

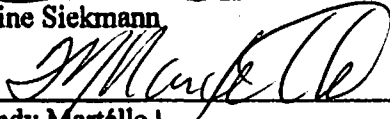
SEARCHING FOR THE FAMILIAR

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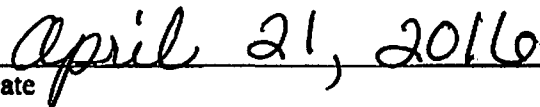


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SEARCHING FOR THE FAMILIAR

A

PROJECT

**Presented to the Faculty
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Abstract

This paper describes my implementation of the Language Experience Approach, a method of developing language skills, in my elementary classroom. Through the Language Experience Approach the teacher is able to tap into the rich resources of the students' home lives and start to bring that knowledge into the school. This is done by the students creating a language piece with the help of the teacher that is not only at an appropriate reading level but also is a high interest reading piece because it comes from the students themselves. This project includes my rationale, lesson plan, and supporting materials.

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Figure 1
Picture of me
with an orphan
calf at about age
6 on my family's
farm, St.
Catherine,
Missouri. Picture
by Bethany
Helmich
Thomson

Literature Review

Growing up I was lucky enough to have a library full of old books, many about pioneers. Most pioneers in the stories were farm families and as a farm girl I had a connection to the content of those stories. I knew the terminology and situations. It did not matter if the stories took place one year, one hundred years or two hundred years ago, I understood what it meant if a story included words such as: rotation, land husbandry, contouring, and irrigation, even if I had never seen them in written form before. "Hoe the row," and "until the cows come home" were not just some odd idioms that added color to a conversation but something that I understood on a personal level. I have "hoed" many a row and saw the cows "come home" daily throughout my childhood. So even though I was a struggling reader (I remember being in tears at times) I was excited to read these stories that were about people just like my own family and life experiences. I did not have to struggle trying to figure out new concepts or unfamiliar situations on top of trying to decode the text. Being able to read about those familiar people, places and situations that I could understand when I was struggling to learn to read, was a big part of making

me into a voracious reader and consequently a better student than I would have been otherwise.

Years later, I found myself teaching for the first time in a remote Alaskan, Yup'ik village. In order to get to the village I had to fly on a jet from Anchorage to Bethel, roughly a four hundred mile distance full of tundra, mountains, trees and no connecting roads. At Bethel, I switched to a small bush plane that was just big enough to fit another new teacher, my principal, the pilot, myself and our luggage, to



fly to my village, approximately forty air miles distance. In my village there are no roads, only muddy paths and boardwalks. Once in the village my choices of transportation to the school were to go by four-wheel or to walk.

That first day I chose to walk along

with the other new teacher and the principal. It was a beautiful sunny

day and we wanted to enjoy the first look of our new home. The principal was kind enough to point out different points of interest to us along the way.

Here was the gas station; over there was the washateria.

Wait, wash-a-what?

A Laundromat along with a small place to grab something to eat, explained the principal.

Figure 2
View of the tundra from an
airplane.



Figure 3

Picture of the land between Anchorage and Bethel. There are no roads, just miles of rugged terrain.

Why are the houses built up off the ground? Doesn't that make them colder?

If a house was built directly on the ground, and if there was permafrost underneath, it would eventually start to melt and the floors would sag.

We continued on, trying to take everything in and asking many more questions.

That first walk was just the start of the many new things for me to see and learn in this place that was familiar but yet so different from what I knew.

Fast forward a month or so and picture a classroom with eager fourth graders listening to me reading a story. Up pops a hand, "Yes?"

"What's a 'curb'?"

What's a....? I admit this question floored me for a minute. After all who doesn't know what a curb is? Curbs are everywhere, right? Well, not really. Remember, there are no roads here.

Over the next several years, students would ask me a variety of questions about things that I had never thought twice about before. Cement, crickets, tractors, zoos, boulders, towering trees, and museums were just a few of the things my students had little to no experience with. Even if they knew what something was,

such as a zoo or a museum, very few of them ever had a chance to go, distance and travel cost being what they were. I found out that many times before we read our story I had to help the students to build background knowledge of the places and situations found in the stories. My students not only had to deal with decoding the text but also had to try to understand unfamiliar content.

Funds of Knowledge

At the same time, I was fascinated by the knowledge that my students had about the world around them. I was learning and trying so many new things that were for them, every day. I was later to learn that this is known as a person's funds of knowledge. Funds of Knowledge is used to refer to what Moll et al. (1992) call the knowledge that an individual has learned from their culture, environment, and life experiences. Everyone has a knowledge base that is a product of his or her place in the world. It can take the shape of traditional values and /or practices passed down. It can be a product of a child learning a skill from a family member or neighbor. With Funds of Knowledge the child learns from someone who sees the child in multiple ways, not just as a student in a classroom as an instructor would but as a "whole person" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). In my own personal example of Funds of Knowledge I learned how to grow and preserve food from my parents, hand quilting from a neighbor, and family stories from my grandfather. Each of these skills/knowledges has been important in my life and not something I learned in school. Most recently in my life my funds of knowledge helped me to make connections I would not have been able to make otherwise in the village that I now live. When I share stories about my grandfather, preserving food or sewing,

although it is not the same way of life as in the village, it has similarities and people will make a comment to the effect of “you understand.” My personal Funds of Knowledge are just as important, if not more important than the knowledge I gleaned from my formal education. They connect me to my world, my family and my culture giving me a place (not necessarily a physical place) that I belong. This is the same for my students. Educators of children should understand that their students are a collective treasure trove full of their own funds of knowledge that can be used to make learning more relevant to the child. I was lucky enough, partly due to my own background, to realize that my students had a knowledge base that I could learn from if I was willing. Teachers must first learn about their students and be willing to learn new things themselves in order to use the funds of knowledge in the classroom. Being aware of the available knowledge sets of the students is the first step. With my students I was willing to ask questions and to listen and to learn. I was always willing to have village members come and speak in my classrooms, to visit, or just observe but I had no concrete, sure way, yet, of bringing in the students’ local ways of knowing and working it into our curriculum materials.

I knew that the practice of integrating stories about familiar things to teach reading and language skills or using skills that lend themselves to science, math and/or social studies such as skin sewing, preserving fish and other food, weather lore, etc., would show the students that I valued and respected what they knew and where they came from. It would value their place in the world and help to build their connection to formal education in a positive way. It would give students buy-in into an institution that they may very well see as separate and not truly part of

their “real” life. How to do this? That was the question I was struggling with. Most people love to share about themselves in one form or another. I have not met a student yet that has not loved to teach or tell the teacher something. How was I going to use this to benefit the students?

They knew so much but very little of their knowledge was reflected in our curriculum materials. The students continued to grapple in reading with unfamiliar objects, places and situations. Because of this, reading was a chore for many of them.



Figure 4
Middle section of the village as viewed from a plane, the school is the large blue building on the right. What looks like roads and bridges are boardwalks, just wide enough for two four-wheelers to pass each other. The lakes are just beginning to freeze.

For some of the students it was a laborious process of sounding out words one by one until they got to the end. These students worked so hard on sounding out each word that the meanings of the text were lost. Others could read each word perfectly, saying each word in a clear, steady voice, making me think, “Alright, here we go. We are on track”. Then I would ask comprehension questions. Few students could answer.

I reflected on my own reading experience. What kind of reader would I have been if not for those old books in the library that allowed me to connect with the

stories with my own personal funds of knowledge? Would I have continued to struggle? Hated school?

During the course of the Master's program I was researching language activities to try with the students. I came across a short article that briefly outlined the Language Experience Approach (LEA) ("Professional Learning Board", n. d.) A light bulb went off for me. This used the students' own words to create a reading piece. This combined the students' personal knowledge with reading and writing. LEA brought home and schooling together for my class. It uses the students' own words and experiences to create language material that the students do not have to struggle to understand. The bonus was that LEA was also easily adaptable by the teacher to fit into a state standards based curriculum while still meeting the needs of the students. It was a win-win.

The Language Experience Approach (LEA)

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) has its first documented use in the early nineteen hundreds (Nessel & Dixon, 2008). Since then it has been used by many educators to teach students to read and write in English using the students' own words. Hall (1977) reviewed a number of studies that support the use of LEA in the classroom. Although she admits that most of the studies are short and research remains to be done, she concludes, "The research does substantiate that the language experience approach is an effective way to teach reading and related communication skills" (1977, p. 28).

LEA is versatile and may be modified to fit the needs of the students. For example, Dorr (2006) used to use the students' prior knowledge of a produce

section of a grocery store to have the students practice and learn vocabulary, sentence skills and paragraph skills before going on to a lesson on plants. LEA starts with what the students know. Clark (1992) wrote in her case study of the use of LEA in a bilingual classroom, “By validating the prior knowledge of the students, she (the teacher) sets the stage for them to be able to scaffold from their knowledge base” (1992, p. 624). The teacher can then build on this knowledge to help make connections.

LEA consists of four basic parts that can be adapted to fit multiple classroom needs. The first part is to have a discussion about a shared experience between the teacher and the students. The second step is for the teacher to write down the students’ dictated account. The third step is the teacher modeling fluent reading of the student-produced account of the experience. The fourth and final step of the basic process is for the students to practice reading the account until they can read it fluently (“Professional Learning Board”, n. d., Nessel & Dixon, 2008). This approach allows students to learn to use language while using not only words they know orally but also the words in a familiar context as well. LEA draws upon the experience and knowledge of the students, bringing into the school the local funds of knowledge that is often missing from a culturally diverse classroom.

For my class I have adapted LEA to fit my students’ needs. Like many classrooms, I have students that need to practice fluency, comprehension and writing. I use the basic four steps of LEA described above plus the added steps of creating a word list with the students, a language activity using either the word list or a reading skill, and also an individual writing piece to help meet these needs.

The word list came about by accident. The dual language program at our school, the Gomez and Gomez Dual Language Enrichment Model (Gomez, n.d.) emphasizes using word walls and visual language. During my first implementation of LEA, after the students discussed the topic, without thinking about it, I asked what words they thought we might use and started writing them down, creating the first word list. It worked well and just seemed natural so I kept doing it. Even more importantly the students used the word list to look up words for their own writing and they enjoyed reading through the words, sometimes even more than the story.

The language activity is done most often after the students practice reading the whole class generated story. I ask the students to choose words for which they do not know the meaning, or words that they have never seen in print before. This is important because even though the words are student generated, each student's knowledge of the words might be different. A word that one student might have suggested for our list might be one that another student has never heard. I try to let each student pick at least one word. Allowing the students to pick the words for the activity, helps to naturally scaffold the lesson to the students. We then use these words in an activity where the students have to think about the meaning and use of the words. For example a simple bingo game where the students have to match the word on their self-made bingo card with a definition or question that I ask. By taking time to use the words in language activity the students gain valuable practice with vocabulary and gain confidence in using words that they might not have felt comfortable using before the practice.

Another way of using the LEA process in a language arts lesson is to practice reading skills such as comparing and contrasting or sequencing. When I use the LEA story for this, I do not always use the most recent story. I will choose a story we have done that fits the skill I am teaching. When one of my classes was studying sequence, I picked a story where the students had used a sequence of events. They then had to create a flow chart of the story. For another example of a skill lesson, I took two stories that two separate classes had created on the same topic. I had the class who were learning to compare and contrast practice the skill with the two stories. They first went through and marked things that were the same in each story with a pink crayon and things that were different with a blue crayon. Then they created a Venn diagram using what they had found in the stories. This was good practice before we went on to our textbook practice on the same skill. Comparing two of the students' individual writings would also work to do this with.

When the students write the individual stories they use the whole class story as a model, using the word list we created and hopefully the words we practiced during the language activity. Some of these stories become class books that the students can continue to read throughout the year. I have the option to extend the project even further by using Adobe Voice to have the students create a digital voice book. By using the Adobe Voice app, it brings us full circle from the students' oral Village English (VE), the local dialect, discussions of the experiences, to written Standard American English (SAE), and back to orally practicing the stories using SAE

There is a reason that LEA has remained in the toolbox of educators for so long. Many hypotheses of language learning support the ideas that inform LEA. I have already discussed the importance of using a student's Funds of Knowledge to bridge home and school, but other hypotheses also support the use of LEA in the classroom including multiliteracies, affective filter, focus on form and output.

Multiliteracies

"Multiliteracies" is a term that was created by the New London Group in the late 1990s. The group had gathered to start a discussion on what they saw was happening in the world. They realized technology was changing the way people were able to communicate with each other. They realized that things were changing and straight, traditional reading and writing was not going to be enough for our children to know. More was needed. "...The multiplicity of communications channels and increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world today call for a much broader view of literacy than portrayed by traditional language-based approaches" (1996, p. 60). Technology was advancing and usage was growing, allowing greater and broader communication world-wide. People needed to be able to communicate through many different languages and modalities. Even with one language, there are broad differences from region to region, country to country. For example, English is one language but it is spoken worldwide and there are differences between each dialect. The English spoken in the United Kingdom is different than the English spoken in the United States. Village English (VE), a variety of English spoken in parts of Alaska, specifically in the village where I teach and by

my students, sounds slightly different than the English spoken in rural Montana or New York.

There are two major parts of multiliteracies, multilingual and multimodal. Multilingual is the communication through language. This not only includes an understanding of different languages and how they are presented but specialized vocabulary students need to know if they want to be part of a specific work force, such as the medical field, or a community with a regional dialect, such as VE. In the present context of our schools, students need to become familiar with what is termed “academic English” or Standard American English (SAE) in order to become successful students. This is different than the social English or Village English (VE) that they may use with friends and family. Both SAE and social English are important aspects in every student’s life.

The second part of multiliteracies is multimodal forms of communication. These include written, visual, audio, tactile, gestural and spatial modes of meaning (New London Group, 1996). The norms for these multimodal forms can vary from place to place. An example of gestural communication that my students use illustrates this. In the lower 48 people nod their head to indicate “yes” but in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta area of Alaska “yes” can also be raised eyebrows. Another example of multimodal literacies in written form that students would be familiar with would be text messaging with its abbreviations and spelling differences. It is still English but not a form that would be readily readable just twenty years ago. Dance and music are yet another common example of multimodalities familiar to the students. In the local context traditional dances often communicate stories or

prayers. Knowing when, where, and how to communicate in multimodalities is a skill that many of our students will need in the future as the world, through technology and travel, gets “smaller”.

“The languages needed to make meaning are radically changing in three realms of our existence: our working lives, our public lives (citizenship), and our private lives (lifeworld).” (New London Group, 1996, p. 65). The term “multiliteracies”, viewed over a decade after the article was first published, has lost none of its relevancy, if anything, it has gained meaning. As written by Cope and Kalantzis, who were part of the New London Group, in their article ten years later, they saw that the need for the understanding of multiliteracies in the world had only increased (2006). Technology has only grown and advanced since the first article was written in 1996, continually tweaking and changing the way people communicate. As we prepare students to go out and become part of the work force, educators need to keep in mind these changes. Technology and the way we communicate are ever evolving but also the needs of our students as the future workers in the work force are changing also. No longer does a worker need to know only one aspect of a job such as would be done in a factory assembly line. As the job market shifts from the industrial practices of the last century to changing technological world we now live in the work force needs to be able to work in a team. They need to be able to communicate with others in a multitude of ways using both of the multilingual and multimodal aspects of multiliteracies. They need to be able to problem solve and have the skill of adaption (learning and changing as needed) (2006). The role of the educational system should be to prepare students to

function in this ever-changing world, so that they are prepared to communicate in multiliterate ways using multilingual (VE and SAE) and multimodal approaches (written, oral, gestural).

The uses and importance of using the multiliteracies framework in the classroom are endless. My focus of using multiliteracies in the classroom is to help me connect the students' rich funds of knowledge from their home life to that of the, sometimes, disconnected world of the school. Culturally, storytelling was one way of handing down life lessons and experiences of everyday life (John, 2010). They were shared socially to create bonds within a community and pass on generational knowledge of knowing and being. Stories were shared to educate and entertain. Being able to use the format of student dictated stories in the classroom helps to bridge the cultural literacy of storytelling with the literacy of reading and writing. When students participate in telling and discussing stories they are using multiple modalities, facial expressions, gestures, and different oral language, such as social and academic English and also the Yugtun Language. Students use gestures and social language when talking to their peers about the story they want to tell. When the teacher writes the students' words down, the students see their own oral words in written form helping them to start transforming their oral language into a standard written language. Seeing and reading their own words helps them connect to reading as a relevant activity and not just something that they have to do because the teacher said so. Turning their written stories back into oral books with Adobe Voice using SAE with illustrations, not only adds a visual modality but also brings the story full circle by connecting it back to the oral tradition.

Part of the multiliteracies framework is the design process that consists of available design, designing and redesigning. Available designs are the already existing examples of different literacies that allow us to “see” and make meaning from the world around us. These available designs are the *resources* that students can pull knowledge and ideas from. They may include many different grammars and semiotic systems such as texting, signs, symbols, dance or music. The New London Group gave the example of the discourse of TV where many different discourses may be going on within one context (1996), for example, in a comedy show the “joke” being told might be the gestures a character is doing silently behind the back of another character, or the feelings of a character might be “told” through facial expressions seen on the screen, all without saying a word. The same principles could be applied to storytelling and collaborative dialog. The listener needs to be aware of gestures and facial expressions along with the verbal and situational contexts that may be happening. Much meaning could be lost if the listener misses one or more of these things (New London Group, 1996). The students I teach have many rich available designs to draw from such as dance, music, and other traditional, day-to-day activities such as hunting, fish cutting and family events, to just name a few examples.

Designing is reading, seeing, listening and creating meaning from what we experience through those; it is the taking in of the information and finding your *personal meaning* of the available design. “Designing transforms knowledge in producing new constructions and representations of reality.” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 76). It is not repeating or copying the available design but the process of

creating new meaning from the input through the interpretations combined with life experiences. Not only is the available design made into something new but the person is also changed by the experience. In my project my students take events from their daily life, process them by thinking about them and talking to each other about how they want to tell the event on paper. The students take an event from their life, usually a physical, real-world event and start to transform it into written text through the LEA.

Redesign is the new meaning that comes from the process of the designing. It is the available design transformed into something new. Our class story is the first redesign. It is the combination of their life experiences, collaborative dialogue with each other, and the example of their experience in written form. They use it to write their own, personal stories. Then, if the new personal story is shared with others it then becomes a new available design for someone else to use. This cycle plays an important part in LEA in the context of a culturally diverse classroom. The cycle continues as more stories are created and shared.

Comprehensible Input

The next hypothesis I would like to talk about in relation to LEA is the comprehensible input hypothesis. The Comprehensible input hypothesis is part of Krashen's Monitor Model that he proposed in the 1970s. It states that language acquisition happens when a student receives language input that is both comprehensible and slightly above their current level of understanding (Krashen, 1982, p. 20; Spada & Lightbown, 2012, p. 106). My school district has been diligent in investing in reading material that is research based and fits the criteria of

comprehensible input. Every few years a reading committee is formed the current reading program and various others are evaluated for their content. What research is each program based on? Is the content appropriate for the age and grade level? Do the lessons meet the standards set by the state? After the evaluation process the committee either chooses to keep the current program or adopt a different one.

Unfortunately, even though there has been a lot of research, thought, and time spent in finding a reading program that meets our students' reading requirements, there is still a disconnect between the content of these reading programs and the experience of my students. The content is age and level appropriate but the students have a hard time connecting to it. The content is full of unfamiliar things, places and situations that hinder comprehension. It creates a wall that many students have a hard time overcoming. By using LEA, the students, with the help of the teacher, are creating comprehensible input themselves. The comprehensible input is the completed story. Because the students are working together with the help of the teacher, the students are seeing their personal experiences in a standard written form for the first time. This process helps to push their personal language skills forward yet keeps the content comprehensible.

Comprehensible Output

This leads me to the related hypothesis, comprehensible output. In order for the students to be able to create their own comprehensible input, the students must first create comprehensible output. According to Swain and Lapkin (1998) and Swain (2000), in order to communicate in a second language, learners must produce language that is understandable. This is called comprehensible output. The role of

comprehensible output in language learning is to practice and negotiate for meaning. By producing the language in authentic contexts as opposed to rote memorization and parroting, the speaker receives feedback. The speaker is then able to test how the language works by negotiating for meaning. The speaker is also able to further develop his/her language metacognitive awareness about language and language learning. Swain (2000) writes the following about output:

With output, the learner is in control. In speaking or writing, learners can 'stretch' their interlanguage to meet communicative goals. To produce, learners need to do something. They need to create linguistic form and meaning, and in so doing, discover what they can and cannot do (p. 99)

I believe this is especially important for our English language learners. Being able to produce language in a safe, non-threatening environment, with the support of fellow learners, allows the students to be able to "stretch" their language production to create comprehensible output.

There are three functions of comprehensible output according to Swain (2000): 1. Noticing function, 2. Hypothesis-testing function, and 3. Metalinguistic functions. In the noticing function the learner becomes aware of a gap in his/her knowledge. This can be a missing piece of whole knowledge or knowing what one wants to say but realizing that they do not have the available language to express it to another. Hypothesis-testing is realizing or recognizing that the grammar may not be right after getting feedback from another. Metalinguistic function is taking the experience of noticing and hypothesis-testing and thinking about the feedback and

mistakes that were made and learning from this reflection in order that the output will be correct the next time it is produced.

Another important aspect of Output Hypothesis is collaborative dialogue. Swain (2000) said, “Collaborative dialogue is dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building. It heightens the potential for exploration of the product” (p. 102). When a student is able to communicate with another peer and share knowledge and ideas, the product of their discussions is usually an enhanced product of what they would have been able to produce on their own. In my own classroom I have observed that the students are more likely to participate and work toward understanding faster if they are allowed to discuss difficult concepts with each other first.

LEA promotes output because the students work through the three functions of comprehensible output through collaborative dialogue as they support each other in their language learning. Collaborative dialogue allows the students to work together to build their knowledge of the language through storytelling discussions. Because the speakers are engaged in “problem solving” (what has occurred in the story and in what order) they have noticed a gap (noticing function) and are engaged in hypothesis-testing and giving feedback to each other through collaborative dialogue. They work together using language to bridge the gap, negotiate for meaning and complete the story. The outcome of the activity is ideally the students’ ability to bridge the gap and use language in authentic ways to complete a story.

Hypothesis testing also happens when the students give the teacher a sentence to dictate. For example the teacher may give feedback through both verbal and written forms. The teacher may ask the students to think about their answer or the teacher might write the dictation without comment. Both types of feedback communicate a message to all of the students in the class. Metalinguistic function occurs when the participants think about the feedback with a heightened awareness of how language works and make corrections in their responses and their own written stories.

Collaborative dialogue does not necessarily happen spontaneously in the classroom when the teacher or students want it to. It needs to be modeled, practiced and helped along. Fortunately there are time-tested methods to help with having students produce comprehensible output. Two methods that I have used in my LEA lesson plan are think-pair-share and sentence stems. Think-pair-share is a simple activity that allows the students to produce output through collaborative dialogue. First students think about what they want to say. Then they find a partner. Lastly they share with their partner. Because they are talking with one other person, their partner, and not the entire class or teacher, negative factors such as a fear of being embarrassed in front of peers by saying the wrong answer or not knowing what to say are mitigated by the chance to talk and share with one other person first, getting ideas and feedback. In this way the affective filter (see the next section for a definition) is lowered and it allows the students to practice the language and negotiate for meaning with another before they are required to speak to the teacher and/or the whole class. The sentence stem activity uses sentence

stems/starters, such as “Today in class I learned _____” or “The first step is _____” to give the students a place to start in their output activities and collaborative dialog. Students who are unsure or maybe who are just learning are more likely to produce more language if they are given a starting place to begin. Have you ever been given a blank piece of paper by a teacher and told to write about anything that came to mind? The trouble is you have no idea of what to write about. That blank paper just sat there and mocked you. Sometimes it was easier and a relief when the teacher told you to write about something specific such as “Tell me about your favorite birthday present”. It was not necessarily the content that was the most important aspect of the paper but the process and the practice. Sentence stems give students that specific place to start allowing them to work through the process of discussion and allowing them to practice.

Affective Filter

Do you have a memory of sitting in a second language class with a feeling of dread because you were afraid the teacher would call on you? I do. I was nervous and afraid not because I had not done my homework but because I was uncomfortable and did not want to make a fool of myself in front of my peers. I have always occasionally stuttered and mispronounced words in English. So guess what? I did the same thing in Spanish but more so. A few times I was laughed at in class and it was not pleasant. Consequently, whenever I was in class my mind was focused on being worried and stressed over what I might or might not do in front of my peers if called on, not on the lesson the teacher was trying to impart. It could be

said my affective filter was high. My learning ability was being blocked by my feelings and the thought mantra of “please, don’t call on me, please don’t call on me.”

In any classroom the teacher needs to be aware of the affective filter. According to Krashen (1981 p. 30-32) the affective filter is a mental barrier that could possibly prevent language learners from acquiring the language. “A learner who is tense, anxious, or bored may filter out input, making it unavailable for acquisition” (Lightbown & Spada, p. 106). With the district grade level curriculum, the students who were struggling were more likely to be anxious or bored when reading. Students seemed to either struggle with the meaning, getting upset when it was difficult or they did not even try to comprehend what was going on and were consequently bored. This caused many students’ affective filter to be high, not allowing them to pay full attention to the lesson. By using the students’ own words and experiences this lowered the affective filter by allowing them to connect with the content. Also, because the students were allowed to work in partner pairs, and small groups and to use sentence stems, the affective filter was lowered, allowing the students to not worry about struggling through the work on their own. They knew that they would be able to get support from their peers, so instead of students shutting down there is more likely to be increased engagement.

Focus on Form

The last hypothesis I would like to connect to my project is focus on form. With focus on form students are given a specific structure to work with (Long, 1991). Focus on form must occur within a context (as opposed to decontextualized grammar drills) and focus on form activities give students the opportunity to use

the given structure to negotiate for meaning and/or complete the task. Feedback is given to the students and reflection occurs. The students then correct (if a mistake was made) or keep (if output was used correctly) what they have used. During LEA the teacher may preplan to draw the students attention to a specific grammar structure that has been used. Then in the students' own writing practice, they can practice the grammatical structure. The teacher can also use the LEA as a "teachable moment" if something comes up unexpectedly. An example from my own classroom happened during one of our whole class dictation sessions. While I was writing I started to run out of room to write on the line. I was going to put the next word on the next line but I quickly made the decision to use this as a way to have the students notice a grammatical rule that many of them needed help with. Several of the students would divide a word whenever they got to the margin line of their paper regardless of the syllable divisions. I continued to write on and said, "uh-oh, I'm running out of room to write the rest of this word. What am I going to do?" I used this opportunity for the students to think about what to do with a word if it needs to be divided because of space at the end of a line. Some students knew that they could divide the word but what I wanted the students to notice was that the word had to be divided between syllables. I was able to provide an opportunity for the students to notice and negotiate with each other and also myself to figure out that a word should be divided between syllables. The students were then able to practice this form in their own writing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish I could say “Eureka! I have found the solution! All of my students will succeed now!” but I cannot. LEA is unfortunately not a cure-all for the classroom but it does address the disconnections some students may feel between their “real life” outside of the school and the academic world they find themselves in everyday. Through LEA students are allowed to share knowledge sets that would possibly otherwise go unnoticed and unappreciated in the school setting. LEA shows the students that all of their knowledge is valuable. They get to be the “teachers” and take charge of creating their own learning experience. They also learn to use language to communicate to others through both written and oral avenues. It allows them to practice the language they do know and to build upon it. So, although LEA is not the cure-all, it is a bridge, helping students to connect their worlds.

Overview of Project Components

Assessment

The assessment piece contains the rationale of the assessments for my project. I talk about using checklist and the importance of considering different worldviews on writing. Click here for more information about the assessments:

<http://searchingfortheusual.weebly.com/paper.html> Click here to find the

assessments and for directions on how I create my checklist:

<http://searchingfortheusual.weebly.com/lesson-plan.html>

Lesson Plan

My lesson is divided into two columns. On the left is the lesson itself. Each section starts with an objective that quickly states what each section involves and then goes into more detail below it. On the right is my reflection on each of the lesson parts. Please take what you need. Make it work for you. Read through the lesson only or get more information through my personal reflection process. Click here to find my lesson plan: <http://searchingforthefamiliar.weebly.com/lesson-plan.html>

Language Activities

Language activities are important to use with the student generated word list because even though the words are student generated, each student's knowledge of the words might be different. A word that one student might have suggested for our list might be one that another student has never heard. Any word wall activity will work with the word list. If you are not familiar with word wall activities I have included a list of some here: <http://searchingforthefamiliar.weebly.com/lesson-plan.html>

Fire Drill Lesson Plan Implementation

This was not a lesson I had planned on doing but am so glad it happened. It was spur of the moment to fill an unexpected gap in the day. This lesson has turned out to be a good example of how it is possible to use one LEA to help with language practice and expansion. Click here for more information:

<http://searchingforthefamiliar.weebly.com/lesson-plan.html>

Ircinrraat (Little People) Lesson Plan Implementation

Our writing pieces, as in most classrooms usually have a seasonal theme. It being St. Patrick's Day called for writing about the little people. But instead of writing about Ireland's leprechauns my two classes wrote about one of the groups of local little people, the ircinrraat, instead. In this example of the LEA process, the students dictated to me things they knew about the ircinrraat to create an informational piece. The language activity was a simple eight-space bingo game. Both of my classes did separate stories, I then used both class stories in a compare and contrast reading mini-lesson. Click here for the stories and pictures:

<http://searchingforthefamiliar.weebly.com/showcase>

Suggestions for LEA Stories

Being new to an area and not knowing the local culture, traditions, and activities can make it difficult to facilitate an LEA class event. This paper gives some suggestions of how to come up with topics to write about, the best being asking the students themselves. Click here for more information:

<http://searchingforthefamiliar.weebly.com/lesson-plan.html>

Showcase

To showcase some of our class work, activities and stories accomplished through using the Language Experience Approach in our lessons I have created a showcase page on the Weebly. Here you will find a few examples of our Whole-class stories, individual writing, language activities and pictures of our work:

<http://searchingforthefamiliar.weebly.com/showcase>

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Assessment Rationale

Authentic assessment is a way of assessing what a student truly knows on a personal, student/teacher level that is in no way standardized. Authentic assessment is not an everybody-has-to-do-the-exact-same-thing type of testing. It is a more holistic, organic approach to assessing what students know and have the ability to do. O'Malley and Pierce define authentic assessment as "multiple forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities." (1996, p. 4)

It is not "I feel this student should get an A because they *tried* really hard even though they didn't *really* do what was asked of them." Authentic assessment first needs to be both valid and reliable. A valid assessment is one that "measures accurately what it is intended to measure" (Hughes, 2013, p. 26). In other words, an assessment will test the student on what has been taught in class and not on something that they have never heard before. If it has not been assigned and discussed in class, it should not be on the assessment. An assessment is considered reliable if "the performance of candidates from occasion to occasion and the reliability of the scoring" is consistent (Hughes, 2013, p. 44). This means that I should be able to give my assessment and student work to another teacher and they should have similar, if not the same scores I, myself, assign to my students. If an assessment does not meet these two criteria of being valid and reliable then it should not be used to assess the student.

O'Malley and Pierce write about three types of authentic assessments that teachers may use in the classroom: portfolios, performance and self-assessment. (1996, p. 4) In the following section of this paper I shall explain and then relate how I use performance and self-assessment to assess my students during the LEA process.

Performance assessments may be formal or informal, written or oral. They require students to combine what they know with what has just been learned to complete the given task (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996, p. 4). The task that the students are required to complete for this type of assessment is generally characterized by several attributes that include, but are not limited to: being a constructed response, being meaningful and engaging, challenging, integrating language skills and/or content knowledge, and providing an in depth look at the knowledge of the students. (p. 5) Examples of performance assessments include written and oral reports. In my project of LEA, the performance assessments are the stories, oral and written, that the students produce. By listening to their oral stories as they talk in class I can informally assess their oral knowledge of the language, which I find is often at a higher level than their written grasp of the language. By using the written stories that the students write on their own, we, both the students and I, can assess their written language with the help of rubrics and checklists.

Self-assessment is a key component that needs to be included along with other assessments. Self-assessments are needed because they promote self-led learning. They give students more control over their own learning, allowing the students to make choices, evaluate and share their learning. Students have a say in the manner and form the evaluations will take (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996, p. 5). In today's schools, many standards want students to be able to persevere through learning difficulties and be able to problem solve in a multitude of contexts. Self-assessments help to promote these two life skills by allowing the student to thoughtfully look at their work to find not only the

mistakes and what may need improvement but also to see what is going right. In my project self-assessments will be facilitated by the use of checklists and rubrics.

Using a checklist with my project allows me to be flexible and relevant with the needs of my students as they write. The checklist, especially at first, works well in my project and may be used by either the teacher or students. A checklist may also be used by the teacher for a type of quick formative assessment to track the students' learning of a skill during a lesson. My use of a checklist in my project revolves around my students and helping them to assess their own writing. I would make a list of story parts and elements that I would like to see my students use.

Name _____ Date _____

Is each sentence capitalized and does it have punctuation?

Do you stay on the topic of _____?

Do you have a variety of words at the beginning of your sentences? Do not overuse "Then" or use "and"

Do you use strong sentences (8-10 words)?

Figure 5
An example of a checklist that the students could self check the writing piece with. See the appendix for the full checklist template and other examples.

A couple suggestions of what could go on a checklist are the standards that are pertinent to your lesson in student friendly language, and the parts of the writing traits you want the students to specifically address in their writing such as punctuation, word choice, details, etc. The checklists are easily adaptable to each writing piece. I give the students the checklist to go through as they read and edit their writing pieces. They check off each

element they have. By watching the students go through the checklist and discussing different aspects allows me to see what my students are doing fine with and also what they are struggling with. This helps to inform my instruction. If one part or skill was not checked off then I would address that in my next language arts lesson. Checklists are also nice in that I can give the same checklist to all of my students if I want to focus on a specific skill or I can easily customize a checklist to a specific student's needs. During the implementation of my project, I found that checklists are flexible and versatile, and worked well in assessing my students.

I would also like to mention one more important component of authentic assessment that is not often mentioned nor discussed. When I assess my students I also need to be aware of students' cultural norms that may be different than my own. For example, being aware that there may be different story structures used in the family homes of my students can make a difference in understanding where my students are in their academic understanding. As a Midwestern child, born and raised, I was taught that a story starts at the beginning, has a middle, and then an end. It never occurred to me that a story could be told any other way. Just as I was using my funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) so, too, are my students. Additionally, Escamilla and Coady (2001) noted that students may be using their own cultural norms to communicate what they know. This can look very different in the end product of a student with a different cultural experience than what might be expected of a monolingual English student. Escamilla and Coady (2001) described that it appeared that the student papers were not written well, when in fact, according to their family culture, the students had done a good job. I have been told that some Yup'ik stories start with the ending and then go back and tell the beginning of

the story. When teaching English story structure I need to be aware of the fact that students may use their cultural knowledge of stories to write. Other forms of communication and presentation of self (note: multiliteracies, funds of knowledge) also need to be taken into account. For example bragging and talking of one's self is also traditionally not done by many of the families in the local context in which I teach. (Personal communications with staff and community members of Tuntutuliak, 2007-2015) This traditional value could affect how my students approach self-assessments. It is my job as the teacher to present self-assessments as a reflective practice, being careful not to use any verbiage that denotes bragging or boasting. Not learning about our students' forms of communication can lead to miscommunication by both the teacher and the student. Miscommunication can lead to misunderstanding and unintentional bias of the persons involved, which then can unknowingly affect the outcomes in the classroom.

Authentic assessment should be a cornerstone in every teacher's classroom. They are reliable and valid forms of student evaluation. I have found them to be the best course to assess the classroom activities of students in a meaningful, authentic way.

Post-It Notes 6 Traits Template

Ideas and Content

- Ideas are yours
- Ideas are based on what you know
- Details are on topic
- The topic tells a story or makes a point
- The ideas are well thought out

Organization

- Sequencing logical and easy to follow
- There is an introduction
- There is a conclusion
- Transitions are used when needed
- Organization is easy to follow

Voice

- Writing is varied, the reader can “see” the person behind the words
- Language is chosen for purpose
- Writing is interesting and holds the reader’s attention
- The writer behind the words comes through the words

Word Choice

- Words are specific and striking
- Writing is natural, like a conversation
- Verbs are energetic and lively
- Word choices paint a picture for the reader

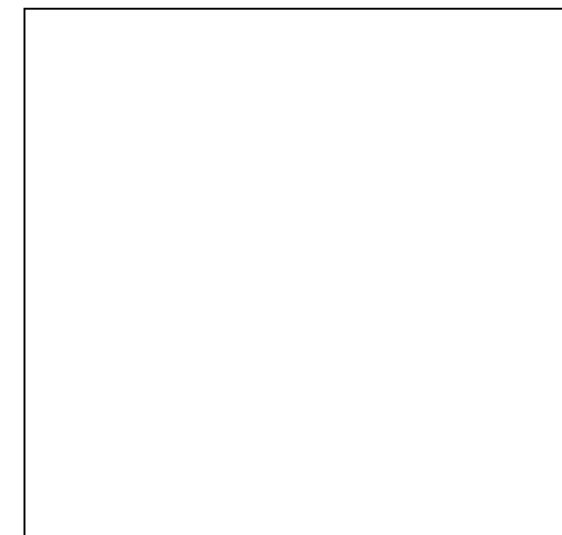
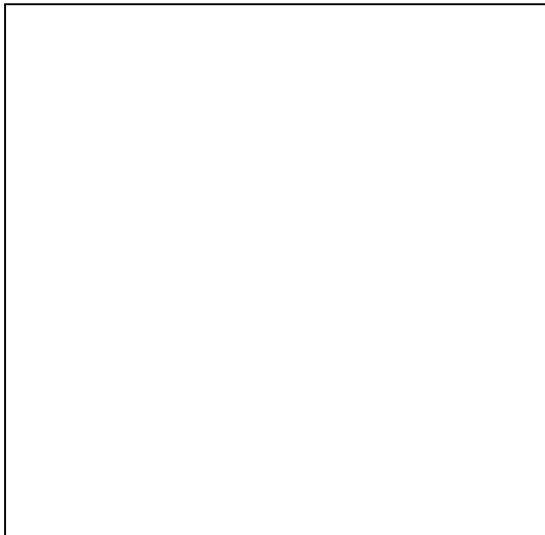
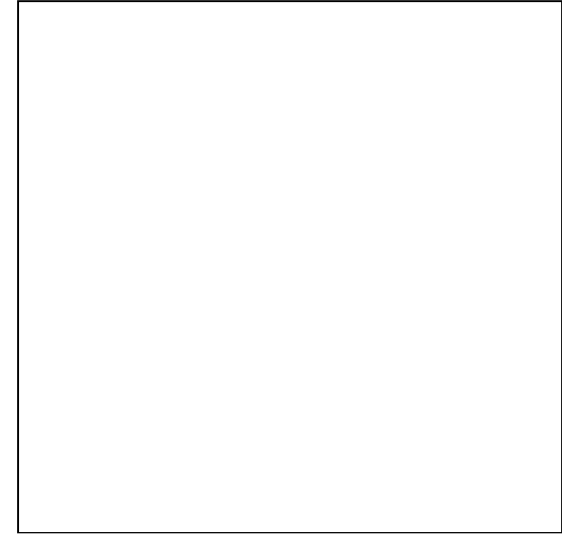
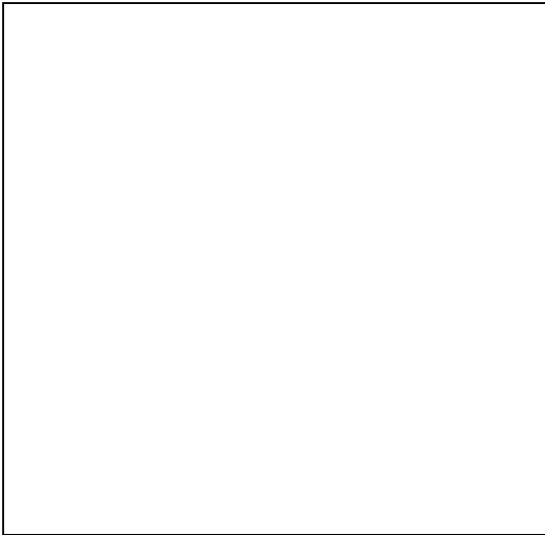
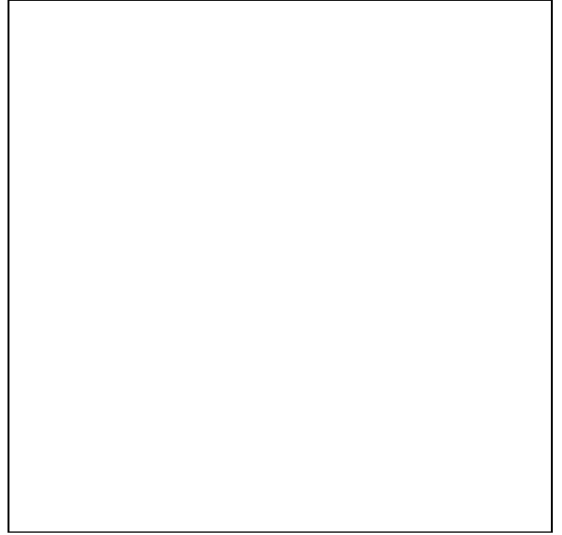
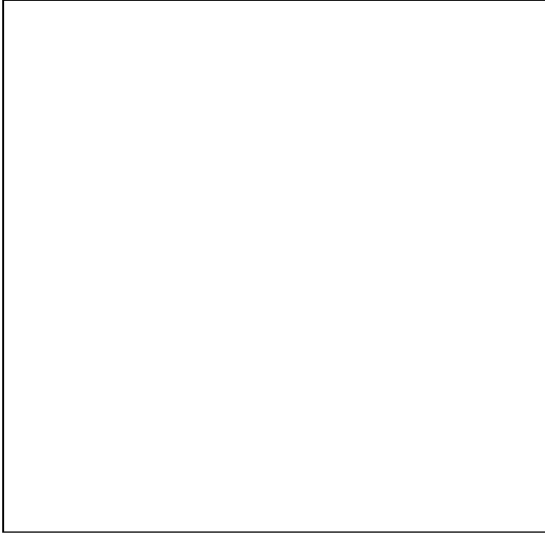
Sentence Fluency

- Sentences make meaning clear
- Sentences have a purpose and build on each other
- Sentences vary in length and structure
- Dialogue, if used, sounds natural
- Writing has an easy flow /rhythm

Conventions

- Spelling is correct
- Punctuation is correct
- Grammar and usage is correct
- Paragraphing reinforces the organizational structure.

3 by 3 Post-It Note Template



Sequencing Rubric

Alaska State Standards <https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/>

3. Use narrative writing to develop real or imagined characters, experiences, or events using effective narrative techniques (dialogue, description, elaboration, problem-solution, figurative language), and clear event sequences (chronology).

	1	2	3
The story has a clear situation; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and easily read by the reader.	There is no clear situation The beginning, middle and/or end seems to be missing. There are events, but they seem random	There is a situation There is evidence of a beginning, middle and end. There are 2 to 3 events but might not be in a natural order	There is a clear situation. The events unfold naturally with a beginning, middle and end. There are 3 to 4 events
Use transitional words and phrases to signal event sequences (e.g., later, soon after).	No transitional words are used to signal event sequence	Transitional words are used but the same ones are repeated.	A variety of transitional words are used to help the story unfold naturally.
The story has a clear ending. The reader was not left with unanswered questions	There is not a clear ending or is unfinished. The reader is left confused.	There is an ending but it seems too quick. The reader is left with questions.	The ending is clear and seems natural to the reader

Notes/ observations:

LEA Lesson Plan

The following lesson is divided into two columns. On the left is the lesson itself. Each section starts with an objective that quickly states what each section involves. On the right is my reflection on each of the lesson parts. Please take what you need. Make it work for you. Read through the lesson only or get more information through my personal reflection process.

Alaska Standards and GLEs:

Cultural Standard for the Student:

E. Culturally-knowledgeable students demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them. 8. Identify and appreciate who they are and their place in the world.

Cultural Standard for the Educator:

A. Culturally-responsive educators incorporate local ways of knowing and teaching in their work.
6. continually involve themselves in learning about the local culture.

Grade Level Expectations

Strand 3

3. Use narrative writing to develop real or imagined characters, experiences, or events using effective narrative techniques (dialogue, description, elaboration,

The LEA lesson plan fulfills this standard by showing the student that their life experience is important in the school setting and that I value and appreciate it too.

The LEA lesson plan fulfills this cultural standard by allowing the student to be my teacher. By sharing their stories with me I not only help them with their language learning but I am also learning about their lives.

The LEA lesson plan is very versatile in meeting the language content standards. It can be used not only the

problem-solution, figurative language), and clear event sequences (chronology).

- a. Establish a context or situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description and elaboration, and concrete and sensory details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings and to develop experiences and events showing the response of characters to situations or problems.
- c. Use transitional words and phrases to signal event sequences (e.g., later, soon after).
- d. Provide a sense of closure (e.g., how a problem was solved or how the event ended)

<https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/>

standard I have included here but also be adapted to meet many of the reading and writing standards.

To meet part of strand 3 we developed the real event of the fire drill into a simple sequence story. I encouraged the students to think about how to use transitional words in our class story then again in their individual stories. Although in this lesson we did not accomplish every aspect of this standard we could, at a later date, revisit the same story and add more elements to it, for example, dialogue. Another option to hit more of the standards could be, to address them in a separate LEA story.

Lesson Plan	Reflection
<p>Before You start.</p> <p>Objective: Think about how you want to implement this in your setting (group, small group, or individual). When will you fit this into your schedule? How much time do you have? This activity works well with content subjects as well as Language arts. Think ahead about possible things to write about so that you can either help guide the student(s) to pick a topic or have one ready to start the lesson if you are choosing. Also decide on what and how you want to assess the students' writing. Make sure that this is talked about and modeled during the whole class activity. <u><i>This lesson focuses on the LEA as a whole class activity.</i></u></p> <p>This activity may be used with a whole class, a small group or individual students. If the activity is used with the whole class, the teacher needs to decide what type of experience</p>	<p>Over the course of the year and a half that I have used this in my classroom, I have done both whole class and individual. What you choose to do will depend on how you want to use the final project. When I did LEA with individual students, my only purpose was to create a practice reading piece. When I did LEA with the whole class, my purpose was generally to create the reading practice piece but also to have the students create their own written stories. As a whole class, I can generally do a word list, story and a language activity well within a half hour time frame. I block out another 15 to 20 minutes to do a writing piece. I do find that if I am working through the lesson plan for the first time with a group it tends to take us a bit longer. If we have done it before the students already know what is coming next and are thinking ahead; consequently, the lesson seems to go faster. I do not think I have ever done the whole lesson in</p>

will be used for the activity. The experience needs to be familiar to all of the students participating in the activity, preferably a shared experience when all of the students participated.

A good choice for an experience that the whole group may do together is a field trip. Not only is it a shared experience but it also is something that is very exciting to the students. In the village where possibilities are somewhat limited, some suggestions are to arrange for a trip to the store, tribal council, community hall, post office or even a nature walk around the village.

If a fieldtrip is not an option, then have the students brainstorm ideas about a familiar experience or topic from their everyday lives. The experience needs to be something familiar to everyone participating in the group. If the activity is being implemented with the whole class as was done during this project, it might be helpful to brainstorm as a group a broad topic like “spring activities” or “holiday traditions” in order to find a familiar activity for the whole group. Everyday school activities are also an option. “What

one day. I have always either split into small units (for example: word list and whole class story one day, language activity a second day, rough draft writing piece the third day and final writing draft the fourth day). It seems easier to fit LEA into my schedule if I am willing to divide it up over at least a few days.

Remember also that what the students find engaging might not be something that seems engaging to adults. For one of our lessons I chose to have the students create a story about the recent fire drill that we had had. I chose this topic because it was an experience that the whole class went through earlier that day and it also fit in with the skill of sequencing that we had been working on. I was not expecting the students to be super engaged with it. To my surprise they were very enthusiastic about the whole process even though I thought the topic was mundane. We even created a book using Adobe Voice (<https://standout.adobe.com/voice/>).

did we do during P.E. today?" would work well, especially if a new and fun game had been played. It is important to keep in mind to pick something that is exciting and interesting to the students.

Make sure to create and keep a list that may be used again to help choose a shared experience for the next time this activity is done (See the list to the right for some of the ideas my own students came up with). Thought has already been put into the brainstorming of various topics, do not waste this effort. By creating and keeping a list you are creating a resource to help next time. Even if you do not use something from the list, it will help jog not only your memory but also the students'.

If the activity is being used with an individual it would be better to ask the student what interesting or fun thing is happening in their life currently. Students almost always have something that they would like to share. If the student cannot think of something, this is where the brainstormed list previously talked about may come in handy to have the student look at and pick from.

What follows is a small example of some of the suggestions my students came up with when they brainstormed things that they might want to talk and write about. This list covers some activities throughout the year. If I am searching for an idea to use I will either pick from this list or have the students pick from the list. I love to hear about how some things are very different than I expect (for example: Halloween trick-or-treating is done in large groups in my village. Everyone in the group comes into the house, candy is passed out, then the group moves to the next house). I have found that by listening to the students I learn too; things that I would never have known otherwise.

For pictures, examples of student work in our showcase, and lesson support materials please click here and follow the links to the appropriate area

<http://searchingforthefamiliar.weebly.com/>

water skipping,
spring cleaning,
ice fishing,
nature walk around the
village,
basketball

cutting fish,
different ways of
fishing,
drying fish,
hunting,
Fourth of July,
gathering wood

hunting: bird, seal,
walrus,
boating
wood gathering
wild egg hunting
Easter: family, church,
egg decorating and egg
hunting

steams (maqii),
Christmas,
Slaviq,
Halloween,
berry picking
Salmon Berry
Festival

Step 1: Discussion

Objectives: To have the students talk with each other to generate ideas. The teacher acts as a facilitator.

Time: 2 to 3 minutes

After the choice of an experience has been picked, have partners talk to each other and also their partner pairs about it to help stimulate their personal knowledge and memories. Each student should take a turn saying something about the experience. By talking together the students help to give ideas to each other and to think of things that they might not have otherwise. The Kagan structures of Think-Pair-Share or Round Robin would work well for this part of the lesson.

If you are using small groups to discuss Round Robin would be a good choice. During Round Robin each student takes a turn sharing something about the experience in a given time (such as 30 seconds). Then the next student takes a turn. This continues until everyone shares or until a specified time has elapsed (such as 3 minutes). If students

After the students discussed among themselves, I had the students tell me about the event without writing anything down first. I asked questions of the students to show interest and to clarify various points.

If you are working with an individual, spend a few minutes talking about the event with them. Ask clarifying questions. For example, I find that making sure that the students have answered, at least verbally, who, what, when, why, and how helps them to think through what they want to say.

It could be helpful if to get the conversation going by using sentence stems during your discussion. For example if the students are discussing different types of fishing some sentence stems could be “My mother fishes _____”, “My

<p>are unfamiliar with discussing with a partner or a group, this needs to be modeled and practiced.</p> <p>If you are using partners, Think-Pair-Share would work well. Have the students think silently about the part of the story you want them to talk about then pair with a partner. With the partner they will take turns discussing their thoughts about the story. For more information and training opportunities go to http://www.kaganonline.com/</p>	<p>father fishes _____” “I fish by doing _____”, and “I like the way _____ fishes because _____”</p>
<p>Step 2: Word List</p> <p>Objectives: To generate a list of words that the students might use in the creation of their story.</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p> <p>Ask the students what words they think we might use in the writing of our story. On a big piece of paper or on an interactive white board write the words that the students</p>	<p>This was not part of the original LEA plan. It was something that I did without really thinking about it. Our language program at our school has an emphasis on using word walls and visual language. It worked well and just seemed natural so I kept doing it. Even more importantly the students used the word list to look up words for their own writing and they enjoyed reading through the words, sometimes even more than the story. They even made their</p>

<p>say. Have them raise their hands and call on them one at a time. Words can be added throughout the rest of the process.</p>	<p>own “I spy” game during free time while perusing the words. One student would say “ I spy the word ‘glittery’ ” then the other students would look for it.</p> <p>After the students start writing on their own and ask about the spelling of a word that is not on the list, go ahead and add it now. There have been times when the students do not seem to use any of the words from the list but I still do not consider the list wasted time or space. The students still see, hear, and say the words. The list is an available resource for them to use later if they need to.</p>
<p>Step 3: Dictation</p> <p>Objectives: The students, as a whole class, will dictate a story line by line to you as you write it down.</p> <p>Time: 10 to 15 minutes</p> <p>The third step would be to have the students dictate a story to you as you write it down on large paper or the</p>	<p>I did find that doing LEA with the whole group, I had to be extra careful to gently lead some of the students in the “right” direction. For students that struggled a little more I made</p>

interactive whiteboard. You do not have to be overly worried about correct grammar usage or sentence structure if your students are at the beginning stages of language learning; however, do make sure that everything is spelled correctly. Remember that the purpose for the activity is for the students to use and *see* the language that they know. Gentle reminders of corrections of things that have been worked on in class are permissible if done carefully. You do not want to overcorrect the students into shutting down, *especially* on aspects of the language that have not been covered in class yet. This is supposed to be a fun and engaging activity that not only exposes the students to the written form of their oral language but to get them excited about reading and writing. Having students' names on sticks and pulling them one at a time is a good way to make sure that as many students as possible get a chance to participate.

sure that I did not put them on the spot. I used a couple different methods to make sure that they had the support they needed in telling the next sentence of the story. For example, in the middle of writing the story, I might ask the students to Think-Pair-Share again about the next step in our story before calling on that struggling student to share with the class. Asking pointed questions sometimes worked well to help lead the student to an answer that would be a logical progression of our story. "We know that we are going outside. What do we always do before we go outside in the cold, cold air?" Another strategy would be to get ideas from several students before letting the struggling student pick one, "Lets get some ideas first from different people, then decide what we want to say next. Johnny would you be our judge and pick your favorite answer?"

<p>Step 4: Model Reading</p> <p>Objectives: Students hear the story read in a fluent manner with appropriate expression.</p> <p>Time: 1 to 2 minutes</p> <p>After the writing is done, read the story with the students, pointing to each word as it is read. Make any corrections that students suggest. The teacher may also bring the students' attention to any mistakes or corrections that may need to be made. Reread the story after the corrections are made.</p>	<p>I tell my students that I am the world's worst speller and that they have to help me out by being on the look out for misspelled words. I really am not the worst speller but I do tend to write fast and spell things wrong on occasion. The kids love to help me with finding my mistakes and it is good to model fixing mistakes when found. This is where either the students or I find any spelling mistakes and we fix them together.</p>
<p>Step 4: Practice Reading</p> <p>Objectives: Students practice reading for fluency and expression.</p> <p>Time: 1 to 2 minutes</p>	<p>I do have a couple of students that either do not like to do any group work or are reluctant to participate, even in whole groups. There was even a few mornings recently, because the</p>

<p>Next, it is the student’s turn to read. When working with the whole class, an excellent option is to have the students read chorally, this way all the students get a chance to read and practice the class story without the pressure of being singled out to read individually. If one or two students are not reading, gently stop the class, say “I need to hear everyone,” and start over. This practice is important.</p>	<p>sun shines well after 11pm now, that all of the students were tired, cranky and did not want to do any school work. I had to start the story over three times before everyone was reading it. Be persistent. Do not give up. Rarely does anything work one hundred percent of the time without at least a few bumps</p>
<p>Step 5: Word List Activities (optional) Objectives: To give the students extra practice with the words from the word list before they start to write their own individual stories Time: 5 to 10 minutes</p> <p>This can be a quick review or a more in-depth study of some of the words from the word list. This is the perfect place to use it, if you have a favorite word wall activity. If you do not I have included a list of various language activities you could use. You can find the list of activities on the Weebly site</p>	<p>Since I have added this step, I have found that it is beneficial to my struggling students. They tend to know fewer of the words than do my top students. When they are writing their own stories and referring to our word list I have observed that they are less likely to stand in front of our list and struggle to sound out the various words for the word they want after we do a language activity.</p>

here <http://searchingforthefamiliar.weebly.com/lesson-plan.html>

With the help of the students try to pick words that most of the students are not as familiar with. Ask the students to pick a word that they are not as familiar with. If you have a large class you may want to have partners discuss and choose a word between them. If you have a small class you might ask each student to give you two words. Depending on the activity the goal is to come up with 10 to 16 words. Use these words in any type of word wall language activity that you prefer to give the students some practice with them before they write.

The language activity that I like best is Eight Space Bingo because it is quick easy and the students love it. Here is how we play:

With the students, I went through the word list and picked out 16 words. I gave each of them a piece of paper to fold into eight spaces. They then randomly choose and wrote 8 of the words on their paper, one in each blank. I wrote all 16 words onto pieces of paper and placed them in a cup. For the first round I made sure that the students new how to mark the left hand corner with an x if I called the word. In order to win a “bingo” I told them they had to get one of their four-word rows marked with an x in every square. I pulled a word and either gave a definition or a sentence. The students guess what the word is and I always tell them if it is correct or not. As this is suppose to be a fun language activity to practice the words, I want to make sure that they are matching the correct word with the correct meaning. After the first round we played again, this time marking the right hand corner with an o. Two rounds were all we had time for before we had to write our own stories.

Step 6: Writing Individual Stories

Objectives: The students now create their own personal stories about the same experience as that of the whole class story.

Time: 15 to 20 minutes

After the students practice reading the next step would be for them to practice writing their own stories. Remove the copy of the shared class story but leave the word list so that the students may reference it as needed as they write individually. Words may be added to the word list if the students ask for new words to be spelled for them. After going through the writing process the stories should be collected and put into a class book to share or added to a student's individual book of their own stories.

This may seem redundant after the whole class has created a story but each student's experience or emphasis is slightly different. With one of my groups I have the students work individually on their stories because of personality clashes but with my other group I have the students partner-write. I have to admit I like doing it both ways. The partner writing can be challenging to do but the end product is usually worth it, especially for the struggling students. The individual stories are great because you get to see that particular student's experience.

It is important to remove the class story or you might get 12 copies of the same. I left one of the stories up a few too many minutes after the students had started writing, and I was amazed later how many of the stories started out the exact same way. Some of the students, even when the story has been removed, still start out their own writing in a

	<p>similar manner but usually the stories quickly evolve into individual, unique experiences.</p>
<p>Step 7: Finishing Touches: Creating a Useable Book</p> <p>Objectives: To create a useable book that the students can practice fluency and expression. This also serves as a model for writing.</p> <p>Laminate the whole class paper or place it in a project protector (if you created it on an interactive whiteboard and can print it off) so that it will withstand the repeated handling of the students. The story may then be posted on the wall or hole punched and bound with other student written stories by using binder rings or string to create a class big book. Project covers may be used too.</p>	<p>In my own classroom I have put all of our whole class stories together while their individual, personally written, stories go together to create another class book. Make sure to include the word list in the book also. Students love to read through these and to play games such as “I spy.” One student will say “I spy “purple”” and the other students will have to find the word.</p> <p>Another finishing touch project idea is to have the students turn either their whole class story or individual stories into a digital format using an App such as Storyboard or Adobe Voice (https://standout.adobe.com/voice/).</p>

Step 8: Assessment

Objectives: To assess the student(s) to see if the goals of the lesson have been met.

Use checklist or rubrics to assess your students. See the section on authentic assessment for more information. Also attached are the template for a Post-It note rubric, a simple checklist, and directions for how to print them.

In my authentic assessment section I talk about and have included how I assess my students. If you have an authentic assessment for writing that works for you by all means, use it. I find that using what works for me is usually the most effective approach. For pictures, examples of student work in our showcase, and lesson support materials please click here and follow the links to the appropriate area <http://searchingforthefamiliar.weebly.com/>

Final Reflection:

When I first read about LEA, something clicked. I realized what an awesome resource it could be for my students who struggle with comprehending the world in written form. It was a challenge to fit it into the schedule the past two years but I believe that it was worth it. Sometimes I would use some writing time while other times I would use reading. One time I even used P.E time when we could not use the gym. I usually broke the process into pieces; brainstorming and list making one day,

class story another day, followed by writing on yet another. I plan on continuing the process in my classroom. I do not know exactly how yet as my teaching assignment will be changing slightly and like many teachers I am expected to follow certain guidelines that make time precious in the classroom. But I believe that the effort will be well worth it. I once heard from somewhere, I don't remember unfortunately where, that we always find time for the things we want to do or feel are important to do. This has stuck with me throughout the years. With little exception I believe this to be true. I believe that LEA is important to do for my students. It helps provide a real connection between their world and the written language

Word List Activities

Bingo Games

-- Give each student a half sheet of blank paper. Have them fold it so they have 8 rectangles. If you have a really long word list you might wish to limit the words to 10 to 12 words that the students could choose from. Have them fill each blank space with a word.

Option #1 –Write each word on a piece of paper and place it in a cup. Draw one word at a time and read it out loud. As you read the words the students cover the word. Students may win by either covering a row or all eight words.

Option #2 –Write each word on a piece of paper and place it in a cup. Draw one word at a time and tell the students the definition without saying the word. The students have to come up with which word goes with the definition and cover it on their paper. Students may win by either covering a row or all eight words.

Option # 3 –Write each word on a piece of paper and place it in a cup. Draw one word at a time and use the word in a sentence without saying which word you are using. The students have to listen carefully to figure out what word in the sentence is also on their paper in order to cover it. Students may win by either covering a row or all eight words.

Option #4 –Write each word on a piece of paper and place it in a cup. Hand out notebook paper to each student. Draw one word at a time and read it out loud. Students must find the word on their card, cover it, and then write a sentence using the given word on the notebook paper. Students may win by either covering a row or all eight words and then having a correct sentence for each.

Bang

--Place each word on a card and place it in a cup. For every eight to ten words place another card with the word “Bang!” on it in the cup. The class sits in a circle. Each student takes a turn to pull a word and then read it. If they can read it they may keep the word but if they cannot they have to put the word back into the cup. If a student pulls a card with “Bang!” on it, the student has to put all of their cards back. An option to make it more challenging is the student not only has to read the word but also use the word correctly in a sentence.

ABC Order

--Write each word on a large index card. Pass one index word card to each student. Tell them to organize themselves in alphabetical order. They may do this in a student line or if you have a group of students that cooperates well together you may want them to clothespin their words onto a long length of ribbon or string.

Swat

--Write the list of words on the board in a random order. Divide the class into two teams. One member from each team goes to the board with a fly swatter. A word from the list is read off. The first student who “swats” the correct word earns a point for their team. The game goes on until either a certain point score is earned or until a time is reached. Another idea is to have a separate, random list of words for each team. Words may also be written on shower curtains with dry erase or white board crayons.

Around the World

--Students may either sit at their desk or sit in a circle. Words are written on large cards. One student starts by standing behind the next student. The teacher will flash them a word card, the student who says the word correctly first wins and will move on to the next student. If a student makes it back to his or her own seat that student is the winner

Hangman

--Have the students play in pairs a game of hangman with words from their list. One student chooses a word. The student puts as many blanks as there are letters in the chosen word on their paper. The other student guesses letters. The first student either fills in the letters in the word that are guessed correctly or draws part of the “hangman”. The round continues until the word is guessed or the picture of the hangman is complete. The partners then switch roles. Alternately you may also use a simplified picture of your mascot, a smiley face, or an animal if you do not want to use the “hangman”. Make sure each student can draw the chosen picture with the same number of parts.

Alphabet Tiles/Wall Posters

--Students choose a word from the list and write a sentence. They illustrate the word. These may be hung on the wall as small posters or used to make a student made alphabet.

Implementation 1: Fire Drill LEA

This was not a lesson I had planned on doing but am so glad it happened. It was spur of the moment to fill an unexpected gap in the day. This lesson has turned out to be a good example of how it is possible to use one LEA to help with language practice and expansion.

Having an unexpected fire drill took up enough time and pushed my lessons back that I would have been able to do only part of the next planned lesson. Because I did not want to start the original lesson and stop half way through I decided that we were going to write about the fire drill. I thought the kids would be a bit resistant to this, after all fire drills are old hat to us. We have one at least once a month. In my mind I had pictured them doing it but with a lot of prodding on my part. To my utter surprise the students were really into it. They enthusiastically discussed, listed words, and gave suggestions for sentences with little prompting from me.

At this time I had a working interactive whiteboard in my classroom so it was easy and quick to pull up a blank screen and start writing. It also made it easy to print off the word list and stories that we did using it. This was all we did for that day, just the word list and story.

A few weeks later when we had some more unexpected time we wrote stories. Each student wrote with a partner to create a story of what happens when we have a fire drill. We went through the writing process using the simple checklist to make sure we were indenting, capitalizing and using punctuation.

Again, sometime passed and I was looking for a whole class activity. I knew I wanted to explore using Adobe Voice in the classroom so I thought why not try a quick whole class project using our whole class fire drill story? Using an iPad we downloaded

the App, took pictures and followed the simple directions that were given on the App. The kids loved it! It allowed them to revisit and practice reading the “script” for our story giving them new motivation for rereading and practicing not only the story but also the word list.

A year has passed and I still think about that story. In part because of some suggestions made by my professor and also in part because of the type of language program we have. I still have the same group of kids and would like to use the story to broaden some of their language use and to make connections. Coming up soon our school will have its Culture Week. Half the day the students will be learning cultural activities but the other half of the day will still be used for regular academic purposes. I think this would be the perfect time to revisit this LEA story.

My plan is to have the kids brainstorm and research more words pertaining to fires and firefighting. These words would then be used in language activities such as alphabet tiles for our student-generated alphabet. This could even turn into a research project; researching the different types of fires we have here in Alaska and what is needed to fight each one (Forest, tundra, remote housing, urban housing, boat, etc.). Other opportunities for language discussion often come up during a lesson for example I had a student ask me about the fire alarm going “off” instead of “on”. This led to a teachable moment which in turn led me to think about how to do a mini lesson on idioms/unusual word usage and connect this questioning to it.

We also actually had a real fire this year (thankfully it was very small and quickly put out) so this would provide an opportunity to write another LEA story and individual

stories connected to what we did before. This time however I would want the students to expand their writing by practicing a more narrative voice instead of an expository one.

Screen shot of our word list and story.

The Fire Drill

The fire alarm goes off. We put our shoes, coats and hats on. Then we line up and quickly go out. We get out of the building. Next we line up on the boardwalk and our teacher counts the children in our class. After the teacher counts us, we wait patiently for the principal to tell us its okay to go back in.

Fire Drill Words

Sweater	count	smoke	shove
coat	hat	stay	polite
outside	teacher	headband	mean
jacket	walk	fire	nice
line up	kids	detention	pull
green	student	trip	listen
red	children	get	kick
cards	gloves	ready	huddle
safety	alarm	push	quickly
shoes		wait	patiently
building			
principal			

Implementation 2: Ircinrraat (Little People) LEA

Our writing pieces, as in most classrooms usually have a seasonal theme. Around St. Patrick's Day, it was appropriate to write about the little people. But instead of writing about Ireland's leprechauns my two classes wrote about one of the groups of local little people, the *ircinrraat*, instead. In this example of the LEA process, the students dictated to me things they knew about the *ircinrraat* to create an informational piece. The language activity was a simple eight-space bingo game. Both of my classes did separate stories, I then used both class stories in a compare and contrast reading mini-lesson. Click here for the stories and pictures: <http://searchingforthefamiliar.weebly.com/showcase>

Ircinrraat (5th Gr)

Word List:

*teeth * mean * sharp * qaspeq * nice * nails * mouth * hills * pointy hat * dry fish * holes * minion sized * punk ash * move fast * akutaq * trap * scary * hunt * dance * night * scare * swim * hide * hood * light * change * trees * disturb * dark * little legs * lucky * chase * run * small * feet * tricks * shape shifter * kidnap * people underground * track * bad * teleport

Informational Piece:

Ircinrraat are small people. They are sometimes scary. Sometimes they can be nice and bring luck. They are small like midgets. They wear *qaspeq* with pointy hoods. At night, they can come out and play tricks on you. They hide. Underground is where the *ircinrraat* live. Their houses are hidden in the tundra. They use their magic to trick people. They use their magic to create light to make it look like there are people there when there is not. Ircinrraat are out little people! The end.

Ircinrraat (4th Gr)

Word List:

* little * wilderness * small feet * small * purple * steal * tiny * invisible * evil * good * black * scared * grab * taken * weird * dry fish * kidnap * pointy * shape shift * teleport * blue * big eyes * middle * red * hide * knock out * yellow * night * disappear * orange * knife * creature * strange * pets * camouflage * fire light * take * dark * rich * scary * wishes * white * power

Informational Piece:

We have our own little people. One type is ircinrraat. They are very interesting. They are good hidiers. They play tricks at night. If you are out at night you might see them. They can look like people. The ircinrraat can also shape shift. Their eyes are completely black. The clothes they wear are fur qaspeq. They can make magic. They can make things appear like mirages. They can also teleport people to their house in the tundra. They can trick travelers to go in in circles. Our little people are awesome! The end.

Word List Activity:

Eight Space Bingo

With the students, I went through the word list and picked out 16 words. I gave each of them a piece of paper to fold into eight spaces. They then randomly choose and wrote 8 of the words on their paper, one in each blank. I wrote all 16 words onto pieces of paper and placed them in a cup. For the first round I made sure that the students new how to mark the left hand corner with an x if I called the word. In order to win a “bingo” I told them they had to get one of their four-word rows marked with an x in every square. I pulled a word and either gave a definition or a sentence. After the first round we played again, this time marking the right hand corner with an o. Two rounds was all we had time for before we had to write our own stories.

Student Piece: Written by MF:

Ircinrraat.....

Ircinrratt could be very tiny, small or big. They live in hills and tundra. Ircinrraat like to scare people when they want to. They could be bad or good and can give people luck. They use qaspeq and have pointy hoods. They move fast by teleporting. Ircinrraat can change into people or an animal. Ircinrraat chase us fast. They hide in the trees. I would not like to meet one.

Student Piece: Written by NS:

Ircinrraat

Ircinrraat do not like punk ash and dry fish. Ircinrraat can move fast for example they will be behind us and then in one second they will be in front of us. They like to run around in the dark. Ircinrraat live under the ground or in the tundra or hills. They have a pointy hood, sharp teeth and sharp nails. Ircinrraat have small feet and they make small tracks. In English their names are small people or midgets. Some ircinrraat are scary and some are not scary. If we take them we can get three wishes.

Possible Topics for LEA

Being new to an area and not knowing the local culture, traditions, and activities can make it difficult to facilitate an LEA class event. Because the most common suggestion of a field trip was not very practical I started with having the students list things they were currently doing outside of school. The students are your best resource for topics for LEA. Ask them. They will be happy to share. After the first story I kept the list to get ideas for later stories. We even added some suggestions. At the bottom of the page is the list we used in class.

Another option for story ideas are pictures that you take around the village or town you live in. Pictures of the store, post office, etc. are good starting points. When taking pictures, be respectful of others, ask permission when taking pictures of people or personal property. Let the person know that you would like to use the picture in your classroom. When using the pictures to spark ideas with the class choose one student to select a picture. Discuss with the class what is going on in the pictures then proceed with the regular lesson plan. If I am using the pictures with individual students I have the student choose a picture that sparks a story with him/her. We discuss for a few minutes what story the picture reminds them of then proceed with the lesson plan.

The Internet also has pictures available. Be careful and respectful of copyright though.

Ask around at your site about pictures too. For example our site has a set of pictures done by local artists for the use in the curriculum. I use these especially when I am working one on one with a student to create a story.

List of Ideas

water skipping,
spring cleaning,
ice fishing,
nature walk around the village,
basketball

hunting: bird, seal, walrus,
boating
wood gathering
wild egg hunting

Easter: family, church, egg decorating and egg hunting

cutting fish,
different ways of fishing,
drying fish,
hunting,
Fourth of July,
gathering wood

steams (maqii),
Christmas,
Slaviq,
Halloween,
berry picking
Salmon Berry Festival

The project webpage can be accessed at:
<http://searchingfortheusual.weebly.com/>

Language Experience Approach

HOME PAPER LESSON PLAN SHOWCASE

