

# Creativity and Collaboration

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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## Background

This year at Dr. John G. Egnatoff School, an elementary school in Saskatoon, the grade two teacher Melanie Lynchuk and the teacher-librarian Dawn Morgan have collaborated on a number of engaging lessons focused on literacy skills, but have also included skills in areas such as visual arts, writing, and inquiry. The following are reflections on each of these experiences.

## “Don’t Let The Pigeon...”

The “Pigeon” series of books by author Mo Willems are loved by grade two students. The pigeon books are cheeky and accessible, with a lovable little character who is a stubborn pigeon. Books such as *Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* became a daily request in the classroom and the students were constantly searching the school library bookshelves for a Pigeon book to read or reread.

Once Melanie Lynchuk introduced the idea of creating student books based on the work of Mo Willems, she knew that the students were hooked! In order for the students to begin their own rendition, they had to be able to explain the important details that were repeated throughout Williams’ books and to have an understanding of published texts.



The class examined Mo Willems’ books in greater detail. To support their learning, Melanie Lynchuk also introduced additional mentor texts that focused on end pages, character development, and author craft (such as creating interest and humour). The students represented their understanding of these elements through the creation of their own Pigeon book.



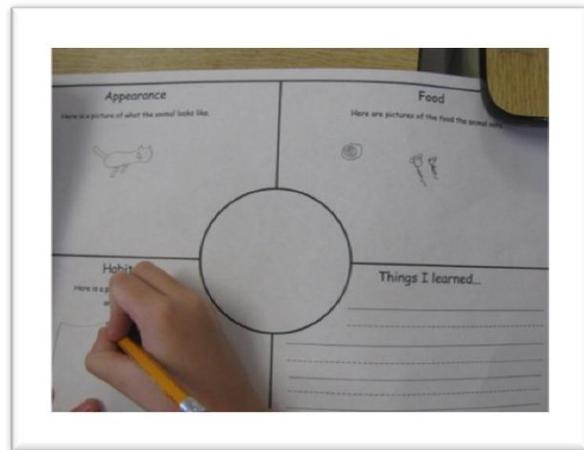
The students followed a model to communicate their ideas, and also combined illustrations and written text to express the ideas and feelings of the protagonist.

The students were able to apply their knowledge from a variety of other content areas. They created a plan which they followed to create a final copy of their book. As well, they took what they have been learning in writing workshop, such as adding dialogue, and writing for specific audience, in order to create a book that captures their readers' attention.

## Pet Research Project

The grade two class embarked on another big learning journey - researching pets! This project grew as the students became more invested in their work and as they decided how to showcase their learning. Students began their learning by working in a large group to research various familiar animals such as dogs, cats, fish, and rabbits. Through the Reggio Emilia approach, the students decided to individually research a specific animal that they would, in turn, teach the class about.

The students collected jot notes regarding the growth and development of their chosen animal. The jot notes were eventually compiled into a book that they could create a non-fiction book. The students used a variety of resources from their school library to assist in the collection of information. The students learned how to create a life cycle of their animal, identify characteristics and traits, and then display this information in a "storybook" format that could be used to teach others.



Through the learning of non-fiction texts, the students made the decision to create an expository text. The class created criteria that should be present in the non-fiction books. Past created anchor charts of text structures and text features helped guided the formation of criteria. The

criteria were placed on a chart to enable easy reference for the students and to help gauge their individual progress.

The knowledge gathered throughout this process will help students continue to make sense of the world around them. Students develop understanding by building upon and reflecting on their observations and what already is known by themselves and others. By thinking creatively and critically, the students were able to deepen their understanding of our natural world and the animals that occupy it alongside humans. As well, through this project the students developed as independent thinkers and workers. The teacher did not directly instruct nor explicitly shape learning, but guided their thinking in order for the students to think critically about their project.

Through constant self-reflection and re-examining of their project, the students developed beautiful non-fiction books that are proudly displayed in the school library. This method of inquiry learning provides students with opportunities to build knowledge, abilities, and inquiring habits that lead to deeper understanding.

