THE  
ONTARIO  
ASSOCIATION  
OF  
JUNIOR  
EDUCATORS

SEPTEMBER  
2011



GAMES  
FOR  
CHANGE

## GAMES FOR CHANGE

Given the lure of video games and time spent by junior level students interacting with them, Games for Change has recognized the potential educational and social impact inherent in them. This non-profit organization acts as an advocate for supporting and making games for positive social impact. In collaboration with the gaming industry and other sectors, Games for Change has helped create a number of FREELY ACCESSIBLE and high quality games for students.

Useful in the classroom or at home, teachers can browse a collection of games for students ages seven and up which address issues in Science & Technology, Language & Literacy, Social Studies, Health, and Mathematics through naturally integrated themes. The current list includes the exploration of financial literacy, careers, ocean habitats, wolf habitat and survival, airport security (useful for media literacy), natural disasters, interpersonal relationships, cell phone literacy games, politics and government, and more.

Of particular note is *Electricity*, where students manage resources and generate a portion of their electricity from renewable energy sources as they build a simulated city. Great for Grade 6. There are no lesson plans posted, but were sure that creative OAJE members will develop some for sharing in a future newsletter. Check them out!

[www.gamesforchange.org/game\\_categories/07-and-up/](http://www.gamesforchange.org/game_categories/07-and-up/)



## Classroom-ready Ideas for Teachers of Grades Four Through Six

Off to a great start!

### Building Relationships

It's the beginning of a new school year, and teachers across the province are starting the task of getting to know each of their students and establishing a positive relationship with them.

One of the activities that I have the students in my class do as part of my plan to get to know each them better is to have them answer two questions - first in rough, then in final written form on an index card. These are the questions:

- what is ONE thing that you hope to learn more about this year at school?

- what is ONE thing that you hope to learn how to do or how to do better this year?

I tell the students that while I cannot promise to deliver on each of their hopes - I do use them to help me plan my program and keep in mind that their opinions about their own education are important to me too.

On 'meet the teacher night', 'parent-teacher interviews' or another similar occasion I ask the parents to write down an answer to this question:

- what is ONE thing that you hope your son/daughter will learn or accomplish this year?

I am always surprised and sometimes, touched, by the responses. One parent wrote "I hope that Tony finds a friend this year." Success in school isn't always measured by assessments or reflected in report cards.

So . . . this year use this activity to get to know your students a bit better and have gain some insights into what parents are hoping for their children.

back to  
School



JOIN OAJE FOR  
FREE!



The Ontario Association of Junior Educators (OAJE) provides a network for education professionals to share ideas and resources, to assist and support teachers and to advocate on behalf of students and teachers in the Junior grades.

Members of OAJE receive a newsletter outlining news, events, conferences and teaching tips. They are also invited to provide input, information and opinions for the Ministry of Education about issues of importance to Junior Division teachers.

To become a member of OAJE, simply register online at <http://oajemembership.eventbrite.com>



Creating the Curious Classroom

# Surface Tension

Have your students work in pairs for this activity. Give each pair two plastic cups (both half filled with water) and about fifty pennies. Tell the students that they need to fill one of the plastic cups with water from the other until it is as full as it can get without overflowing.

Challenge the students to predict how many pennies they can add to an already FULL cup of water. Have them write down their guess. Now have them add as many pennies as they can to the already full cup of water and observe what happens.

Have each pair of students report how many pennies they were able to add to the already full cup of water. Use the data from the class to chart and illustrate the results in a bar graph.

Challenge the students to make a list of all of their observations - underlining the ones that are most helpful to them in coming up with a hypothesis as to why this is happening.

Prior to the class, rub one penny with a drop of dish detergent. When the students have added their pennies to the point that the water is heaped over the top, have them add the penny with the soap film and observe what happens.



## UNMISTAKABLE IMPACT

Knight, J. (2011). Unmistakable Impact: A partnership approach for dramatically improving instruction. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin.

In this positive synthesis of current initiatives for school improvement, Jim Knight considers respectful and consistent professional learning that is done with teachers, not to teachers...valuing the work of all involved. The book centres on the five core concepts of humanity, focus, leverage, simplicity and precision which emerged as key themes in his work with a number of school districts in the USA and Canada. The aim of the book is to provide a simple, but not simplistic map for educators in pursuit of improving learning for their students. As he states, "A teacher should only be asked to attend a workshop, participate in a professional learning community (PLC), partner with a coach, or be observed by a principal, if those events will have an unmistakable impact on teaching and student learning." He helps the reader to achieve this goal by describing practical and relevant strategies through very accessible text.



## Have you seen our newest resource?

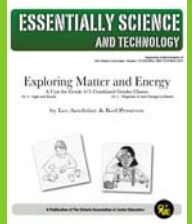
### ESSENTIALLY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Ontario Association of Junior Educators has recently produced some NEW and EXCITING science resource books for teachers.

- ✓ a unit for each of the FOUR STRANDS in the Ontario Curriculum for Science & Technology: Grades 4-6
- ✓ specially designed units for COMBINED GRADE CLASSES
- ✓ focusing on SKILLS of inquiry, problem solving, and communication
- ✓ addressing ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
- ✓ challenging students to DESIGN & CONSTRUCT
- ✓ using simple, easily found materials
- ✓ supporting authentic ASSESSMENT
- ✓ linking NUMERACY and LITERACY skills

All 20 titles in this series are NOW available.

For ordering information, contact PEARSON Publishing at [www.pearsonschoolcanada.ca](http://www.pearsonschoolcanada.ca) and enter Essentially Science and Technology into the search field.



A Curriculum Resource from The Ontario Association of Junior Educators



# Math plays a starring role in children's TV show

Once the warm spring weather arrives, many people put away their bird feeders. Schools that regularly put food out for local birds and used the opportunity for a window ledge feeder to provide students with learning opportunities related to observing and identifying birds, determining food preferences and a host of other activities.

What do you get when you mix two cousins and one wacky uncle with a whole lot of numbers, crafts, songs, special guests and mathematical fun? If you're watching TVOKids, you get The Prime Radicals, the live-action television program that makes math fun for children.

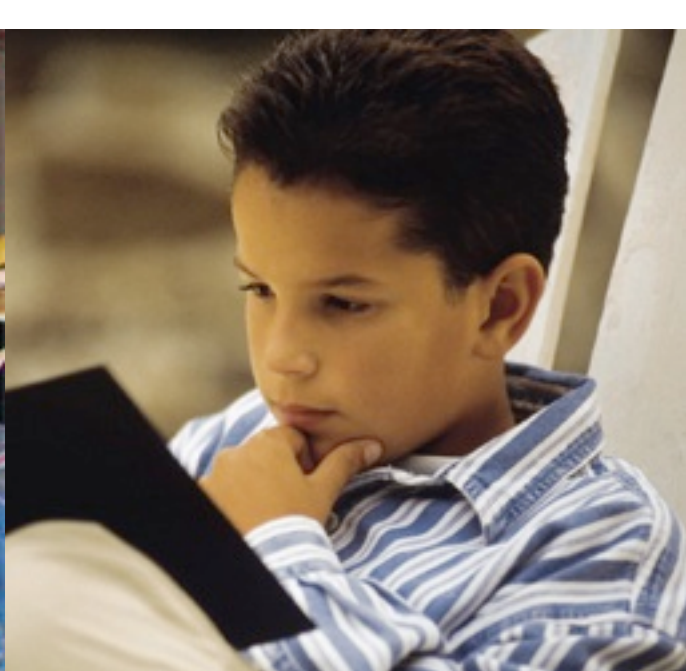
Produced by Ottawa's GAPC Entertainment in close consultation with Queen's University math education expert, Dr. Lynda Colgan, The Prime Radicals airs every Saturday at 3:30 p.m. and every Sunday at 12:30 p.m. on TVOKids. In each episode, the "Rads" - 11 year old Kevin and his teenaged cousin Alanna - use math to help their Uncle Norm solve problems or get out of whatever mess he's found himself in. The series is based on the Ontario math curriculum for children aged 6 to 8.

Funny and fun, the show teaches young viewers key math concepts such as measurement, counting, patterns and much more through interviews with experts like a firefighter, maze-builder, chef, police officer and architect. The Prime Radicals features a weekly "Make, Build and Do" project that allows kids to apply the week's math lessons to a make-at-home craft, along with a radical tune that children can sing along with.

The Prime Radicals takes the mystery out of math and puts the fun into learning. The series is supported by a website that features numbrific fun and games, along with songs and crafts from each episode. For more information, visit [www.primeradicals.com](http://www.primeradicals.com) and [www.facebook.com/primeradicals](http://www.facebook.com/primeradicals).

*The Prime Radicals was developed in conjunction with TVOKids and is being produced in association with TVOntario, Knowledge Network, SCN and ACCESS Alberta; and with the financial participation of the Canada Media Fund, The Shaw Rocket Fund, The Bell Broadcast and New Media Fund, and the Ontario Media Development Corporation (Screen Content Initiative Program).*





# Dr. Larry's Summer Reading 2011

The following are some 2011 titles that are highly recommended, especially for those whose tastes are in the world of fantasy fiction. Alas, these titles are all out in hardback only, but you can be the first on the block to read - and enjoy - these books and, of course, share with your students.



## Plain Kate by Erin Bow

Lovers of fantasy stories will be engrossed in this richly written - Canadian - novel about a young girl who lives in a world of superstitions, curses and magic. Some think Plain Kate to be a witch, as she seeks survival in a community that is set to burn her. The friendship of a talking cat balances out the dark dreams and fears Plain Kate faces as she struggles to survive.



## Noah Barleywater Runs Away by John Boyne

The author of *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* tells the story of a runaway boy who learns about love and family when he meets up with the owner of a toy shop. Great storytelling!

Check out these book recommendations from Dr. Larry Swartz



Larry is a greatly sought after workshop leader and one of Canada's foremost experts in children's literature.

He teaches at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Toronto and is the author of numerous professional books.

Check out these titles from Larry Swartz.

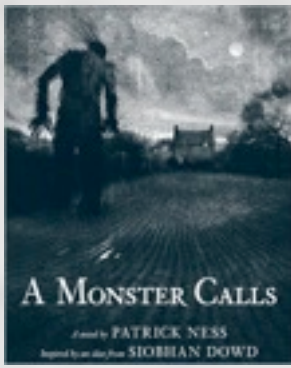
Good Books Matter  
(with Shelley Stagg Peterson)

The Novel Experience

The Poetry Experience  
(with Sherre Fitch)

The Picture Book Experience

Available from Pembroke Publishers  
[www.pembrokepublishers.com](http://www.pembrokepublishers.com)



## **A Monster Calls by Patrick Ness and Jim Kay**

Just before midnight strikes, a 13 year old boy awakes to see a monster outside his bedroom window. This was not the wild monster that has been invading his dreams ever since his mother began her treatments for cancer. This monster, this story, and the staggering black and white illustrations - are liable to haunt readers literally - and emotionally. WOW!

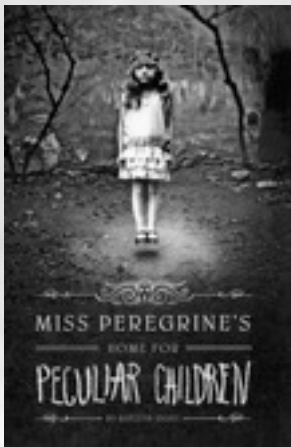
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## **This Dark Endeavour by Kenneth Oppel**

Although his father makes Victor Frankenstein promise to never visit The Dark Library, the boy disobeys and seeks the recipe for the legendary Elixir of Life when Victor's twin brother becomes deathly ill. A strange adventure unfolds as Victor beats impossible, dangerous odds that push the boundaries of science, nature - and love. FYI: Movie rights for this book have already been sold to the producers of Twilight.

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## **Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children by Ransom Riggs**

Besides its title, the appeal of this book is the use of strange-but-true photographs spread throughout it. The images are used as an inspiration for the stories that the author has invented about a 'peculiar' group of children that a boy meets on a weird time travel adventure. This book appears at the top of the New York Times bestseller list and will satisfy the appetites of fantasy readers who have said good-bye to Harry Potter.

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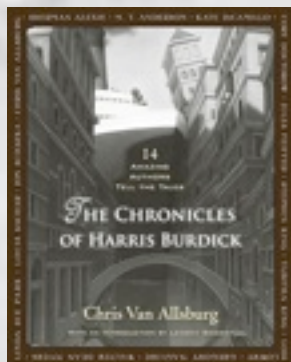


## **Wonderstruck by Brian Selznick**

A novel in words and pictures

The Caldecott Medal winning author of The Invention of Hugo Cabret has done it again with another large novel (630 pages: half of which are black and white illustrations). This time travel adventure story blends past and present in a story of loss and belonging, family and friendship.

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## **The Chronicles of Harris Burdick by Chris Van Allsburg**

Fourteen authors have each written a tale to accompany one of the illustrations from Chris Van Allsburg's famous picture book The Mysteries of Harris Burdick. Authors include Kate Di Camillo, Lois Lowry, Walter Dean Myers, Louis Sachar, Lemony Snicket, Stephen King and Van Allsburg himself. This one will sell a million copies!

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