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Rights, Responsibility
and Citizenship

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*A Lesson for Learning Complex
Skills in School and Life*



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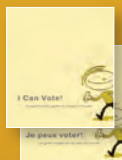
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Autumn is nearly upon us, bringing with it the familiar sounds of the school bell chiming and the chatter of students arriving and pouring into the schoolyard. Some are dropped off by their parents while others walk or bike. Perhaps there may even be a student who rides in on a unicycle, the elusive single wheeled bicycle.

Naturally, no one expects a unicycle rider to be successful upon their first attempt, or even tenth. Rather, failure—falling, getting back up, and trying again—is expected. It's the only way one learns to ride the unicycle or to accomplish most difficult feats. Can the same be said about kids in the classroom? Much of our society and educational world focuses on rewarding the mistake-less while stigmatizing failure. In this issue, our feature story describes how the unicycle is an effective metaphor for learning while demonstrating the metaphor in action.

Every classroom needs to have a positive and inclusive atmosphere for students to thrive. Our regular department, Staffroom Perspectives, relays advice from an educator on how he modelled positivity and maintained an inclusive classroom.

This issue's CURRICULA will allow students to explore Canadian democracy by looking at their own rights and responsibilities in their everyday lives. Elsewhere in the issue our other regular departments also appear, Field Trips and Web Stuff. This time around, be sure to check them out to discover unique learning excursions and educational YouTube channels that will surely spark the interest of your tech-savvy students.

We wish you the best in this new academic year and hope to be part of both your teaching and learning journeys. Be sure to check our digital resources: *The Shadowed Road* (theshadowedroad.com) and *The Ruptured Sky* (therupturedsky.com) and don't forget to sign up for free trials!

Lisa Tran,
Associate Editor / Rédactrice adjointe
@teachmag

L'automne est à nos portes, rapportant avec lui le doux son des cloches et les cris des enfants qui affluent dans la cour d'école. Certains viennent avec leurs parents, d'autres sont à pied ou en vélo. Peut-être verrez-vous même un enfant sur un monocycle, ce petit engin à une roue pas comme les autres.

Il est normal qu'on ne réussisse pas à rouler en monocycle du premier coup, ni même après dix tentatives d'ailleurs. Il faut plutôt s'attendre à l'échec : tomber, se relever, réessayer. C'est la seule manière d'apprendre à manier le monocycle ou à accomplir toute autre tâche complexe. En est-il de même avec les enfants en classe? La société d'aujourd'hui, le milieu de l'éducation y compris, préfère récompenser la perfection et condamner l'échec. Dans le présent numéro, notre article-vedette décrit en quoi le monocycle est une bonne représentation métaphorique de l'apprentissage par des exemples concrets.

Toutes les classes doivent avoir une ambiance agréable et sans discrimination pour favoriser le succès des élèves. Notre rubrique Staffroom Perspectives présente les conseils d'un enseignant qui a décortiqué les facteurs qui créent une bonne ambiance et éliminent la discrimination en classe.

Dans la section CURRICULA, les élèves pourront étudier la démocratie canadienne sous l'angle de leurs droits et responsabilités au quotidien. Nos autres rubriques Field Trips et Web Stuff sont aussi de ce numéro : vous y découvrirez des excursions pédagogiques uniques et des chaînes YouTube éducatives qui susciteront certainement l'intérêt de vos élèves les plus friands de techno.

Nous vous souhaitons une très belle année scolaire et espérons que nous serons du voyage avec vous. Nous vous invitons enfin à visiter nos deux ressources numériques, *Le chemin et ses ombres* (theshadowedroad.com/fre) et *The Ruptured Sky* (therupturedsky.com, en anglais seulement). Pourquoi ne pas vous laisser tenter par un essai gratuit?

The Attraction of Unicycles

**A lesson for learning complex skills
in school and in life**

By Eric Grossman

Imagine you are out at the school bus dock supervising kids arriving at school in the morning. Most shuffle off the buses, single file, and parade into school like so many ants following the trail already in front of them. The car riders may feel more special, or just more embarrassed, as parents chauffeur them each morning. You are proud of your school for encouraging the bicyclists, who you notice zipping up to the newly installed bike racks. They are a confident, independent, and fit set of kids. Unfortunately, they are a small minority of students at your school.

Bicycling was so much more common when you were a kid, you think.



Your mind begins to wander to how you might encourage more kids to pedal to school when your attention is caught by something in your peripheral vision. Your head swivels, along with the heads of the kids disembarking the bus. A kid is approaching the school perched atop a single wheel. He moves in short sporadic bursts coinciding with each pedal stroke. He seems to defy gravity as it is hard to imagine how he manages to stay upright. An unmistakable murmur passes through the kids and you overhear someone say, "Cool!"

Because attempting to ride a unicycle is an unnatural, difficult, and complex skill, it reveals quite a bit about the process of learning, more generally. If we can distill what is required to ride a unicycle into broader steps, we can apply them to a range of valuable skills that are also difficult to learn.

Part of the reaction, of course, is the novelty of a unicycle. But if kids like them so much, why aren't unicycles more common? The simple explanation is that riding a unicycle is difficult and unnatural. The steps required to learn how to ride one are unobvious and pose obstacles that, for most, are prohibitive. There are no training wheels. The activity is both remarkably interesting and remarkably difficult. These ideas circulate in your mind as you arrive to the real question—can unicycles serve an important educational purpose?

Unicycles do attract kids' attention. They emerged, after all, as a circus act. But are there good *pedagogical* reasons for learning to ride them? At least one celebrated educator thinks so, and he recently won a grant to purchase ten unicycles for his program. Steve Ahn, a science teacher at Abingdon High School in Virginia, recently won a grant to purchase a set of unicycles for the extra-curricular Appalachian Teen Trekkers non-profit club that he sponsors. Why did he write the grant? His intention is to attract students to a whole set of after-school activities meant to address obesity by providing kinesthetic challenges (Abingdon is also building a climbing wall). And he thinks it will work to attract kids.

Ahn knows that any progress with kids begins with getting their attention. This past spring he won the prestigious \$25,000 McGlothlin Award for Teaching at the secondary level. In an interview for the Bristol Herald Courier he said, "There's a lot I do as a teacher that's not that exceptional, but one thing I concentrate on is connections to kids." In a personal correspondence he told

me that "you would be amazed at how kids are so attracted by trying to learn something difficult and cool."

Because attempting to ride a unicycle is an unnatural, difficult, and complex skill, it reveals quite a bit about the process of learning, generally. If we can distill what is required to ride a unicycle into broader steps, we can apply them to a range of valuable skills that are also difficult to learn.

When my son received a unicycle this past Christmas from his grandmother, I was worried that it would soon be collecting dust in the garage. His best hope of learning to ride, I thought, was a very realistic perspective on what was required. I encouraged him to do some research and find YouTube videos of others who had managed to master this difficult skill. I watched, mostly from a distance, and made a mini-study of the process that he went through. Reflecting on it now that he has become proficient on the unicycle, I can point to eight steps that I think are important when learning any complex skill.

1 Dedicate time for practice with the expectation of a long-term commitment. The ultimate goal (in this case riding a unicycle) must be pushed into the background with the explicit recognition that it is a long way off. The regular routine toward success must occupy the near-attention of the learner. Create a schedule and a method for practice and then do what it takes to make it a habit. Some kind of feedback will be needed to reinforce the habit, like progress toward benchmarks.

2 Set benchmarks to celebrate progress. In the case of the unicycle, an obvious benchmark is the distance travelled before toppling over. In the early stages (when distances are very small), the rider can count pedal rotations. The first success is completing one pedal rotation, then two, etc. While my son did not need material rewards to stay motivated, I noticed that he valued positive verbal feedback to celebrate his small victories—like making it ten feet. Likewise, students learning any complex skill need positive feedback for progress.

3 Engage the mind. Mastering a complex skill requires reworking physical connections in the nervous system. That takes energy. The *learner* must actively pay attention to important aspects of the skill. This requires focus and dialogue. Self-talk can be an important strategy, whether it is developed alone or with a coach or teacher. One technique is to create memorable phrases that serve as reminders. The rider might say to himself phrases like, *Head up! Back straight!* And most importantly, *keep pedaling!* Self-talk isn't just for motivation, it helps to keep the mind focused on important elements of the task so that neural connections are reinforced.

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4 Make mistakes, and then vary them. This is a twist on the usual aphorism *learn from your mistakes*. The modification is needed because learning to ride the unicycle will require a lot of mistakes with little sign of progress. Another way to put it, taken from Samuel Beckett is, “Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” We cannot learn something complex unless we are willing to fail, repeatedly. We move forward not by “correcting” mistakes, but by methodically changing our actions and noting any changes. This step is absolutely critical yet it is one that educators and learners often avoid. When we avoid the mistakes, we avoid any real learning.

5 Watch others. Learning a complex skill is not a solitary endeavour. The learner should be surrounded by those who are already skilled. Because we do not have unicycle-riding neighbours, my son watched YouTube videos of those also learning and those who were proficient. He also brought his unicycle to a party and told a friend who also had received one to bring his so they could practice together.

6 Visualize oneself performing the skill. Stabilizing oneself on a unicycle, for example, requires constant

and fatiguing tension in the thighs. A learner can compress the time required to master this by separating some of the cognitive work involved from the actual performance of the skill. This is accomplished by attentively visualizing oneself performing specific action as one is learning them.

7 Find the motivation to persevere. Learning anything is ultimately a personal endeavour; it is about who the learner becomes. No one else can *cause* the learner to learn, he must decide for himself that it is worthwhile. That decision may be based on incentives that others have provided, but the learner determines the relevance of those incentives to more personal goals. My son told me that he wanted to learn something uncommon to his peers. The learner has to find the self-motivation to get through the inevitable work involved after the novelty has worn off, the goal has receded into the distance, and the influence of others has waned.

8 Become the thing learned. Real learning occurs when the learner *identifies* with the thing learned. The unicycle will become an extension of the spine and the pedals extensions of the legs. What had been foreign becomes familiar, what had been wild becomes domesticated. The ultimate expression of learning is the seamless flow between the *performance* and the *performer*. The learner no longer has to pay special attention to the task because the neural pathways for performing it have been established.

Riding a unicycle is physically striking. When kids finally reach the point of wheeling out of the school yard on their unicycle, they will have also achieved at least two additional goals: they will have a captivating means to stay active and fit and they will know what is required to learn something difficult. While it is unlikely you need to provide unicycle racks at your school anytime soon, thanks to educators like Steve Ahn, there is precedence for challenging your students to learn complex physical skills and good reason to expect they will take away a value to learning from their mistakes.

Dr. W. Eric Grossman is an associate professor of education at Emory & Henry College, Virginia, where he specializes in teaching and learning. He has written extensively on performance and motivation for *Running Times* magazine online and in his blogs *Explore Fatigue* and *Above Grade*.



BECAUSE I AM A GiRL



BECAUSE I AM A GiRL I watch my brothers go to school while I stay home.

BECAUSE I AM A GiRL I eat if there's food left over when everyone is done.

BECAUSE I AM A GiRL I am the poorest of the poor.

AND YET...

BECAUSE I AM A GiRL I will share what I know.

BECAUSE I AM A GiRL I am the heart of my community.

BECAUSE I AM A GiRL I will pull my family out of poverty if you give me the chance.

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Creating a Positive Classroom Environment

By Bruce Van Stone

As a teacher, I know it is important to establish and maintain an environment that is positive, tolerant, and supportive for all students. This optimistic and inclusive atmosphere provides them with a base for meeting their full potential. During my teaching experience, I used many instructional strategies that in the classroom that I would like to share below.

- Make it clear to all students that they are valued and that any differences between them have no bearing on how they will be treated by you or others in the classroom.
- Be approachable to all your students, not just the ones that are easy to deal with.
- Don't refer misbehaviours to administration and/or guidance, unless you absolutely have to. Part of classroom management involves keeping each child in the classroom as much as possible and helping each student address their conflicts with you or other students within the classroom. Remember that you have the day-to-day relationship with each student and that they may trust you and be more willing to work with you to address their misbehaviours, than with other school staff.
- Always model positive social skills such as empathy, tolerance, patience, problem-solving, and effective communication.
- Never forget that a person is not the same as their behaviour so never "label" them or marginalize them.
- Do regular check-ins with all of your students in short conferences.
- Use whole-class relaxation techniques.
- Ensure all students are assigned some kind of responsibility or role that make them feel a sense of belonging in the classroom environment.
- Speak to students privately when addressing individual misbehaviours.

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Canada's DEMOCRACY Week



CURRICULA

FOR GRADES
6 TO 8

Adapted from Elections Canada Learning Resources

Disponible aussi en français à www.democracy-democratie.ca

Canada's Democracy Week provides a non-partisan, central platform to showcase how democracy works, who maintains it and the kind of work they do, and why it matters in the lives of Canadians and their communities.

While voter turnout rates have gone down in Canada and other Western democracies, research shows that civic education is linked to increased political knowledge and intention to vote—two important predictors of voter turnout. Research also shows that open classroom discussions on issues related to democracy help build political knowledge, support for democratic values, and civic engagement. Political discussion at home is also linked to increased voter turnout and students themselves can play a key role in generating discussions with their parents. The purpose of this Canada's Democracy Week Education Guide is to engage your students in the democratic process by giving them the tools to talk about democracy in Canada, the importance of voting, how they are already contributing to democracy, and how they can continue to do so in the future. Your role as an educator is more crucial than ever in bringing relevance and awareness of our democratic and parliamentary institutions to students—the voters of tomorrow.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Learn the concepts of rights and responsibilities (active citizenship) and democracy (a value and a process).
- Understand that rights and responsibilities are decided on together in a democracy, such as Canada.
- Define democracy in Canada and explore how they can contribute to it by discussion, voting, respecting everyone's rights, and fulfilling their responsibilities in their own communities.
- Identify voting as both a right and responsibility of Canadian citizenship.
- Explore participating in democracy in the future by voting in elections.

Materials Required

- Venn diagrams (HANDOUT 1*)
- Magazines/newspapers
- Pencil crayons/markers
- Chart paper/board
- Pair and Share Questions (HANDOUT 2*)

Presentation tools:

- Comic life (<http://plasq.com/products/comiclife/mac>) (on the computer or tablet)
- (OR) Prezi (<http://prezi.com>)
- (OR) Wordle (<http://wordle.net>)
- Ballot template (HANDOUT 3*)

*Handouts available for free at www.democracy-democratie.ca

Introduction

Defining Rights, Responsibilities and Citizenship

To introduce students to the concepts of “rights,” “responsibilities” and active “citizenship,” have the class break into pairs and brainstorm together what they think these words mean and how they make them feel. Depending on students’ previous experience with these terms, you may want to start this discussion by writing the following linked terms on the board:

- Right – Being allowed to act vs. earning the ability to act
- Responsibility – Rule
- Citizenship – Belonging to a group

After these brainstorms, create a word wall that can be displayed throughout the lesson. Ask students to write a single sentence definition for each of these terms and to draw/cut out/print out a picture to go with each definition. Post these definitions on the word wall (20 minutes for discussion, plus individual work time).

Possible definitions to keep in mind:

- Right: Something a person should be legally allowed to have, obtain, or do.
- Responsibility: A duty or task that you are required or expected to do.
- Citizenship: The qualities of a person who is a responsible member of a community.

(Source: www.learnersdictionary.com)

Rights & Responsibilities & Active Citizenship: Learning Activity

Part A

Begin by asking students for examples of responsibilities and rights they have in the classroom. You may want to kick off the discussion by giving one or two basic examples, such as:

- All students have the right to a safe environment (right), so they must bring a peanut-free lunch (responsibility).
- All students have the right to participate (right), so they are required to raise their hand in class (responsibility).
- All students have the right to say something and be listened to by others (right), so students must be respectful listeners (responsibility).

If your class requires a more structured discussion, consider prompting students to think about classroom responsibilities/ rules and their corresponding rights by asking some of the following questions:

- Are students allowed to eat/drink in the classroom? When and where are students allowed to eat/drink?
- How do students answer a question/respond to the teacher?
- How are visitors treated when they come in?
- What do students do when they agree or disagree with someone else?
- Where do students sit and how is that decided?
- What happens if someone breaks a “rule” or doesn’t fulfill his or her responsibility?
- How do students indicate they need to go to the washroom?
- How are assignments like homework decided upon?



Part B

When you feel that the students have grasped the idea that they have rights and that these are associated with responsibilities (which can be considered similar to rules), extend the discussion to other areas of the students' lives using a pair and share activity.

Divide students into pairs to discuss rights and responsibilities in their lives outside school. Once in pairs, have students brainstorm rights and responsibilities that they have in some, or all of the following areas:

- At home
- On a sports team
- At camp
- In community clubs (Scouts, Girl Guides, 4-H, etc.)

Hand out Venn diagrams (see HANDOUT 1) for students to use to record their discussions. You can hand out one diagram per partner to encourage teamwork or individually to improve recording skills. If both students have diagrams, you may also want to consider having one student record the responsibilities (rules) in his or her diagram and the other student record the rights. As discussion takes place between partners, they should record answers that are similar to their partner's in the middle overlapping circles and any answers that are different from their partner's in the outside circles.

If students require guidance in their discussions, see HANDOUT 2 for a list of questions for students to ask themselves and their partner.

To review the results from the Venn diagram activity as a class, ask pairs to share their results. For example:

- What activity did they discuss?
- What common responsibilities and/or rights did they have?
- What different responsibilities and/or rights did they have?
- What did they think about the similarities and differences? Did they like some that they did not have or wished they had?

Part C

Conclude this activity by encouraging students to make the link between being active and community-oriented citizens with the rights (things they do, obtain, or have) and the tasks (responsibilities) that they have in their daily lives at school, at home, or at their sports or community club. For example:

At the end of a game or competition, students must shake hands/congratulate the other team. Explain that this is good citizenship because it respects the team or community's right to have everyone treated equally, whether they won or lost.

If students are required to raise their hand in class, then you can explain that this is good citizenship for the classroom community because it gives everyone the right to speak without being interrupted.



As a class, discuss why students like or dislike the rights and responsibilities they have identified. Ask students what they think it would be like if no one took his or her responsibilities seriously. Guide them toward understanding that everyone in Canada has responsibilities and rights as citizens, just like they have responsibilities and rights as students/members of a sports team or community club/siblings.

Extension Activity

Depending on the time and resources available, students could present their explanation of active citizenship, by respecting rights and performing responsibilities in the wider community by:

Creating a poster that encourages others to keep performing a responsibility (e.g., a poster that would be placed over garbage cans to remind others to recycle). OR
Creating a comic strip (on the computer or tablet), Prezi presentation or Wordle word cloud to illustrate why a right discussed in class is beneficial to everyone.

Connecting Active Citizenship to Democracy: Learning Activity

Now that students have an understanding of responsibilities, rights and citizenship, they will be able to see how participating in a democracy by voting is one of the key rights and responsibilities of active Canadian citizenship.

Begin by asking students how communities can decide upon new responsibilities (rules). After noting students' answers on the black board/chart or paper/projector screen, write a definition of democracy on the board.

Possible definition:

Democracy is a form of government in which people choose leaders and representatives by voting and in which everyone is treated equally and has equal rights.

(Source: www.learnersdictionary.com)

You should explain that in Canada, new responsibilities (rights) are decided upon through voting and that today the class will propose and vote on a new right and/or responsibility/rule for the classroom.

Ask students to propose at least five suggestions for a new right or responsibility/rule that they would like to have in the classroom.

Examples:

- Everyone will take turns picking up anything left on the floor at the end of the school day (Responsibility)
- Students will sit in alphabetical order (Responsibility)
- Students will decide the configuration of the desks for at least one day a week (Right)
- Students will choose a game to play during one period a week/month (Right)

Individually or in small groups, have students brainstorm some of the positives and negatives of the proposals. Consider assigning one proposal to each small group and having each group create a pro/con list.

Bring the class back together for a discussion or debate based on the positives and negatives that were brainstormed for each proposal. You may want to write the pro/con lists on the board or a chart.

Now have the students vote. HANDOUT 3 is a ballot template that you can customize with your classroom's proposals.

Students should vote for the one proposal they most want by marking an "x" in the space next to it. When students are done voting, they should fold their ballot in half and give it to the teacher to be counted.

Once the results have been counted, have students reflect on the process of voting for a new right/responsibility in the classroom by writing a journal entry on one of the following

questions:

- How did students feel about voting to choose their classroom's new right or responsibility?
- Did the students feel it was their responsibility to vote and to make their voice heard on the issue? Why?
- How would the students feel if some in the classroom were not allowed to vote or did not have the right to vote?
- Do the students think this approach to making decisions works well for all of Canada?
- If they had the chance to vote in the future, would they do so?
- If they could vote on things to change in their community, what would they choose to vote about?

Extension Activity

Before voting:

1. Have the class interview people (the principal, other students, other teachers, each other, etc.) about the proposed new rules/responsibilities and rights. Using web cams, camcorders, or cameras on a smartphone or tablet, students could record video of the interviewees discussing the proposals.
2. Have the students create an online poll on Google Forms (<http://docs.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=151187>) to survey people on their opinion. Before they conduct the survey, students should make a prediction as to what they think the results will be. Have students conduct the survey at recess with other students or else get permission to survey another class. When the surveys are done, have students report to the class on their findings.

Suggested Assessment Considerations

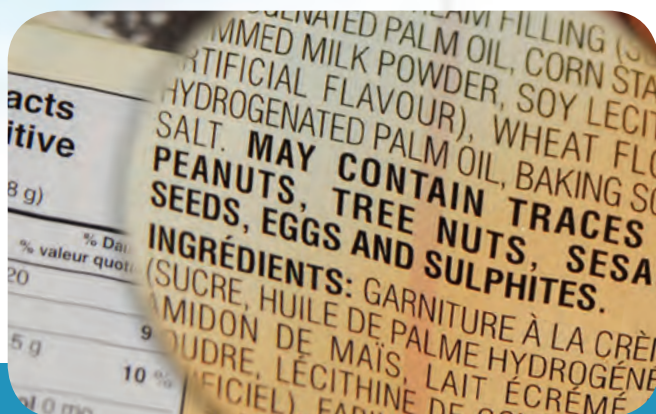
Content assessment suggestions:

1. Did the students use the class brainstorm to inform their personal definitions? Did their choice of accompanying image demonstrate an understanding of the terms?
2. How well did the student complete the Venn diagram(s) and demonstrate an understanding of rights and responsibilities for his or her chosen activity?
3. In the journal entry, did the student demonstrate an understanding of the importance of voting?
4. Effective assessment criteria:
5. How well did students cooperate with each other when working in small groups or pairs?
6. Did students demonstrate appropriate note-taking and presentation skills?
7. Did students participate in class discussions and demonstrate an effort to think critically about the subjects being discussed?
8. Did the student participate in the classroom discussion and take voting on a new right/responsibility seriously?

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In this issue of Webstuff, we're going in a different direction and looking at educational video channels on YouTube. Most people consider YouTube a good way to waste time, watching silly cat videos and other inane things, but it can also be a powerful tool for learning in the classroom. Here are five great YouTube channels that are fun and informative supplements to curriculum work.

Smarter Every Day

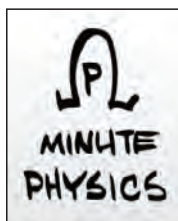
www.youtube.com/user/destinws2



Hosted by an enthusiastic Alabama man named Destin, Smarter Every Day is a science show dedicated to using demonstrations and a high-speed camera to look at the fascinating and interesting physics in nature and in the everyday human world. From the science of how cats land on their feet to the physics of slingshots, Smarter Every Day is a great addition to any high school physics lesson.

MinutePhysics

www.youtube.com/user/minutephysics



in a concise fashion.

Crash Course

www.youtube.com/user/crashcourse

Crash Course is an educational series hosted by Hank and John Green that delves into a variety of subjects such



as, math, chemistry, history, literature, etc., to provide students with lively, easy to follow explanations for difficult concepts. The literature section for example, gives students humorous and thorough discussions of Romeo and Juliet, The Great Gatsby, and other notable literary works. Crash Course is a great study aid for students in a variety of subjects.

The Virtual School



www.youtube.com/user/virtualschooluk

The Virtual School features math and science videos for elementary to high school aged students. Videos explain concepts from atoms to integers, and even isotopes. Subjects also vary from math to the sciences—ecology, biology, and chemistry. This channel presents concepts with animated visuals and also provides the viewer with a playlist of science-themed music videos (such as a song about macromolecules set to Gangnam Style) that are bound to amuse students and spark their interest in science.

Khan Academy

www.youtube.com/user/khanacademy

www.khanacademy.org



The Khan Academy is an extensive trove of educational YouTube videos that teach many topics from subtracting fractions to chromosomes, chromatids, and chromatin. The nearly 4000-video channel features a "blackboard" with multi-colour diagrams and notes that are hand drawn and narrated by Salman Khan, the creator of the channel. The videos explain difficult topics in an easy-to-digest format. Khan explains, "I teach the way that I wish I was taught. The lectures are coming from me, an actual human being who is fascinated by the world around him."

Le pouvoir d'attraction du monocycle

**Leçon d'apprentissage
de compétences complexes.**

par Eric Grossman

Imaginez-vous surveillant les enfants qui descendent des autobus le matin. La plupart des enfants arrivent sur le trottoir, forment une seule file et entrent à l'école à la queue leu leu comme une horde de fourmis qui suivent la voie tracée devant elles. D'autres se font reconduire par leurs parents tous les matins, parfois contents, parfois gênés qu'il en soit ainsi. Vous vous enorgueillissez de votre école qui encourage le vélo, et d'ailleurs des cyclistes profitent devant vous des nouveaux supports à vélos. Voilà des enfants confiants, indépendants et en santé! Malheureusement, ils ne représentent qu'une faible minorité à votre école. Le vélo était, vous dites-vous, tellement plus courant dans votre temps.



Vous cherchez alors des moyens d'encourager les enfants à venir en vélo lorsque quelque chose attire votre attention du coin de l'œil. Vous tournez la tête tout comme les élèves qui descendent des autobus. Un enfant approche, debout sur une seule roue. Il avance par poussées au rythme des coups de pédale. Il semble défier la gravité tant qu'il est debout. On entend clairement le murmure sur le trottoir. Quelqu'un lance même un « Wow! ».

Le maniement du monocycle étant complexe et n'ayant rien de naturel, on peut en déduire des éléments généraux sur l'apprentissage des élèves. Celui qui réussit à cerner les grandes étapes nécessaires à la maîtrise du monocycle peut les appliquer pour nombre d'autres compétences difficiles à acquérir.

La réaction s'explique bien sûr en partie par le caractère inédit de la chose. Mais si les enfants aiment tant les monocycles, pourquoi l'utilisent-ils si peu? La première raison qui vient à l'esprit est la difficulté du monocycle. On imagine mal comment apprendre à le manier, ce qui en décourage plus d'un. Il n'existe pas non plus de roues stabilisatrices. Le monocycle est certes fort intéressant, mais tout aussi complexe. Voilà ce qui mijote dans votre tête jusqu'à ce que vous en arriviez à la question ultime : le monocycle pourrait-il avoir un usage pédagogique?

Le monocycle attire l'attention des enfants, c'est un fait. Ce n'est pas pour rien qu'il a vu le jour dans les cirques. Mais y a-t-il de réelles vertus à montrer aux enfants comment s'en servir? Au moins un enseignant est de cet avis : il a d'ailleurs eu droit à une subvention pour acheter dix monocycles pour le programme qu'il pilote. Steve Ahn, enseignant en sciences à l'Abingdon High School en Virginie, s'est en effet vu accorder ce droit pour son club parascolaire à but non lucratif *Appalachian Teen Trekkers*. Pourquoi avoir fait la demande? Il veut inciter les élèves à combattre l'obésité par des activités parascolaires exigeantes sur le plan moteur (son école construit aussi un mur d'escalade). Et il est convaincu que les élèves répondront à l'appel.

Pour faire progresser les enfants, il faut d'abord capter leur attention, M. Ahn le sait bien. Le printemps dernier, il a reçu le prestigieux prix d'enseignement McGlothlin de 25 000 \$ pour le secondaire. En entrevue au *Bristol Herald Courier*, il a déclaré : « Une bonne partie de mon travail d'enseignant n'a rien d'exceptionnel, mais j'aime tisser des liens avec les enfants. » Il m'a même dit qu'« on serait surpris de voir à quel point les enfants sont curieux d'apprendre des choses difficiles mais excitantes ».

Le maniement du monocycle étant complexe et n'ayant rien de naturel, on peut en déduire des éléments généraux sur l'apprentissage des élèves. Celui qui réussit à cerner les grandes étapes nécessaires à la maîtrise du monocycle peut les appliquer pour nombre d'autres compétences difficiles à acquérir.

Quand mon fils a reçu un monocycle de sa grand-mère à Noël, j'ai aussitôt eu peur que l'engin ramasse la poussière dans le garage. Mon garçon avait, selon moi, une idée bien réaliste de ce qu'il devait faire pour le dompter. Je l'ai encouragé à faire des recherches et à dénicher sur YouTube des vidéos d'autres personnes qui y sont parvenues. J'ai fait mes observations, le plus souvent de loin, et en suis venu à mes propres conclusions sur le processus qu'il a suivi. Maintenant qu'il maîtrise très bien le monocycle, je peux proposer huit étapes qui sont selon moi importantes pour l'apprentissage d'une compétence complexe.

1 Consacrer du temps pour s'exercer et accepter que la route sera longue.

L'objectif ultime (dans ce cas-ci, rouler en monocycle) doit en être un à long terme : il faut s'attendre à ce que le succès n'arrive pas du jour au lendemain. La clé réside dans la pratique régulière et une attention quasi constante. Établissez un horaire de pratique, déterminez votre méthode d'apprentissage et faites-en une habitude. Il faudra une forme de rétroaction pour renforcer l'habitude, notamment l'atteinte d'objectifs intermédiaires (voir étape n° 2).

2 Fixer des objectifs intermédiaires pour favoriser le progrès.

Dans le cas du monocycle, il est évidemment bon d'y aller avec la distance parcourue avant de trébucher. Au début, lorsque les distances sont minimales, le nombre de coups de pédales peut suffire : un coup de pédale, puis deux, puis trois... Si mon fils n'a pas eu besoin de récompenses matérielles pour rester motivé, il appréciait en revanche les bons mots concernant ses petites victoires (comme parcourir trois mètres). Il en va de même pour les élèves qui apprennent une compétence complexe : le soutien verbal favorise le progrès.

3 Faire travailler sa tête.

La maîtrise d'une compétence complexe exige de nouvelles connexions nerveuses, ce qui demande de l'énergie. La personne doit porter une attention particulière aux diverses facettes de la compétence. La concentration et le dialogue sont de mise. Parler à soi-même est à cet effet une stratégie intéressante, qu'elle soit innée ou enseignée. On peut par exemple créer des formules de rappel toutes faites comme « Menton levé! » ou « Dos droit! », sans oublier « Continue de pédaler! ». C'est un moyen non seulement de se motiver, mais aussi de garder l'attention sur les choses importantes pour renforcer les connexions nerveuses.

4 Faire des erreurs et pas toujours les mêmes. C'est une variante de mon cru de la devise « Apprendre de ses erreurs » nécessaire en ce que le monocycle fait faire beaucoup d'erreurs et laisse entrevoir peu de progrès. Samuel Beckett le dit aussi très bien : « Réessayer. Échouer de nouveau. Échouer mieux. » L'apprentissage d'une chose complexe est impossible sans préparation à l'échec répété. On ne progresse pas en corrigeant ses erreurs, mais en modifiant méthodiquement ses actions et en notant les effets. C'est une étape cruciale souvent oubliée par ceux qui enseignent et apprennent. Éviter les erreurs, c'est éviter d'apprendre réellement.

5 Observer les autres. L'apprentissage d'une compétence complexe ne se fait pas en solo. La personne doit s'entourer de gens compétents. Dans



ce cas-ci, il est rare d'avoir des voisins qui roulent en monocycle; mon fils a plutôt regardé sur YouTube des vidéos de personnes en apprentissage et de virtuoses. Il a aussi apporté son engin à une fête et a demandé à un autre enfant qui en avait aussi reçu un de faire de même pour qu'ils s'exercent ensemble.

6 Se visualiser à l'œuvre. Se stabiliser sur un monocycle requiert par exemple une très bonne endurance des cuisses. La personne peut diminuer la durée de l'apprentissage en isolant le travail cognitif qu'exige la réalisation de l'activité. Pour ce faire, il suffit de se visualiser attentivement en train de faire l'action pendant l'apprentissage.

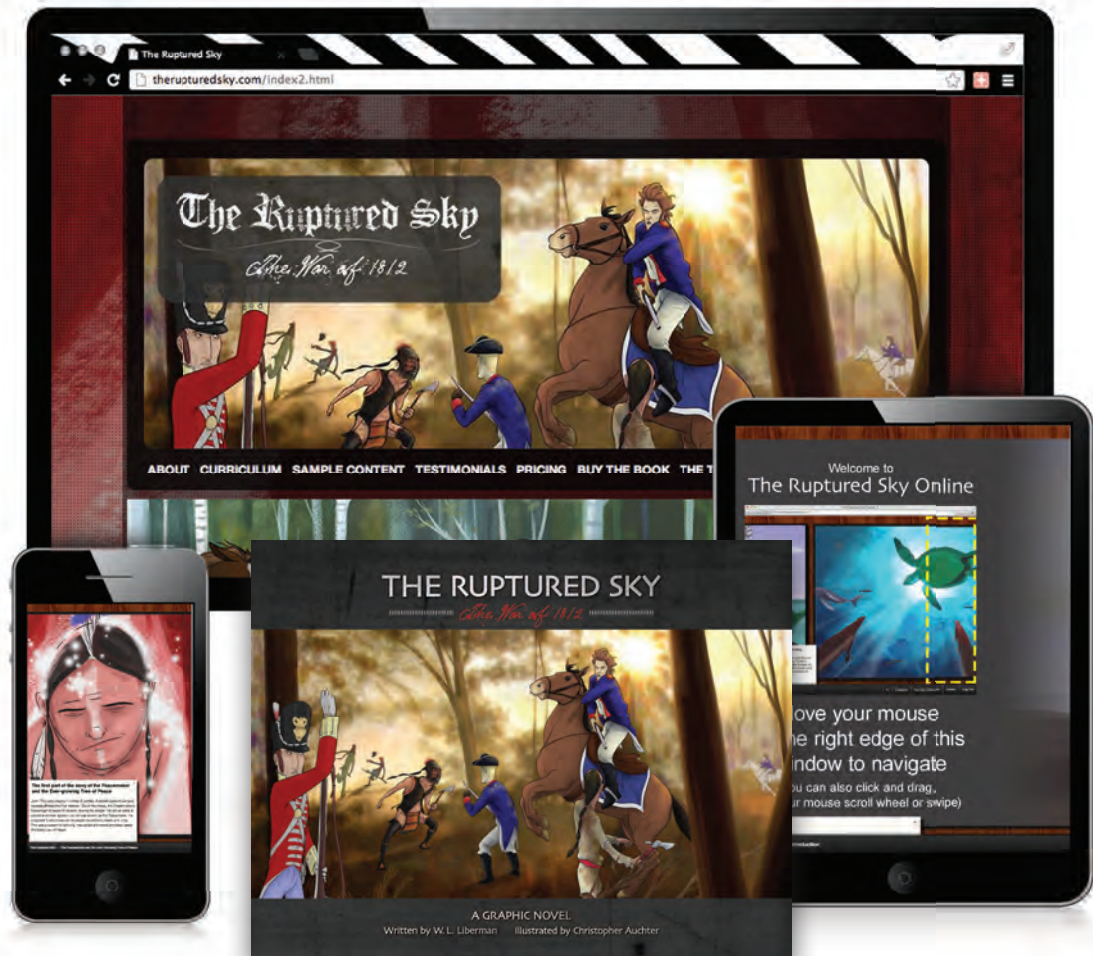
7 Trouver la motivation pour persévérer. L'apprentissage se passe ultimement entre les deux oreilles : c'est un processus de transformation intérieure. Il ne vient pas d'ailleurs, c'est aux élèves de décider qu'il en vaut le coup. La décision peut être soumise à des influences extérieures, mais les élèves déterminent eux-mêmes comment ils les intégreront par rapport à leurs objectifs personnels; mon fils a dit par exemple qu'il voulait apprendre quelque chose de spécial à ses amis. La personne doit trouver la motivation intérieure pour accomplir tout le travail nécessaire une fois l'effet de nouveauté dissipé, l'objectif devenu lointain et l'influence des autres amenuisée.

8 Devenir l'objet de l'apprentissage. Il y a réellement apprentissage lorsque la personne s'identifie à la chose apprise. Le monocycle deviendra ainsi un prolongement de la colonne vertébrale et les pédales, un prolongement des jambes. Ce qui était inconnu devient connu, ce qui était sauvage a été domestiqué. L'expression ultime de l'apprentissage est l'impression de continuité entre la performance et celui qui la produit. Plus besoin de porter une attention particulière à la tâche parce que les patrons nerveux ont été établis.

Le monocycle est une activité épuisante. Les enfants qui quittent l'école sur leur monocycle emportent avec eux deux grands avantages : celui d'avoir un moyen hors de l'ordinaire de demeurer actifs et en santé et celui de savoir comment apprendre quelque chose de difficile. Le moment n'est certes pas encore venu de prévoir des supports à monocycles à votre école, mais grâce à des enseignants comme Steve Ahn, on a maintenant un parfait exemple de méthode pour inciter les élèves à apprendre des tâches physiques complexes et une bonne raison de croire qu'ils verront l'importance d'apprendre de leurs erreurs.

W. Eric Grossman est professeur adjoint en sciences de l'éducation à l'Emory & Henry College en Virginie où il se spécialise en enseignement et en apprentissage. Il a beaucoup écrit sur la performance et la motivation dans le magazine *Running Times* en ligne et dans ses blogues *Explore Fatigue* et *Above Grade*.

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field trips

Drama and Theatre

The dramatic arts are a great way for kids to become involved and active in learning. The theatre is also a great supplementary experience for students studying a particular novel or play like the works of Shakespeare, Jane Austen or Oscar Wilde.

The Western Canada Theatre in Kamloops, British Columbia hosts a student matinee program for students of all ages that complement a variety of subjects, including *The Lion, the Witch, and The Wardrobe*; *Les Miserables*, and *Waiting for the Parade* (a story about the women at home during WWII). These fun plays and musicals will hold students' attention unlike any book or film.

In Calgary, the Alberta Theatre Project provides many community and classroom theatre programs, including a student matinee series that incorporates free online workbooks to help teachers bring the arts into the classroom. The current season's student offerings include the musical *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*, and other works from Canadian playwrights, like *Red* and *The Valley*.

The Living Arts Centre in Mississauga, Ontario also has many interesting workshops, as well as student-targeted shows including, The Improvised Shakespeare Company. From drama and dance, to movement and workshops on acting Shakespeare, the LAC offers a unique and enjoyable experience and helps keep kids active

Montreal's Centaur Theatre offers both popular plays and musicals and lesser-known Canadian fare for students of all grades, with a weekend children's series, and a series for high school students with talk-back sessions that accompany each play, as well as free workbooks for teachers. The current season is offering plays, dance shows, and musicals alike, including a play on the case of Steven Truscott, who was wrongly convicted of murder in 1959.

In Halifax, The Neptune Theatre hosts inexpensive student matinees from *Wilde* to *Legally Blonde the Musical*. Neptune also offers productions that tour to schools around Nova Scotia, for both young children and high school students. Currently on tour are *Offensive Fouls*, which examines racism, violence and cross-cultural relationships for grade 7 to 12 students and Vivaldi's *Ring of Mystery*, an adventure play that uses classical music to entice its audience (K - 6).

FIELD TRIP OPPORTUNITIES

Calgary, AB
Alberta Theatre Project
www.atplive.com

Halifax, NS
Neptune Theatre
www.neptunetheatre.com

Montreal, QC
Centaur Theatre
www.centaurtheatre.com

Kamloops, BC
Western Canada Theatre
www.wctlive.ca

Mississauga, ON
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- Establish clear rules and procedures for the entire class, that they are involved in creating and maintaining.
- Give all students a lot of choice and control over what they can do.
- Don't compare students to each other.
- Express optimism about each of your students' capabilities.
- Always reflect on any judgements (conscious or sub-conscious) you may hold toward a particular student. It is easy to develop negative feelings for a student who is chronically challenging and misbehaving, but you can never allow yourself to do so.
- Recognize your own limitations too. You can't be the teacher, parent, social worker, guidance counsellor, police officer, etc. for your students. Know when to seek additional support from support staff.

Bruce Van Stone is a Learning Specialist – Bullying Awareness and Prevention at the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. You can contact Bruce at bruce.vanstone@gnb.ca.

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