

# TEACH

EDUCATION FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW



5

WAYS TO  
INCORPORATE  
MINDFULNESS  
WITH YOUR  
STUDENTS



**GET MOVING:**  
HELPING TO CLOSE  
THE PHYS ED. GAP

# NOTES

Our planet and spirits may be ailing but spring is always a welcome sign. It is a time of renewal and, dare I say, hope. Longer days, more sunshine, and warmer temperatures, coupled with a much-needed spring break, can be a balm to the soul. We know that schooling has become even more stressful for everyone over the course of the pandemic. Perhaps we might alleviate a bit of that stress by providing some helpful information on, and practical strategies for, several important topics. Regardless of what is happening in the air around us, teachers still teach, and we hope that kids still learn.

One way to aid in their learning is to encourage kids to be more active. According to Adam Stone, in his article about physical education, only 15 percent of elementary students, and less than 10 percent of middle and high school students are required to take PE classes three times a week. There are some jurisdictions where it isn't mandated at all. Research has proven that active kids do better in school and that, ideally, they should be engaged in at least one hour of physical activity every day. Stone outlines some tips and tricks that can easily be incorporated in the classroom to help kids get moving.

Our second feature, written by Martha Beach, tackles the obstacles associated with reading. All too often, students are tasked with reading in order to complete an assignment, rather than for the fun of it. Unfortunately, this approach ends up discouraging students from reading altogether, because they don't usually have a choice when it comes to the material. It is, of course, important to have access to a wide selection of good

books, something that is becoming more challenging given that school libraries are dwindling and tend to be under-resourced. Nonetheless, just ten minutes of enjoyable reading a day can make a big difference in attitude and achievement.

In this issue, we also delve into the benefits of mindfulness, a practice that is particularly useful in these pandemic-infused times. Teacher and practitioner Amanda Ferraioli has successfully employed mindfulness techniques and activities in her classroom, and guides others on how to do the same in our latest Classroom Perspectives column. These days, a little serenity goes a long way.

In Bookstuff, we explore the topic of environmental conservation. With Earth Day just around the corner on April 22nd, now is the perfect time to get kids thinking about what they can do to protect the natural world. Our Field Trips column looks at other types of conservation, namely, wildlife and habitat conservation, in which zoos can play a major part. Take students on a virtual visit to some of North America's most dynamic zoos, each of which have developed a suite of curriculum-connected resources that will engage the class while teaching them important lessons about animals and their environments.

Finally, CURRICULA offers a lesson plan that focuses on gender equality. Discussion points include the evolution of traditional gender roles, the struggles of those who have challenged them, current gender equality issues, and much more.

Until next time.

WILI LIBERMAN

PUBLISHER



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# Get Moving: Helping to Close the Phys Ed. Gap

By Adam Stone

**P**hysical education is on the decline. A mere 15% of elementary, 9% of middle, and 6% of high school students in the U.S. are required to take Physical Education (PE) classes three or more times a week, according to [Washington University in St. Louis](#). Only six states require physical education in every grade, and just 20% of school districts require daily recess, the advocacy group [Active Schools](#) reports.

That means kids are increasingly sedentary. Nationwide, only 27% of high school students say they are physically active every day for at least 60 minutes, according to the non-profit [Springboard to Active Schools](#).

At the same time, there is ample research showing that kids who are physically active do better in school. That means teachers across the board have an active interest in encouraging physical activity. The good news: experts say there are a number of ways for K-12 teachers to help get kids moving. Rather than detracting from lesson time, they say, physical activity in the classroom can be a springboard to better academic outcomes.

## WHY PHYSICAL EDUCATION?



Education experts say that regular physical activity is key to successful learning. Part of this is simple biology.



“People who are more active do better academically because of the blood flow to the brain. We always think about physical activity as building up your muscle and your bones, but the blood flow to the brain is what keeps it alive and alert,” says Jim Baugh, the Founder of health-awareness national charity [PHIT America](#).

There is data to back this up. Studies show that kids who get one hour of physical activity a day do 20% better in class; miss an average of five fewer school days per year; and have 40% fewer disciplinary complaints, [Springboard to Active Schools](#) reports.

“Physical education is critical in a K-12 environment,” says Courtney Arthur, a Curriculum and Instructional Designer at the [Education Development Center](#), adding that physical movement “provides numerous social and emotional benefits for kids.”



Physical activity can increase academic achievement and positive social interactions, while decreasing negative behavioral issues. “When students are struggling and school performance is poor, they are more likely to experience school and learning as a source of anxiety,” Arthur explains. “By providing them an opportunity to focus on physical movement, collaboration with friends and peers, often in a play-based way, PE becomes a source of relief and a way to break the tension.”

Physical education “is essential to every child,” says Dr. Sabreen Mutawally, a PE educator at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. It can “help students stay on task in school, and assist in improving academic achievement.”

Active kids do better, and yet formal school-day movement opportunities—whether through PE or even just playground time at recess—are on the decline. Something has to change. Simply put, “kids need to move more,” says Nick Kline, Active Schools Manager at [Action for Healthy Kids](#), a non-profit dedicated to creating healthy schools.

Math, science, and reading teachers don’t have to wait around for school- or district-wide priorities to change. They can take steps now to build movement into their own lesson plans, driving positive outcomes without taking away from their academic priorities.



## THE TEACHER’S ROLE

The National Education Association (NEA) encourages K-12 teachers across a range of disciplines to be part of the solution. “PE isn’t the only class that should emphasize movement,” the organization notes. “Whatever the grade or subject area, every teacher can effectively incorporate movement into the school day.”

When teachers make physical activity a part of their lesson plans, they will see “more focused, better-behaved students who can accomplish even more throughout the school day,” NEA [reports](#). At a high level, this starts with rethinking the ways in which kids learn. It means pivoting from a desk-bound orientation.

“Teachers of any subject can help close the physical activity gap for students by being intentional in integrating movement exercises in schools,” says Mutawally. K-12 teachers across the board “can help promote and support physical wellness in schools by incorporating

physical activities into classroom lessons,” she explains. “Implementing energizers—physical activity breaks—every 20 to 30 minutes will allow students to unwind and move around.”

What does that look like in practice? The non-profit advocacy group [Healthy Schools Campaign](#) points to examples from the Chicago Public Schools district to show how it can be done.

In one case, a teacher begins each day with ten minutes of exercise: her classroom features pictures of different activities—yoga, toe touches, jumping jacks—and one student picks what the class will do that day. Another Chicago teacher incorporates yoga into their first-grade classroom, with the teacher leading students in stretches while they wait in line.

Among fitness advocates, there is a lot of talk about “brain breaks,” a term used to describe quick-hit activities that can be interspersed throughout the day to literally keep students on their toes.

These movement breaks “are classroom-based physical activity programs for kids to get them moving more,” according to the non-profit [StandUpKids](#), which aims to get every public-school child at a standing desk within ten years. They say that a schedule of regular physical breaks “not only allows children to get their ‘wiggles’ out, but energizes them and increases their ability to focus on the next learning activity.”

## MAKE IT REAL

There are plenty of examples that can help bring to life the idea of classroom-based physical activity.



[TeacherLists.com](#) suggests students “measure around the room,” using yard sticks and rulers to check the dimensions of chairs, desks, doors, and windows. They can do jumping jacks to practice math facts, or play “find the question,” searching for lesson-related questions that are written on index cards stashed around the classroom.

Action for Healthy Kids offers subject-matter specific examples:

- A social studies teacher can incorporate the games and dances of the countries or time periods being studied.
- Science teachers can have kids monitor their heart rates before and after short bursts of activity, or predict how their heart rates will respond to other types of exercise.

- A reading teacher can ask kids to spell words by turning their bodies into the shape of each letter, or they can read books that include physical action verbs—wave, wiggle, hop, skip, shake—and have kids demonstrate the movements.

At the [Colorado Education Initiative](#), experts urge teachers to make movement a part of the physical classroom. Teachers can, for example, post signs indicating types of physical activities and have students make a circuit: jog in place, jump in place, boxing jabs, etc., with kids spending a minute at each station.

When the non-profit [Be Active Kids](#) advocates the use of pool noodles—play horse on it, jump over it, have a sword fight with it—there may be a temptation to hit the pause button. Sure, students are active. But are they still learning?

Some say the best strategy is to tie activities to specific educational goals.

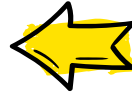
At the Education Development Center, for example, Arthur describes a station-to-station strategy for math teachers. “Break up the problems you plan to have students work on, and place them on index cards or chart paper,” she says. “Students should work on a center for a few minutes and then rotate to the next until they have completed all the stations.”

Nick Kline at Action for Healthy Kids proposes a variation: write questions on pieces of paper, ball up the papers and have the kids toss them around. “We play catch around the room, so that instead of answering questions one through three, now we’re answering questions four through six,” he says.

Looking to teach Newton’s Laws of Motion? “Physical activity brings these laws to life. A bowling ball will go in a straight line forever until it’s acted on by other forces,” says Terri Drain, president of the [Society of Health and Physical Educators](#).

Math teachers can demonstrate graphing by having kids elevate their heart rates as a source of data. A science teacher can build an obstacle course to represent the circulatory system. “Language arts teachers could assign an essay where the kids describe how to perform a physical skill, like shooting a hockey puck,” Drain says. The kids have to get moving, “and learning becomes more relevant.”

## ON THE OTHER HAND...



Some teachers bristle at the notion of having to devote classroom time to this kind of thing.

“Teachers are already responsible for too much,” says Dan Hankins-Wright, a math teacher in New York City. “It’s not my job as a math teacher to ensure that kids get their physical education in my classroom.”

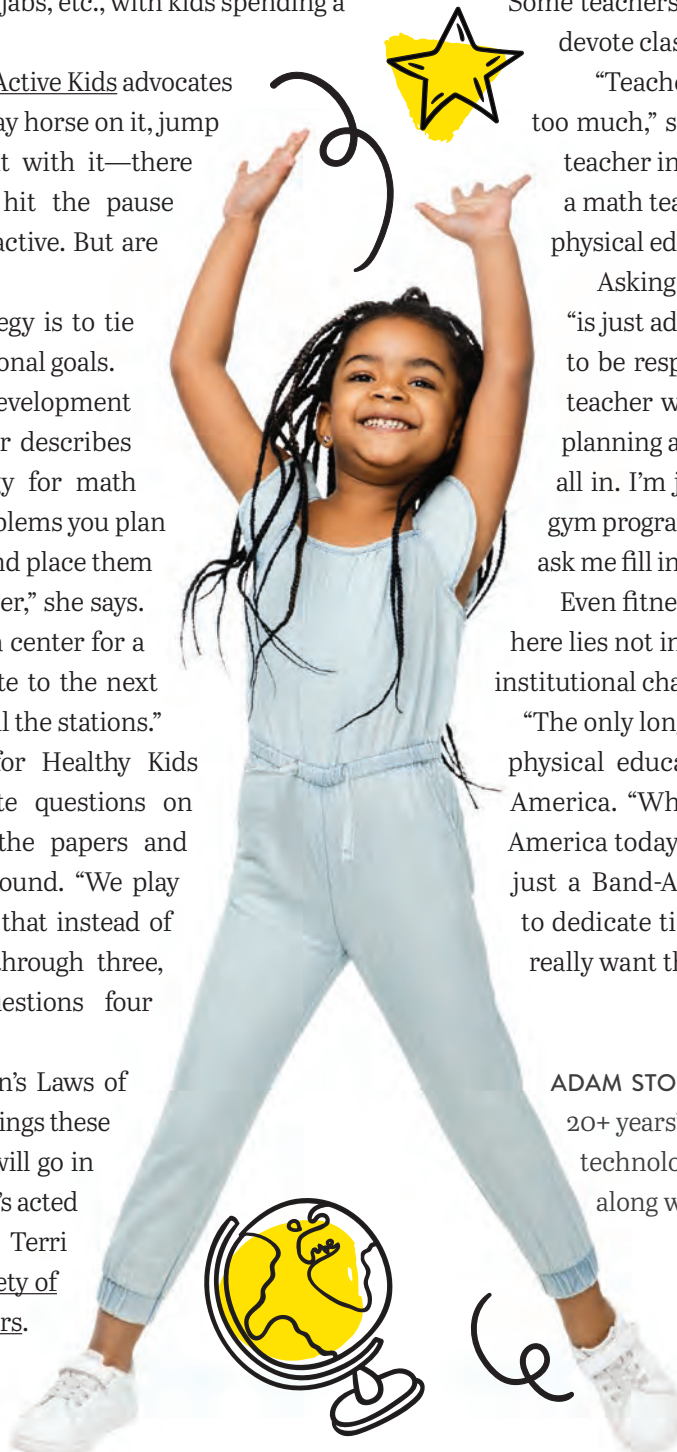
Asking non-PE teachers to close the gap “is just adding one more thing that we have to be responsible for,” he says. “If the gym teacher wants to do some cross-curricular planning and we can support each other, I’m all in. I’m just saying that if admin cuts the gym program, they shouldn’t come to me and ask me fill in for a physical education teacher.”

Even fitness advocates say that the solution here lies not in classroom “brain breaks,” but in institutional change.

“The only long-term fix for this problem is real physical education,” says Jim Baugh at PHIT America. “When 90 percent of all children in America today are not active, ‘brain breaks’ are just a Band-Aid solution. The leadership has to dedicate time and resources to this, if they really want their schools to do better.”

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ADAM STONE is a seasoned journalist with 20+ years’ experience. He covers education, technology, government and the military, along with diverse other topics.



# 5 Ways to Incorporate Mindfulness with Your Students

By Amanda Ferraioli



Education around the world has transformed for teachers and students alike over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirteen years into my teaching career, I feel like a first-year teacher again. The weight of mounting demands feels unbearable. Teachers are struggling to provide engaging, effective lessons while educating students who have received varying levels of instruction during the most trying times of the pandemic.

In the midst of these challenges, teachers also have to navigate the social and emotional needs of their students, along with ever-increasing class sizes and varying levels of support from administration, all while adhering to COVID-19 regulations. Many days it feels as though there isn't a spare moment to breathe, let alone add anything else to our already-overflowing plates.

Although our plates might be full, however, many of our cups are empty. To be our best teacher-selves, it is important that we find ways to fill those cups. And not only do we need to fill them, but we must make sure we are putting in the effort to fill them with things that are positive, life-enhancing, and will make a lasting impact on ourselves and those around us.

One of the best ways to do this is by incorporating mindfulness into our daily lives. We can have our cake and eat it too by encouraging mindfulness in our students at the same time. Now is the perfect opportunity for teachers and students to develop consistent mindfulness practices, together.

Mindfulness is the mind's ability to be fully present. Being mindful means being grounded in the moment. Each of us has the ability to access mindfulness amidst the daily stresses with which we are presented. Mindfulness techniques allow us to return to a calmer, centered space in our minds and hearts.

What does this mean for teachers in the classroom and their students? Promoting mindfulness allows teachers and students to practice coping strategies, learning to think through problems instead of immediately reacting to them, and developing empathy that, ultimately, brings us closer together. Mindfulness returns us to our bodies, brains, and hearts, helping us to clear away the cobwebs that build up as we become engrossed in our lives.

Mindfulness exercises promote social and emotional well-being while helping us to form close relationships in a safe and nurturing learning environment. Educating students in mindfulness and providing them with opportunities to practice will enhance their focus, ability to regulate emotions, social skills, and self-esteem.

As a second-grade teacher and yoga and mindfulness instructor for both adults and children, here are my favorite easy ways to incorporate mindfulness in the classroom.



## 1 QUIET TIME

Developing a short period of quiet time in the classroom gives space for reflection and creativity. During this time students may color, draw, read, solve number puzzles, make cards, write stories, and engage in the creative process. Placing Quiet Time after an especially rambunctious activity, such as outdoor recess, allows students to settle both their bodies and minds. Play calming music, maybe a video of a crackling fire, and let imaginations shine.

Five minutes is truly all that is needed to reap the benefits of this calm, centered environment. While kids are actively creating, exploring, and engaging in independent activities, teachers are given the gift of time to connect with individual students. Forming bonds with each student is what a masterful teacher values, but this can be difficult enough in a regular year, not to mention during a pandemic.

Quiet time allows teachers to learn the interests and hobbies of each student and use that knowledge to form deep and meaningful connections. Teachers will enjoy watching children's interests flourish and observing how their students face or solve problems. Valuable information is gained during this time that goes beyond the curriculum and standardized test scores.

## 2 GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Give each child a journal. Model for students how they can use writing to reflect on positive experiences, collecting and recording them in one location. Creating a gratitude journal can be done in many ways. Teach students to record the date or the month of the year and write their bulleted gratitude list underneath. Have students write down a specific family member, friend, place, or pet and what about them triggers gratitude.

Gratitude journaling has positive, lasting effects on the brain. It allows us to focus on the gifts in our lives and develop clarity, while helping to reduce stress. Students will also learn to develop a growth mindset, facing challenges with resilience and persistence.



Write alongside your students and you will begin to reap the benefits of this exercise with them. Keeping a consistent gratitude journal with your students will help you to maintain the same growth mindset during the many challenges and changes with which we are faced.

## 3 SING A SONG

Gather students for a Morning Meeting or Sharing Circle by playing music with positive, uplifting lyrics. Prepare a Song Lyrics folder for each student with the songs you will cycle through. Students can either sing along or listen to the song as they read the lyrics.

Find songs of different styles, artists, and generations. Encourage students to present you with song ideas that encourage positive values such as friendship, persistence through hard times, and gratitude. Sing with your students and feel the togetherness that comes with a group of voices joining as one.

## 4 YOGA BRAIN BREAKS

Get moving in between lessons! Help students become more mindful by leading them in gentle yoga movements to align their bodies and minds, focus their attention, and train their breathing. Involving students in daily

yoga activities is a great way to practice balance, both inside and outside of the classroom walls.

Students will learn to notice and listen to their bodies when they need a break. Yoga poses like mountain pose, tree pose, and the warrior poses are more grounding, while star pose, cobra, and bridge pose focus on opening the body.

Teach students to breathe in and out while they learn to sharpen their focus, decompress, and find inner peace. These same calming breaths can also be used to show students how to deescalate and find their center during especially challenging circumstances. Practicing yoga and breathing consistently allows students to maintain these strategies and use them as tools throughout their lives. And what better time to begin using them than now?

## 5 MEDITATION OR GUIDED IMAGERY

In between lessons, incorporate meditation or guided imagery to help children focus their senses on the present moment, increase their attention spans, and develop a keen ability to concentrate. Books such as *Breathe Like a Bear* and *Peaceful Like a Panda* by Kira Willey are excellent resources to guide an educator through leading these exercises.

Visualization is a powerful technique that will benefit students academically and personally. Students who practice this skill are better able to create sensory images during read alouds, develop mental images to assist them in solving mathematical story problems, and imagine possible solutions to ambiguous issues.

Guided imagery also helps improve confidence, practice goal setting, and develop a strong foundation for imaginative play. Teachers will feel these same benefits while leading the activity. It is a great way to get ready to conquer the rest of the day, look ahead to the future, and envision the possibilities!

\* \* \*

Mindfulness activities are growth opportunities for both teachers and students. In these unparalleled and unprecedented educational times, incorporating consistent mindfulness practices is a simple and easy way to support the social and emotional needs of our students and staff. These practices nurture a bond between the teacher and students, which will create a safe, supportive environment that encourages individual thought and collective creativity.

Now is the time to support one another, both students and teachers alike. We are stronger together.

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AMANDA FERRAIOLI is a 2nd grade teacher in Malvern, PA, as well as a certified yoga, mindfulness, and meditation instructor for children and adults. Amanda is always learning and growing as an educator, because she is a mom of three entertaining and energetic children, ages 7, 5, and 1!



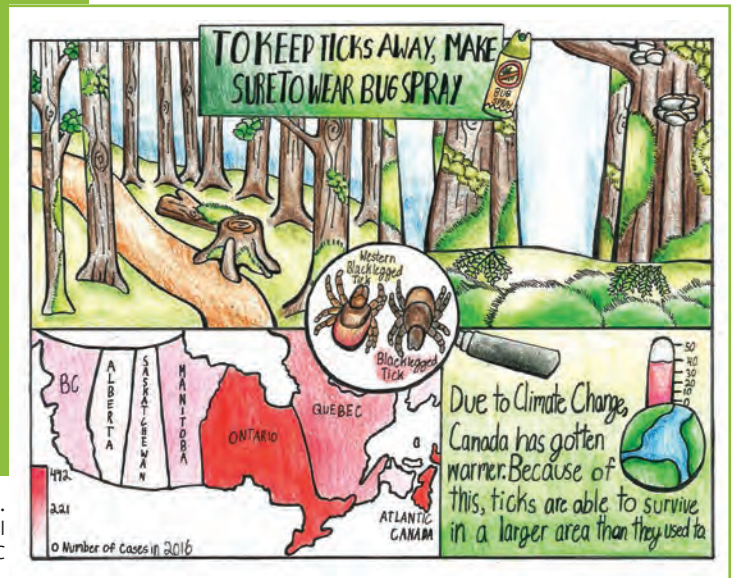


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# POSTER CONTEST FOR GRADE 6 STUDENTS

National Winner 2021: Victoria T.  
St. Edmund's Elementary School  
North Vancouver, BC



Contests are a great way to inspire students and enhance their understanding of a topic area. They play a role in motivating students to perform and excel, and offer a lot more reward than just the winning prize. Grade 6 teachers looking to engage their students in an educational contest this winter are in luck, because the Canadian Public Health Association's Grade 6 Poster Contest on infectious disease and climate change is back for another year! This highly popular contest is an opportunity for teachers and students to learn more about climate change and the impact it is having on the spread of infectious diseases in communities across Canada.

To enter the contest, students must create a poster, which includes a drawing and a call to action that demonstrates how to prevent Lyme disease, West Nile virus, or another climate sensitive infectious disease. By participating in the contest, Grade 6 students will be contributing to a national dialogue about climate change and they will be sharing valuable information with their local and national communities about disease awareness and prevention.

Teachers interested having their students participate in the contest can use the contest "[Teacher Toolkit](#)". It was developed by teachers, for teachers, to help them incorporate concepts of climate change and infectious disease into their lessons. The toolkit includes five lesson plans, which guide teachers in facilitating a rich, cross-curricular learning experience for students, borrowing on skills from Science, Math, Language, Geography, Physical Education, Health and Art. It also includes instructions on helping students develop their poster entries, and links to additional resources including videos, websites and other teaching materials.

Posters must be submitted by 31 March 2022, for the chance to win a Chromebook, gift cards, and other great prizes. They will be awarded to a National Winner, a National Runner-up, and Regional Winners from Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies, Alberta, and British Columbia & the Territories. The teacher of the National Winner will also receive a prize. Winning posters will be featured on the Canadian Public Health Association's website.

Contest details and teaching resources can be found at [www.cpha.ca/contest](http://www.cpha.ca/contest)



# GRADE 6 POSTER CONTEST

Infectious Disease & Climate Change:  
Awareness and prevention in your community

Calling all Grade 6 teachers!  
Have your students create a poster for  
the Canadian Public Health Association's  
National Grade 6 Poster Contest



## Great Prizes

Awarded to a National Winner,  
National Runner-up, and Regional Winners

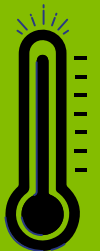


Open to Grade 6 students  
registered in a Canadian school  
during the 2021-2022 school year



For details, visit  
**[cpha.ca/contest](http://cpha.ca/contest)**

**Enter by**  
31 March 2022



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# Global Issues: Gender Equality

By Derek Acorn

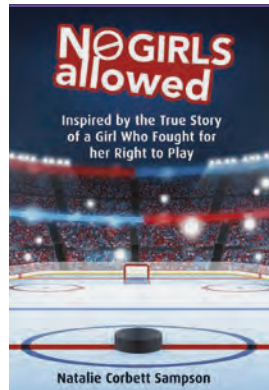
**GRADE LEVEL:**  
JUNIOR (4-6)

**THEME:**  
GLOBAL ISSUES

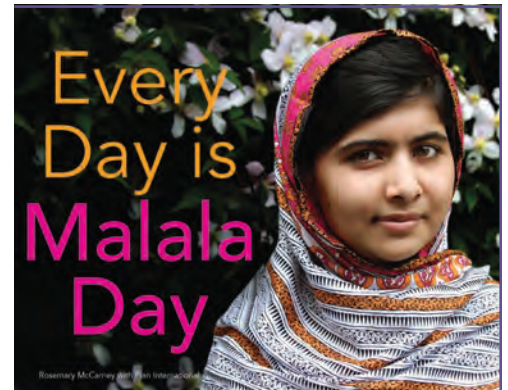
**SUB-THEMES:**  
GENDER ROLES,  
GENDER EQUALITY



## FEATURED BOOKS



*No Girls Allowed: Inspired by the True Story of a Girl Who Fought for her Right to Play* by Natalie Corbett Sampson (Nimbus Publishing, 2019)



*Every Day is Malala Day* by Rosemary McCarney (Second Story Press, 2014)



## LEARNING FOCUS

This unit will use novels to connect to our current Canadian society in order to explore:

- Traditional gender roles and how they have evolved
- Struggles undergone by those who have challenged gender roles
- Understanding rights, equality, and challenging thinking on gender roles
- Ideas around equality and education for all



## LEARNING EXPERIENCE

### MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Create a slideshow of approximately 10 slides that feature photos of 10 sports, activities, or tasks. Examples could be football, baking, fixing a car, etc.

Give each student a chart with column headings of “boys,” “girls,” and “both” and rows that feature the names of the chosen photos. Have students privately fill out the chart as they observe the photos to indicate whether they think the photo represents a boy activity, a girl activity, or both. Alternatively, students could silently reflect on their answers instead of recording them on paper.

Have a second slideshow of 5-10 slides prepared that show photos of girls performing traditionally male activities and photos of boys performing traditionally female activities.

Ask students to reflect back to the answers on their charts by posing the question, “Are there boy activities and girl activities?” Move on to asking, “Should there be boy activities and girl activities?”

Give students time to discuss the following questions using the think-pair-share strategy:

- Do you know of any things that boys weren’t allowed to do in the past?
- Do you know of any things that girls weren’t allowed to do in the past?
- Do you know of any things that either boys or girls are still not allowed to do today?
- What does the word “equal” mean to you?

### READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Students will read *No Girls Allowed* individually, as a book club, or as a read-aloud by the teacher. Several weeks should be allowed for this unit to give enough time to read the novel and complete the associated activities in the sections that follow.

The teacher should also use *Every Day is Malala Day* as a read-aloud to serve as a non-fiction companion text to *No Girls Allowed*.

### COMPARING

Compare and contrast the story in *No Girls Allowed* to the story in *Every Day is Malala Day* using a tool such as a Venn diagram. Discuss with the class what is similar and different about the stories presented in these books.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

These questions can be used by the teacher as whole group discussion questions or they can be assigned as reflection questions to be answered in the style of written journal entries or oral responses using a tool such as [Flipgrid](#).

- How would you feel if you weren’t allowed to pursue your favourite activity because of your gender, like Tina?
- How could you support someone like Tina or Malala if you were their brother or sister?
- Do you think girls should be allowed to play on boys teams? Do you think boys should be allowed to play on girls teams?
- Are things the same for boys and girls in countries around the world? Are they equal everywhere?

### EXTENSION

Have students complete a short research assignment on a person who has made a change related to gender equality in Canada.

Examples of people could include: Nellie McClung, Angela James, Kay Livingstone, Gwen Lord, Huberte Gautreau, Bertha Allen, and Helen Armstrong.

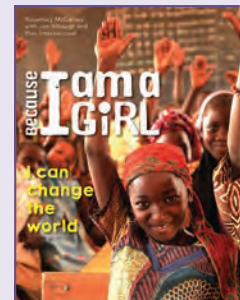
Examples of inquiry questions could include:

- What change did the person want to make?
- What inspired them to make the change?

## ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THESE SUB-THEMES



*Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino, illustrated by Isabelle Malenfant (Groundwood Books, 2014)



*Because I am a Girl: I can change the world* by Rosemary McCarney, with Plan International (Second Story Press, 2014)



*As a Boy* by Plan International (Second Story Press, 2016)



*From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea* by Kai Cheng Thom, illustrated by Wai-Yant Li and Kai Yun Ching (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2017)



- How did they work to create the change they wanted?
- What is the lasting impact of their work?

### MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Give students the opportunity to continue developing their understanding of gender equality and to communicate their understanding in one of the following ways. Alternatively, they could propose their own idea if they have an option that is not listed below that they are passionate about.

- **Artwork:** Create a piece of art that educates others about an issue of gender equality.
- **Gender Equality Today:** Research and communicate about a current gender equality issue. Use a poster, a podcast, or a video to communicate the issue and what can be done to help your school community or the world at large.
- **Letter:** Write a letter to an elected official or organization that you think can help with an issue of gender equality. Explain the issue and give suggestions on changes you would like to see happen.
- **Website:** Create a collective website as a class with each student, or small groups of students, creating subpages dedicated to different gender equality issues they care about.

Here are some [Creative Tools for Making and Sharing](#).



### REFLECT AND CONNECT

Refer back to the Learning Focus for this study, and get students to reflect either in writing or orally on a site such as [Flipgrid](#) about the following ideas:

- What does gender equality mean to you?
- What did you learn about gender equality through our work?
- How has gender equality changed over time?
- Are all genders treated equally today?
- How have people challenged gender roles and gender equality?



### BOOK LISTS

Topic-based [annotated book list](#) that highlights different world issues by the Canadian Children's Book Centre.



### ADAPTATIONS FOR PRIMARY (K-2)

Use the picture book *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino (Groundwood Books, 2014) instead of the novel.

Minds On Provocation activity can still be used, but reduce the amount of slides and use whole group discussion with simplified questions.



- Before reading, share the front cover of the book and ask students what they notice about the cover and what they think the book might be about.
- Use the following questions as prompts while you are reading the book:  
How is Morris treated by the other children when he wears the dress?  
How does Morris feel when he wears the dress?
- After reading the book, have students share with a partner or with the whole group something that makes them happy. Have students make a picture, journal entry, or piece of art about the thing that makes them happy. Share and celebrate the students' creations.
- Have students reflect either through group discussion, in writing, or using a website such as [Flipgrid](#) about the following questions: Should everyone get to be themselves? Does everyone have to wear the same clothes and like the same things?



## MORE RESOURCES

- [Plan International Canada](#) is a member of a global organization dedicated to advancing children's rights and equality for girls
- Canadian Women's Foundation: [statistics on gender equality](#)
- Government of Canada: [advancing gender equality](#)
- Canadian School Libraries Journal: [Making Read-Alouds Purposeful](#), in which Deborah McCallum discusses the potential of designing learning experiences to connect informational texts with narrative texts to build content knowledge and vocabulary in authentic and engaging ways

Canadian Museum of  
Immigration at Pier 21



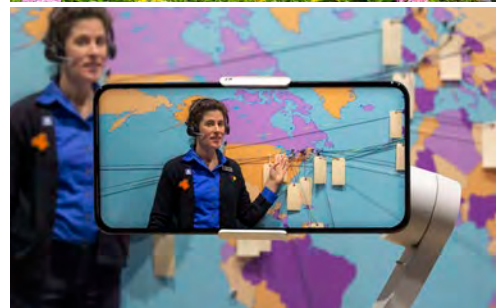
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- Get students to think critically about the experience of immigrants.
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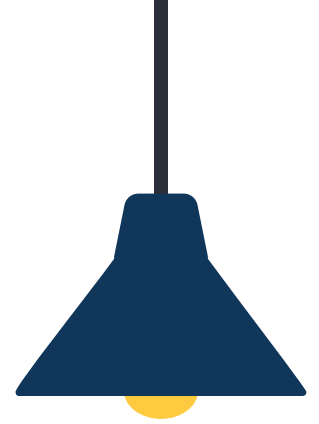
Halifax  
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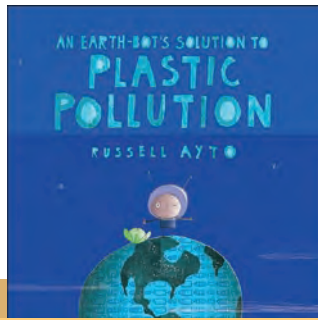
Visit [pier21.ca/learn](http://pier21.ca/learn) to choose a trip for your class today!



# Environmental Conservation



With World Water Day celebrated annually on March 22 and Earth Day a month later on April 22, there's no better time to start introducing your students to books that focus on protecting the natural world and this planet we call home. Inspire students to take action against climate change, plastic pollution, and Earth's water crisis with these new and upcoming environmental-themed books.



**1 BE THE CHANGE**  
BY ROB GREENFIELD  
AND ANTONIA BANYARD

*Greystone Books (Apr 19, 2022)*

**Grade Level: 3-6**

In this guide to sustainable living, YouTube star and zero-waste activist Rob Greenfield shows kids that they're never too young to start making a difference.

**2 AN EARTH BOT'S SOLUTION TO PLASTIC POLLUTION**  
BY RUSSELL AYTO

*Kids Can Press (Sep 2021)*

**Grade Level: K-2**

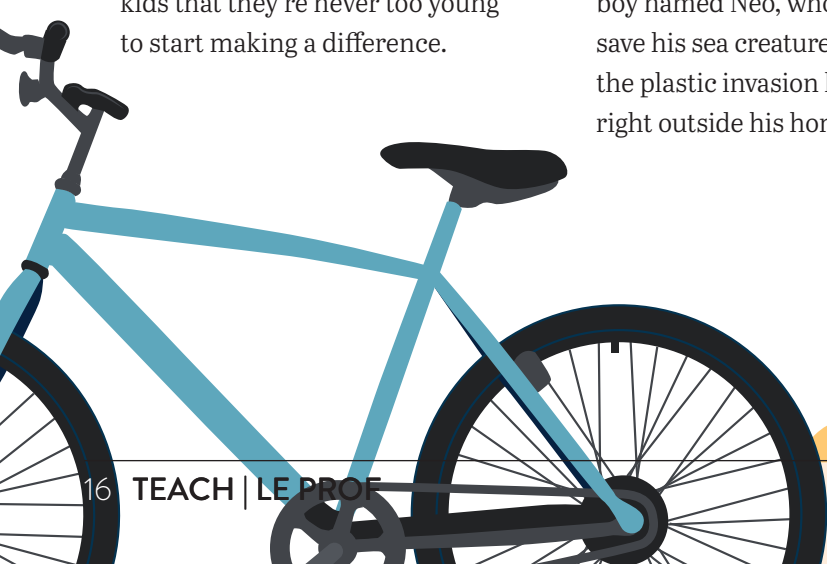
This picture book explores the issue of plastic pollution through the eyes of a video game-loving boy named Neo, who is fighting to save his sea creature friends from the plastic invasion happening right outside his home.

**3 FOREST FIGHTER: THE STORY OF CHICO MENDES**  
BY ANITA GANERI, ILLUSTRATED  
BY MARGAUX CARPENTIER

*Crocodile Books (Mar 8, 2022)*

**Grade Level: 2-6**

*Forest Fighter* tells the true story of Chico Mendes, a Brazilian rubber tapper who took a stand to protect the Amazon rainforest from logging, and to demand fair treatment for Indigenous peoples and the people in his community whose livelihoods depended on the forest.





**4 ONE MILLION TREES:**

**A TRUE STORY**

BY KRISTEN BALOUCH

.....

*Margaret Ferguson Books*

*(Mar 1, 2022)*

**Grade Level: K-2**

This book reflects on the real-life story of Kristen and her family who planted one million trees at a logging site in British Columbia in an effort to combat deforestation.

**5 SAVING EARTH: CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE FIGHT FOR OUR FUTURE**

BY OLUGBEMISOLA RHUDAY-PERKOVICH, ILLUSTRATED BY TIM FOLEY

.....

*Farrar, Straus and Giroux (Apr 5, 2022)*

**Grade Level: 5-8**

*Saving Earth* teaches middle-grade readers about the history of climate change, while also presenting them with stories of how young people today are taking action.

**6 SCHOOL STRIKE FOR CLIMATE**

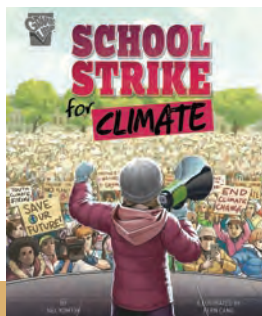
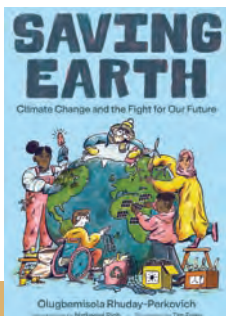
BY NEL YOMTOV, ILLUSTRATED BY FERN CANO

.....

*Capstone Press (Jan 2022)*

**Grade Level: 3-5**

This graphic novel recounts the history of how Greta Thunberg's School Strike for Climate protest grew into the global movement known as Fridays for Future.



**7 URGENT MESSAGE FROM A HOT PLANET**

BY ANN ERIKSSON, ILLUSTRATED BY BELLE WUTHRICH

.....

*Orca Book Publishers (Jan 2022)*

**Grade Level: 7+**

The science behind climate change, its causes, and what young people can do to start taking action now are all topics that are powerfully presented in this teen non-fiction book.

**8 WHEN THE WORLD RUNS DRY: EARTH'S WATER IN CRISIS**

BY NANCY F. CASTALDO

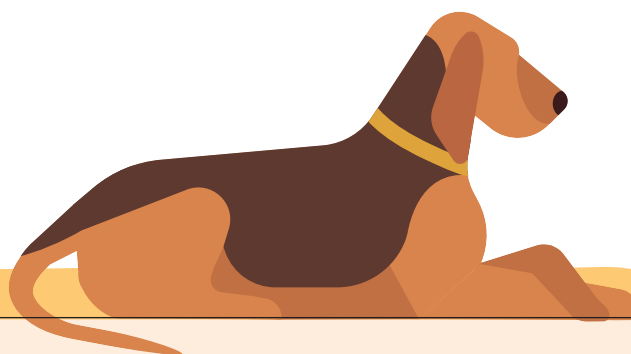
.....

*Algonquin Young Readers*

*(Jan 2022)*

**Grade Level: 5-12**

Award-winning science writer Nancy Castaldo takes readers on a journey around the world to investigate Earth's water crisis and the things we can do to help solve it.





**Teach or learn  
anything you want”.**



## What is ClassForThat?

**C**lassForThat is an online marketplace where students can find teachers in any subject – be it academic, music, sports, tutoring – and take one-to-one live classes online or in person.

## How does it benefit teachers?

**T**eachers are in charge of their teaching business. They can teach online or in person and have complete control over their schedule, the duration of the class and the price that they want to charge. Teachers' classes can be found by a wider audience, and teachers can be assured that they will get paid for classes taught. ClassForThat provides all the tools for charging and managing students easily, including statistics and graphs for each class and for each student. Teachers know how much money they make from different classes over time, and they will never be charged a commission for students they bring to the platform.

## Does it cost to join ClassForThat?

ClassForThat is FREE to join.

## How do students use ClassForThat?

**S**tudents log into ClassForThat and look for classes through a search function. This leads them to a list of teachers that teach that topic. They can then sort and filter the classes by many characteristics, such as type of class, target audience (adults, teens, or kids), level (beginner, intermediate, advanced), language in which is taught, ratings, price and even proximity for in person classes. Students can read a description of the classes as defined by each teacher. Once a student decides to buy a class from a particular teacher, they see all available time periods on that teacher's calendar and buy the class from the calendar directly.

## How do the teacher and the student connect when it is time for an online class?

**W**hen it is time for the class, both the student and the teacher log into their ClassForThat account and a banner with a Start Class button will appear in each of their accounts. ClassForThat's free video platform or zoom can be used for online classes.

Register for FREE



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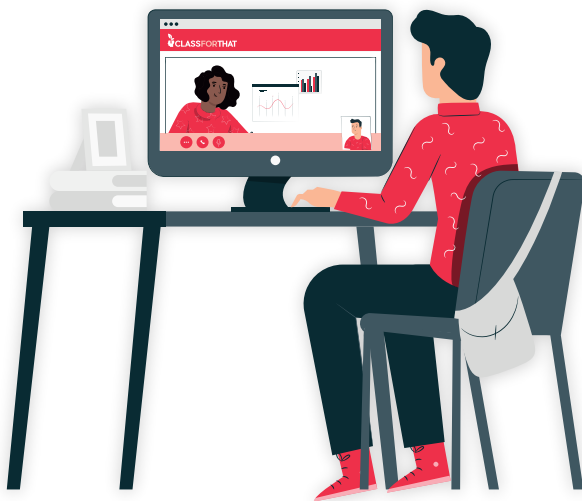
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# Virtual Field Trips: Zoos

Zoos can play an important role in teaching students all sorts of things about animals. From behaviour, to endangered species, to wildlife and habitat conservation, there's plenty of learning (and excitement!) to be had on a trip to the zoo. Now, these fun-filled field trips have also been adapted to virtual learning environments. For a new twist on a classic school field trip, use these virtual zoo programs to take students on wild journeys through the animal kingdom—all from the comfort of the classroom!

## DENVER ZOO

Denver, CO • Grade Level: K-6

The Denver Zoo's virtual Classroom Safari programs offer several options for various age groups. Younger students can learn how to use science skills to discover animal characteristics and adaptations for survival. Older grades can explore the life cycles of insects, birds, mammals, and more! Several all-ages programs are available as well, along with free resources for students and teachers.

## MINNESOTA ZOO

Apple Valley, MN • Grade Level: K-12

These 30-45 minute virtual classes are a fun and engaging way to teach students about wildlife and the environment. Topics range from penguins, coral reefs, or animal adaptations, to designing a successful zoo exhibit. Educators can also browse through free online resources in the zoo's [Learning Corner](#).

**OMAHA'S HENRY DOOLY ZOO  
AND AQUARIUM**

**Omaha, NE • Grade Level: K-12**

Choose from a wide selection of distance learning programs offered by the Henry Dooly Zoo. From 60-minute programs that focus on ocean life, endangered species, the rainforest, or nocturnal animals; to 30-minute programs all about animal sounds, zoo babies, or camouflage, there's sure to be a good fit! The zoo has free [educational resources](#) available as well.



**PHOENIX ZOO**

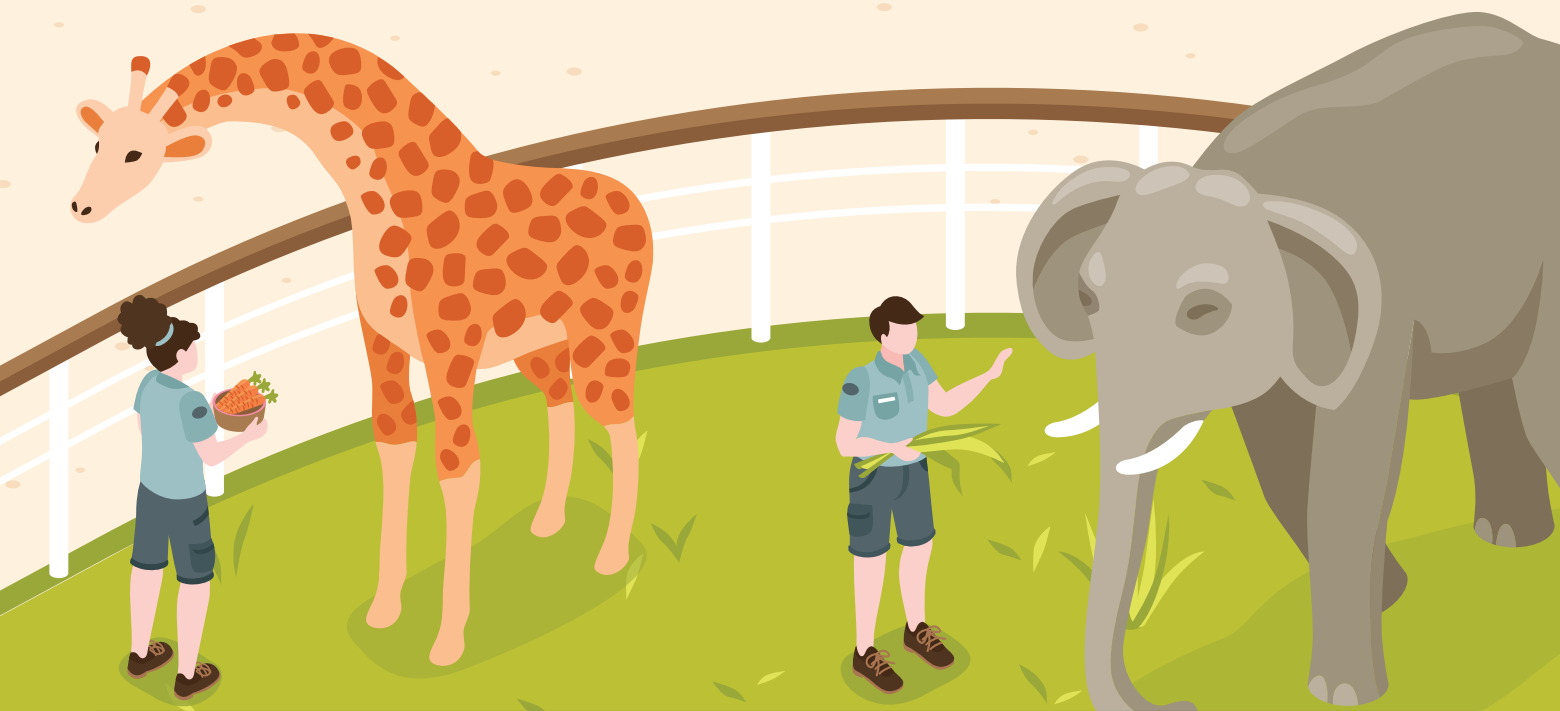
**Phoenix, AZ • Grade Level: K-8**

The Phoenix Zoo's interactive presentations include a combination of live discussions, pre-recorded guided tours with animals, and accompanying worksheets. Topics include: food webs, survival adaptations, human impacts, genetics, and more. Note that Title 1 schools may qualify for the [ZooReach Scholarship Program](#).

**TORONTO ZOO**

**Toronto, ON • Grade Level: K-12**

The Toronto Zoo offers two types of virtual field trips: a shorter "Meet & Greet," which involves a special appearance from an animal ambassador; and a longer "Workshop" that focuses on a curriculum-related topic of your choice. Workshops also include a Q&A session and an additional video and activity package. Be sure to check out the zoo's [online resource page](#) as well.



# The Path to Equitable Education Through Hybrid Learning

By Brad Saffer



The past two years have presented a challenge for both students and teachers alike.

As schools transitioned to remote learning, some students fell through the cracks, while others excelled. As a former educator myself, I know firsthand how much learning styles differ between students. I also know that a flexible and engaging classroom can make all the difference.

With many eager for students to return to in-person learning to prevent more “learning loss,” there is something to be said about the opportunity that hybrid learning presents for a more equitable and accessible learning experience for all. Here are some of the ways that this model can help us get there.

## Breaking Down Barriers

While the value of in-person learning is undeniable, hybrid learning presents students with the ability to personalize their learning experience to best serve their needs. Whether a student misses class as a result of regularly scheduled doctors appointments, or if they simply learn better without the distraction of their peers, the accessibility of hybrid learning allows students to keep up with course materials while staying engaged.

Tools like [WebEx](#) enhance the learning experience by delivering teaching materials through multiple modalities. From visual learners, to auditory learners and everyone in between, tools provided through WebEx, such as video recording and transcriptions, allow students to engage with, and digest, course materials in a way that will best resonate with their personal learning styles.

For underserved students or ones living in rural areas, internet connectivity can present a challenge, making it harder for these students to engage in the immersive experience that can be offered through hybrid learning. Cisco’s solutions, like [digital canopy](#), have the power to increase connectivity for students who may not be well connected, further breaking down barriers to education.

## Securing Education

With the shift to online as a result of the pandemic, we’ve seen a rise in cyberattacks across schools and the public sector as a whole. As educators consider adopting a hybrid-teaching approach in a post-pandemic world, it is crucial that they partner with a trusted security advisor. Partners like Cisco offer a wide range of easy-to-implement security products, including [Cisco Umbrella](#), [Cisco AnyConnect](#) and [Cisco Duo](#), that help protect students, teachers, and their devices from bad actors.

## Supporting Educators Through the Transition

The pandemic has revealed the need for schools to rethink the ways in which they operate. There has been a shift in both teaching and learning, and the resources offered to both students and teachers need to reflect our reality.

Investing in teachers’ professional development is necessary for student success. Teachers must be equipped with the tools and resources needed to thrive through this transition and beyond. From a teaching perspective, interactive tools like polling questions or breakout rooms allow teachers to engage with students and gain insight on the class’ level of understanding. In turn, teachers can tailor lessons to address the needs of the class, fostering ongoing student engagement even for those learning remotely.

Experts in teaching and learning, and former educators like myself, look at everything we create for education through the lens of our personal teaching experience. Our expertise and feedback lead to the development of practical easy-to-use solutions that will best support teachers as they inspire the next generation.

With the right tools, hybrid learning has the power to democratise the learning experience for all. School boards that make the investment in a multitude of hybrid services, from hybrid work to teaching and learning, will be able to provide a better experience for staff and students alike.

As champions of both education and hybrid work, Cisco has a breadth of services available to support teachers in the hybrid world. From making education more accessible to future-proofing the classroom for the next crisis that suspends in-person learning, hybrid learning ensures that students are engaged and continue to have access to their right for education.

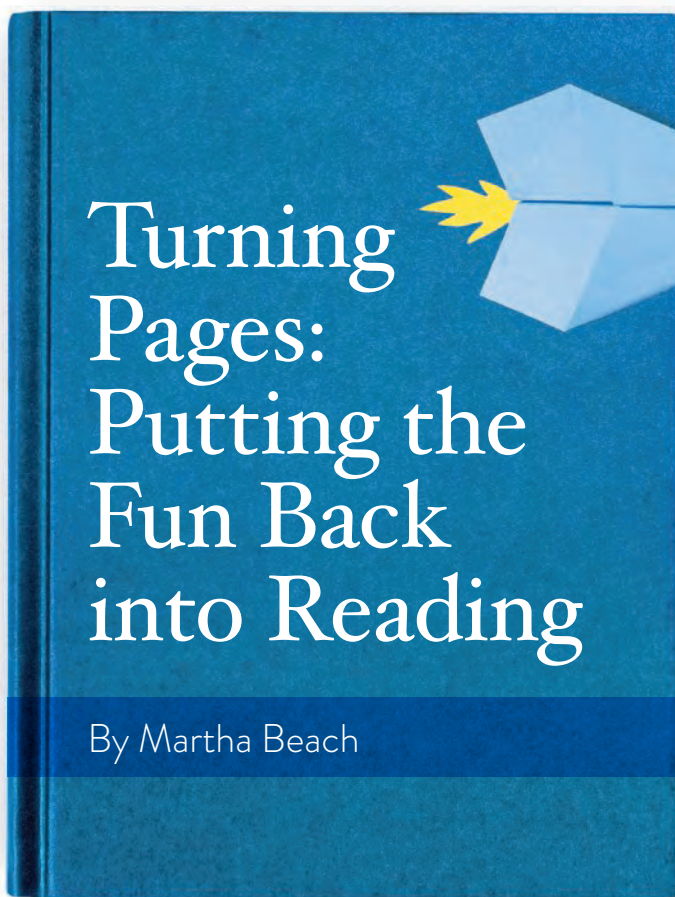


Between curiosity  
and knowledge,  
there's a bridge.



The bridge to possible





# Turning Pages: Putting the Fun Back into Reading

By Martha Beach

A class of 30 students sit at their desks, each with an open book in front of them for daily reading time. For ten minutes the class is quiet except for the sound of pages turning and the occasional whispered conversation. It doesn't look like much, but there's a lot going on: easy access to a variety of books, increased confidence in reading, motivation to keep going, and time to practice and focus. Once those ten minutes are up, students happily mark their place, excited to journal about their experience and already looking forward to tomorrow's session.

Not all students are this happy to read every day. By middle school (or earlier), many children have lost motivation, confidence, and focus. Often this leads to a lack of interest in reading, and kids choosing not to read for fun, which ultimately means the skill is lost. It's a vicious cycle.

So where does it all start to go downhill? When students begin to read only for information, instead of for enjoyment.

## OFFER A WIDE SELECTION

Of course, students can't always read for pleasure.


"I understand why teachers have them read for information—we are under so much pressure to provide grades and numbers and assessments," says Dan Rose of Oswego, NY, who has been teaching middle school for 21 years. "But the balance is sometimes off. Students don't know how reading fits into their life—they don't yet see the connection between what and why people read outside of school or work."

Teachers can begin to address this disconnect by offering access to a rich and expansive collection of texts. "If you want kids to read, they have to enjoy it. And to enjoy it, they have to have access to a good selection of books," explains Anita Brooks Kirkland, the chair of [Canadian School Libraries](#).

Libraries should have diverse collections, by writers from many cultures, about a variety of characters with different voices. "These books may offer a window for seeing the rest of the world," she says.

In some cases, teachers direct students to choose from a particular section or level of texts in order to help focus





their choice or keep them within a certain learning bracket, but that can backfire. “In the library, the entry point to reading should be interest, not level,” says Brooks Kirkland.

“It’s important they have the ability to choose what interests them. A teacher is trying to be helpful by saying: ‘Only choose from this section.’ But that might not include what [students are] actually interested in. A picture book may not be of interest to a child who loves dinosaurs.

“There is no better way to kill interest than putting restrictions on what they can choose,” she adds.

## START A CLASSROOM LIBRARY

Unfortunately, funding for school libraries varies.

“The reality is a lot of kids don’t have access to a school library. If they have one, it’s only open a few hours a week. They’re vastly underfunded,” explains Brooks Kirkland. Sometimes access comes down to a weekly visit, or simply when there’s a few minutes free. “Kids often only go to the library if there’s time—it’s been marginalized.”

One way to mitigate this is to establish your own classroom library. Dan Rose has spent years building his collection. He recommends displaying books with covers visible at “arm’s reach.” And just like the school library, books should offer a diversity of topics and characters by many authors.

“I spend a lot of time thinking each year, ‘What am I lacking and how can I address it?’” he says. “If I want kids to be interested, I need to have books that all kids are interested in.”


However, a classroom library can come at a heavy cost for the teacher, and may not satisfy every reader. “Even if a teacher builds their own classroom library out of their own funds, that small selection cannot satisfy a child who reads at a normal level for the whole year,” says Brooks Kirkland.

To get around this, Dan Rose recommends applying for funds earmarked for books. He also finds parents are often happy to donate old books or cash.

## FIND A GOOD FIT

Even with ready access to books, students may not know what they enjoy reading. Lisa Rose (no relation to Dan Rose) is a middle school teacher in Minnesota who is in her seventh year of teaching. She focuses on reading and reading intervention. At the start of each year, she gives her students a survey for reading personality “to help them find a good fit.” The survey matches their interests to suggested books.

## OTHER TIPS AND TRICKS

- Ask students to keep a “books I want to read” list in the back of their journal. When they hear of an interesting title, add it to the list. “This heads off the excuse of I-don’t-know-what-to-read,” says Dan Rose.
  - Many kids interested in one book? “Put a bookmark in it with their name so they get it next,” Dan advises.
  - When the reading session is over, ask “Who needs a bookmark?” each time to avoid the I-lost-my-place excuse.
  - Create a wall of fame: kids who have read more than 20 books get their name and/or picture posted.
  - Practice visualization by listening to a video’s audio without the image, then having students describe what they see in their minds as they listen. “Then you can level up by asking them to describe it with five senses,” says Lisa Rose.
  - Get kids hooked by listening to a few pages of an audiobook. “Stop it at the cliffhanger,” Lisa adds, and discuss what might take place next. Have them read the next bit on their own to find out what happens.
  - Brooks Kirkland highly recommends Ontario schools join the [Forest of Reading](#), a province-wide program that involves students reading and voting on winning books. “At the end, they have a big celebration—hundreds of kids cheering for authors like they’re rock stars. And that’s about intrinsic reward, about the pure joy of reading.”
- 



“Once they find a book, I ask them to read at least ten pages. And then if they decide it’s not for them, that’s OK. It’s about giving it a good try,” she says. “The goal is to switch their perspective from ‘I don’t like reading’ to ‘I can’t find what I like reading.’” In this way, students begin to learn that reading is a process.

To introduce genres, Brooks Kirkland recommends book “tastings.” Offer a table of books based on genre (mystery, fantasy, history, etc.). Pick two or three books from the table and essentially sell the book in about 30 seconds, then rotate to another table. At the end, students can choose what they like. “They pounce on the books,” she says.

Similarly, Dan Rose suggests daily book talks, especially when you get the community involved: ask parents, siblings, business owners, the mayor, the principal, other teachers, etc. to make a pre-recorded one- to three-minute video about a book they’re reading and why they like it.

## GIVE STUDENTS TIME TO PRACTICE

Once students have found a genre or series they enjoy, then they need daily time to practice the skill of reading. “That’s a tough sell for many teachers,” Dan concedes. He sets aside ten minutes every day in his class.

“Ten minutes doesn’t seem like a lot but it’s the central technique that brings [kids] back to loving reading. Ten minutes of reading is the most important part of the day,” he says. This time serves multiple purposes: it allows students to run to the library to exchange books; it offers the teacher a chance to model reading (i.e. how fast they turn pages, the expression on their face); and it also provides an opportunity for the teacher to move around the room and chat with children who don’t seem interested.

Dan usually finds at the end there is an impromptu lesson based on something that happened during the session. (“Have you ever read a page three times and not remembered what you read? I just did that!” or “How do you hold your place so you can find it easily next time?”)

For some students, sitting and reading for ten minutes is an extremely daunting

task. “Attention span is definitely an issue with struggling readers,” Dan admits. This is something he has noticed proliferate alongside access to technology. “A lot of them haven’t sat still for more than three minutes without their phone. Maybe 10 to 15 years ago kids could sit for 30 to 40 minutes. But now it’s one page and they say ‘OK what’s next?’”

A change of focus often means shifting a student’s mindset, getting them motivated to put in the work and allowing them time to practice. Dan likens daily reading to a sports warmup: you need to practice dribbling before you can play a basketball game.

## CHANGE THEIR PERSPECTIVE

Explain to students why it’s important to look at reading as more than a school activity. Explore areas of life that require reading: from Amazon reviews, to video games, to math equations.

To get students thinking about reading as a life-long skill rather than a chore, Lisa Rose likes to use “reading conversations” and journals to make the task approachable, to help students find what they like, or to carry on with a certain text. She also tries to embed metacognition (being aware of our thinking).

“Instead of asking them to write about what they’re reading, I ask them to pay attention to and write about and discuss what they’re thinking while they’re reading,” she says. For example: does the time go fast or slow? Where is my focus? If something doesn’t make sense, why is that? “This introspection also helps them realize reading is a process.”

Reading for pleasure is a lifelong journey, and teachers play a big role. “Reading begets reading. Success begets success. Give them permission to try, and give them lots of choice,” says Lisa Rose.

MARTHA BEACH lives and works in Toronto as a freelance fact-checker, editor, and writer for a wide variety of publications. When she’s not working, you’ll find Martha on her yoga mat or hanging out with her daughter and husband.



## Why is it important for students to volunteer?

Youth  
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- a. Helps to build leadership skills.
- b. Increases confidence and clear communication.
- c. Leads to better grades.
- d. Earns volunteer hours for graduation.
- e. All of the above.



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This is not easily achieved, says Cassie Tabrizi, CEO of educational consultancy, Create-abilities. "It can be incredibly easy to treat lesson planning like a checklist. Objective: check. Standards: check. Activity: check," she says. Education experts say there is a better way. A thoughtful lesson plan can encourage exploration, freeing kids to speak in their own voices and infusing creativity into the learning process. Parents and teachers see the value in this: Gallup research found 87 percent of teachers and 77 percent of parents say teaching that incorporates creativity in the learning process has a bigger payoff for students.

#### FIRST STEPS

In order for students to find their own unique voices, they first need to feel their voices are valid. Before settling down to craft the lesson plan, teachers need to make an upfront investment in relationship-building.

"Whether it's through surveys or one-on-one interviews, you have to know who is in your classroom in order to create an environment in which they will take risks for self-discovery," says Rosvena Shurn, senior policy analyst and program specialist at the National Education Association.

Shurn taught in Prince George's County, MD schools for 14 years, and found that this early effort paid dividends when she moved on to the actual lesson planning. "You take that information—who they are, what they are interested in—and you have that profile in front of you when you make your lesson plan," she says. "It's what allows your students to show up as their authentic selves."

Deborah Poulos is a teacher with over 27 years experience and the author of *The Conscious Teacher*. She studied every student's cumulative record files at the start of every year, and built that knowledge into her lesson planning. "I had strategies to individualize and differentiate so I could meet students at their levels," she says. "They knew I thought they were important."

#### PLAN FOR CHOICES

How to write a lesson plan that empowers those valued individuals to speak in their own voices? Step 1: Give them choices. Students learn in different ways, and the lesson plan needs to reflect that individuality.

When Wright gives out a persuasive writing assignment, for example, she keeps it loose. "It can't



always be five paragraphs, five sentences in each paragraph," she says. "You can get the same amount of information from them if you let them do it in different ways. They can create a commercial, they can create a blog, they can [create vlogs]. I just need to see that they can make a persuasive argument."

At The Avery Coonley School in suburban Chicago, second grade teacher Sarah Batzel even finds ways to make math an open-ended exercise. "Let's say I want to talk about fractions. I give them patterned blocks and ask them to build a figure that represents 'one-third.' They grapple with the concept, but there is more than one way of doing it," she says. "They make their own choices."

She did the same in science class, as kids designed their own glue. "We tested corn starch, we tested flour, then the children got to design their own mixture in their own way, using the data we had collected," she says.

It's that combination of data—of facts, information, and a clearly-defined end product—that keeps this kind of open-ended work from becoming a free-for-all. "Parameters foster creativity," Batzel says. "It's not just 'go make a shape.' There is real math in there, and they work within that."

Shurn builds her lesson plans on a tic-tac-toe approach: Eight ways of mastering the information (pick your own) plus a blank square if none of the others appeal to you. "Some people can demonstrate their abilities visually. Another student may be more kinesthetic, so

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