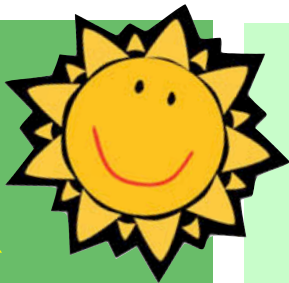


JR IDEAS



THE
NEWSLETTER
OF
THE
ONTARIO
ASSOCIATION
OF
JUNIOR
EDUCATORS

JUNE
2010



Dear Occupant . . .



It's that time of year when teachers in hot, flat-roofed schools look enviously on colleagues who are teaching in new, modern air-conditioned buildings. Where everything can seem like it is moving in slow motion, like the humid air that blows through open windows.

It also seems that report cards have to be written and submitted to the office earlier and earlier - which wouldn't be much of a problem except that the kids are old enough to realize that all of those purposeful activities you have planned and delivered in the last two weeks of June are not likely to impact any measure of their achievement.

It is at this time of the year that I pull out some of my most engaging and interesting activities, projects and experiences. Like an actor in a long-running television show - or an athlete on a world-class team - I want to end my season on a high note.

And if the activities I do help me with my next year's class - it is a bonus. And this is one of those activities.

Tell the students that they are going to brainstorm all of the good things about being in grade 4 (or grade 5 or 6) and jot note their list on a piece of paper. Then ask them to consider what a student who might be sitting where they are next year would need to know about grade 4 (or grade 5 or 6).

Have the students write a 'Dear Occupant' letter - with a rough draft, edited version and final draft (use your writing process to take the piece from start to finish).

Place each of the letters in an envelope and have the students tape them to the underside of their desk on the very last day of school. NB: make sure that you speak to your school custodian(s) about your activity, just to make sure that your desks don't get re-distributed in the the school during the summer clean-up.

Next September, when you are working to manage a new student arriving to your class mid-morning, or need to engage your new class with a short activity while you focus on a first-day demand - challenge the students to look under their desks and locate the letter addressed to them.

Ask the students to read the letter and to talk to a partner about what in the letter was helpful to know about the coming year - and what activities they might hope are repeated in the coming months.

This short activity is a great 'authentic' writing experience, and has the added benefit of providing you with a terrific teaching tool on the first day of classes in September.



Just a Thought . . .

Over some thirty-eight years of working with students I have noticed that the teachers who struggle the most to maintain a focus and their classroom management during the month of June are those who allow their programs to 'drift and fizzle'.

While it may seem sometimes like a monumental effort to motivate the students and to plan and deliver exciting classroom activities and experiences, those teachers who engage their students during the waning months of the school year have the easiest time with student discipline and classroom management.

Don't end the school year until it is truly over.

Classroom-ready Ideas for Teachers of Grades Four Through Six

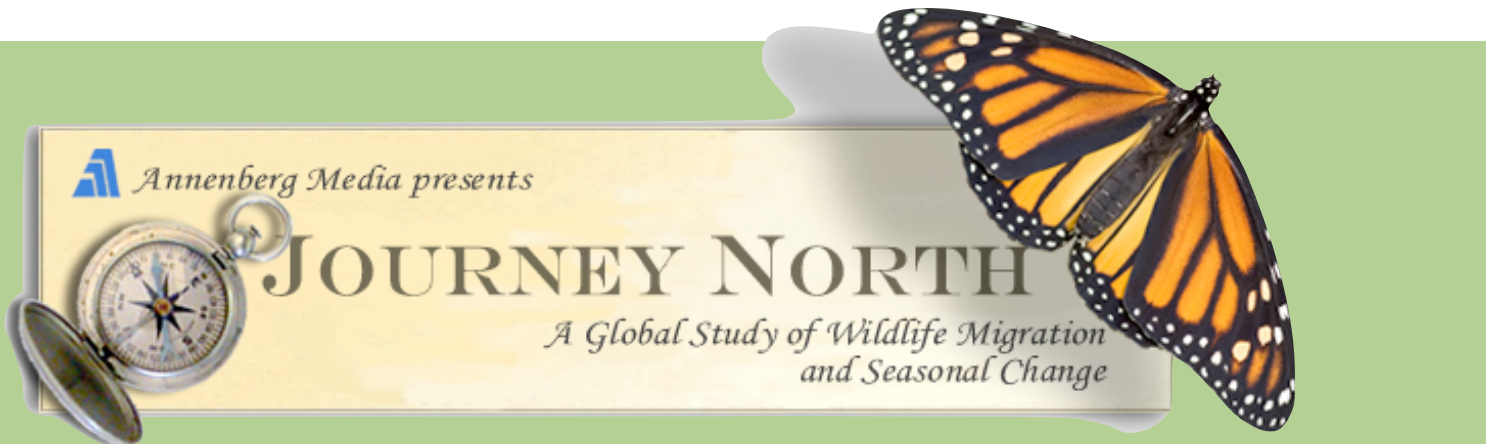
JOIN OAJE FOR FREE!



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.

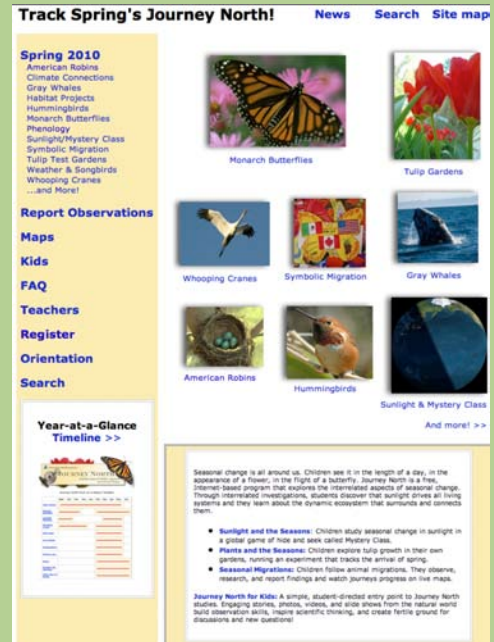
Members of OAJE receive a newsletter outlining news, events, conferences and teaching tips. They are also invited to provide input, information and opinions for the Ministry of Education about issues of importance to Junior Division teachers. And, by joining, you will be sure to receive all future editions of this newsletter, along with lots of other valuable teaching ideas.

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



This spring a number of Junior teachers in Ontario used a wonderful online resource to engage their students in following the journey north of a number of migratory mammals, birds and insects. The website "Journey North", which can be found at www.learner.org/jnorth/ gave their students an opportunity to learn about the wonderful journeys that some species of wildlife take on their way to their summer habitat in Canada AND the students participate by submitting their own observations of nature. There is no fee for this web learning activity.

This fall, you and your students might want to keep track of when these same animals stop being observed in your area - possibly evidence that they have started their journey south for the winter.



Professional Learning Opportunities

OTF Going Green Elementary Workshops

Increase your environmental literacy and learn how to use the environment as the context for integrating all curriculum areas. Through critical thinking and inquiry-based strategies, integrate biodiversity, sustainability and stewardship into your lesson plans across all areas of the curriculum. Apply these strategies to help you implement the revised curricula: Science and Technology, Grades 1-8; The Arts, Grades 1-8; and Physical Education and Health, Grades 1-8.

London - July 7-9 Hamilton - July 13-15
Sault Ste. Marie - July 28-30

Please register (\$50.00 course fee covers workshop materials, on-site meals, and two nights accommodation (if required) by June 18th at:

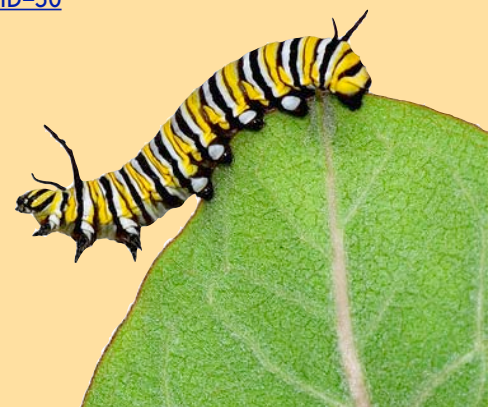
<https://event-wizard.com/secured/EWV3.01/Forms/reg1.asp?ClientCode=offfeo&Ecode=2010summerprograms&Lang=English>



The Monarch Teaching Network

The folks at the Monarch Teacher Network do a wonderful job promoting a better understanding and appreciation of these most amazing insects.

This summer they will be offering two workshops - so if you live in or will be visiting the Toronto area you might want to check out the information at www.signup4.net/public/ap.aspx?EID=MONA10E&OID=50





One of the workshops held on May 27th in York Region helped Junior teachers to consider promoting Global Awareness through the use of novels.

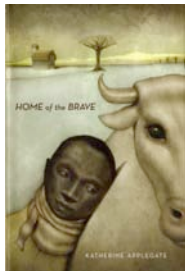
This list of ten titles was prepared by Larry Swartz who would like to thank Cathy Stanley and Heather Vallee for their excellent resources and keen support.

A Novel Approach to Global Issues



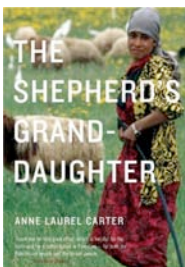
All the Broken Pieces by Anne E. Burg

A Vietnamese boy is haunted by his past as he struggles to adjust in a loving adoptive home in the U.S.



Home of the Brave by Katherine Applegate

An African refugee learns to cope with a new life in Minnesota.



The Shepherd's Grand-Daughter by Anne Laurel Carter

A coming-of-age story capturing the life of a Palestinian girl and her family turmoils.

Check out these Professional Books by Larry Swartz

Good Books Matter
(with Shelley Stagg Peterson)

The Novel Experience

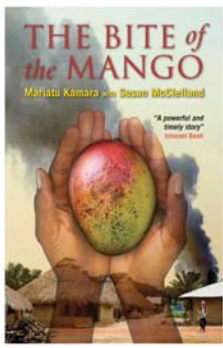
The Poetry Experience
(with Sherre Fitch)

The Picture Book Experience

Available from Pembroke Publishers

www.pembrokepublishers.com



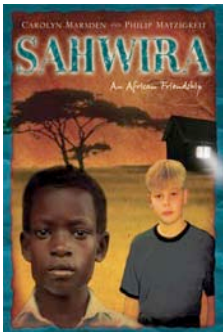
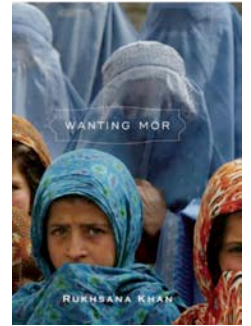


The Bite of the Mango by Mariatu Kamara with Susan McLelland

A story of survival and resilience describing the true story of a twelve-year-old girl's escape from the African bush to North America.

Wanting Mor by Rukhsana Khan

Based on a true story, this is a powerful tale of a young girl living in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

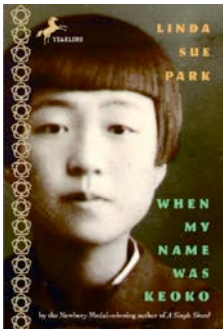


Sahwira: An African Friendship by Carolyn Marsden and Philip Matzigkeit

Two boys, one black and one white, who live on a mission in Rhodesia have their friendship tested when protests erupt.

Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelson

As a punishment a Native adolescent must choose between prison and a Native American Circle Justice.

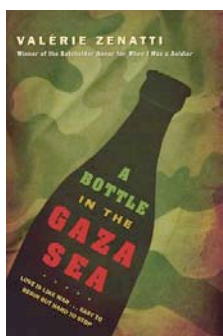
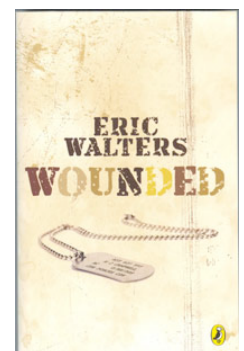


When My Name Was Keoko by Linda Sue Park

Sun-hee and her family are proud of their Korean heritage, but in 1940 they live under Japanese occupation and their lives are at risk.

Wounded by Eric Walters

A boy adjusts to the return of his father who had fought in Afghanistan.



A Bottle in the Gaza Sea by Valerie Zenatti

A teenage girl and a Palestinian boy correspond, sharing their despondency over the Arab-Israeli conflict.



Owls

Students can learn a great deal from using creative drama and role playing in exploring science topics. Such activities allow children to experience first hand, albeit vicariously, many science concepts not readily observed in the immediate environment. We can all set up experiences in which children explore bubbles and powders, but when it comes to some key biological science concepts the children may not have personal experience as a frame of reference. This is where the role playing comes in.

In this activity, children will explore the interrelationship between a predator and its prey - in this case, owls and mice. They will experience the factors which may affect this interrelationship and the populations of the creatures.

Students of all ages can enjoy the activity, and the understandings and concepts that they develop from the experience will depend on their level and the follow up/reflection activities.

Materials

- either
 - beans (100 each of four colours - use white, lima or pinto beans
 - or
 - M&Ms (2 to 3 packages)
 - or
 - a multi coloured cereal (Fruit Loops, Trix)
 - or
 - multi coloured macaroni
- small paper cups (one per child)
- plastic forks (one per adult 'owl' - some with broken tines)

Overview

There are two types of owls in the activity - fledglings and parents. The parents (selected students) prey upon the mice (beans or M&Ms) by gathering them one at a time with the plastic forks.

They feed their 'rodent' catch to themselves and their offspring by placing the mice in the paper cups - which for the purposes of the activity will represent their stomachs.

For older children, the red M&Ms (or other designated 'mouse') will represent a rodent which has ingested a significant amount of pesticide. Don't tell the students about this until after the activity.



In Action

1. Divide the students into owl families. Most should have two parents, however at least one group should have a single parent (representing the death of a parent owl). Vary the family sizes from as low as three to at least one with eight individuals.

example of groupings for a class of 30 students

- 2 adults with 7 fledglings
- 2 adults with 6 fledglings
(break off some tines from the parent owl's plastic forks to represent an injured bird)
- 2 adults with 4 fledglings
- 2 adults with 2 fledglings
- 1 adult with 2 fledglings

2. Each pupil receives a paper cup which will represent the bird's stomach. Adult birds receive two plastic forks which will represent the owl's claws.

3. Set up an area for the mice to live. You can use a sheet of cloth (an old sheet) or coloured paper. If you are using edible 'mice' you will want to make sure that they are on a clean surface. If you are using non edible mice, you can spread them on a grassy area 3x3 metres. Whether you use a grass area or sheet of cloth, make sure that the 'mice' are spread around the habitat.

4. Set up the 'owl families' at varied distances from the food source. This will provide you with another variable for discussion. Those owls who are further from the food have to work harder to get smaller amounts of 'mice' than those families who live close to the food source. The use of hula hoops to designate the owl nests will help prevent owl families from creeping toward the food source.

5. When the game begins, the adult owls run to the mice area and, using only their forks (claws) to catch one mouse, carry the food back to their nest. The adult owls must only carry one mouse at a time. If a mouse falls, it has dropped to the forest floor and may not be recovered. The returning adult owls either feed themselves (put a mouse in their stomach cup) or feed one of their fledglings. The fledglings indicate that they are hungry by hooting. All mice which have been eaten must remain in the stomach cups and may be eaten by the children only after the end of the game.

6. The game should last 7 or 8 minutes. Keep an eye on the 'mouse' habitat. If one half to three quarters of the mice have been gathered, it is a good time to announce the end of the game.

Follow Up

For Younger Students

Young children can count and classify the 'mice' that they have either gathered or been fed. You can discuss why some of the owls were able to gather more of the mice than other owls. You can generally explore how the closer owls (or any other animal) are to food, the easier time they will have in surviving. You can discuss how the more offspring an animal has in the wild, the

harder it is for them to feed the young. If an animal is injured (such as the owls with broken 'claws') it will have a much harder time feeding itself and its offspring.

For Older Students

Have the children compile a record of how many mice each family and owl received. If individual owls have gathered (adults) or received (offspring) 7 mice, they have survived. If not, they've perished. You can discuss how the environmental variables have affected the result of who has lived and who has not lived.

Factors

- distance from food
- number of adults in a family
- number of offspring to feed
- speed and agility of the adults
- 'health' of the adults (broken tines)
- numbers of prey or mice available

You can include one more variable into the game. Ask the surviving owls how many of them have two or more red M&Ms (mice). Unfortunately someone was trying to get rid of those pesky mice and set out some poison. There wasn't enough poison to immediately kill the mouse - only weakened it and made it more susceptible to be caught by a predator - but these owls have received a double dose of the poison. This allows you to get into issues of pesticides in the food chain - difficult, but a realistic aspect of this simulation.

The possibilities for the learning resulting from games such as this one lie in how far you, the teacher, wishes to take it, and how vivid the imagination of the children.

Rodents Eaten

		Adults		Offspring							
		M	F	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
colour #1											
colour #2											
colour #3											
colour #4											
Totals											



Class Data Chart

Family Number	Number of Parents	Number of Offspring	Poisoned		Starved		Survived		Total Survivors
			Parent	Offspring	Parent	Offspring	Parent	Offspring	
Totals									

