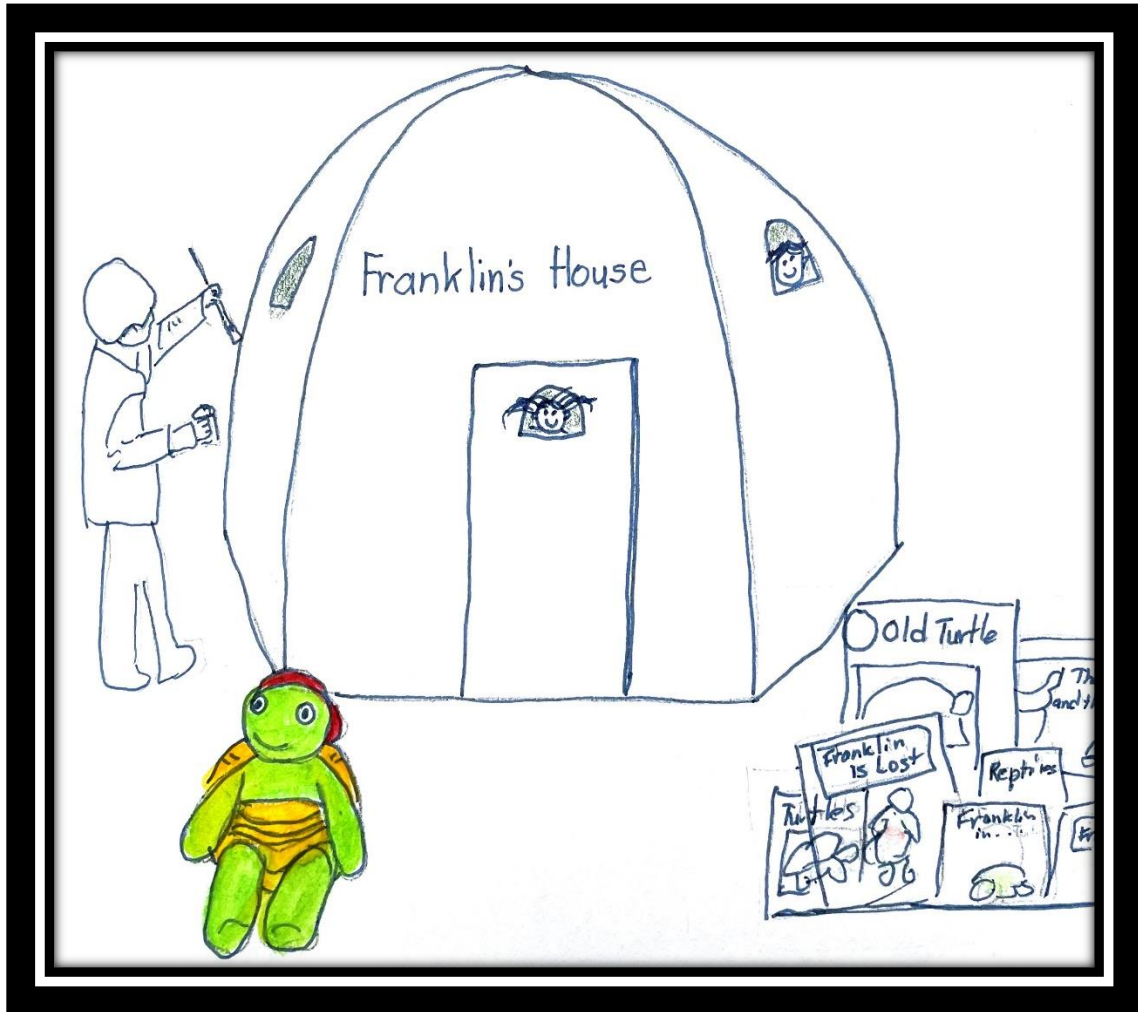


Franklin Projects



By Carol Vaage

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FRANKLIN THE TURTLE BOOKS PROJECTS

by Carol Vaage

Franklin could tie his shoes and count by two's...

I wonder how many Franklin stories I read aloud to my classes over the years – probably close to a thousand! There are so many great ways that my classes chose to engage with Franklin, and thus, many projects to share. The *Franklin* books were written by Paulette Bourgeois and illustrated by Brenda Clark.

Following is a list of the following sections for these projects for your choice and interests.

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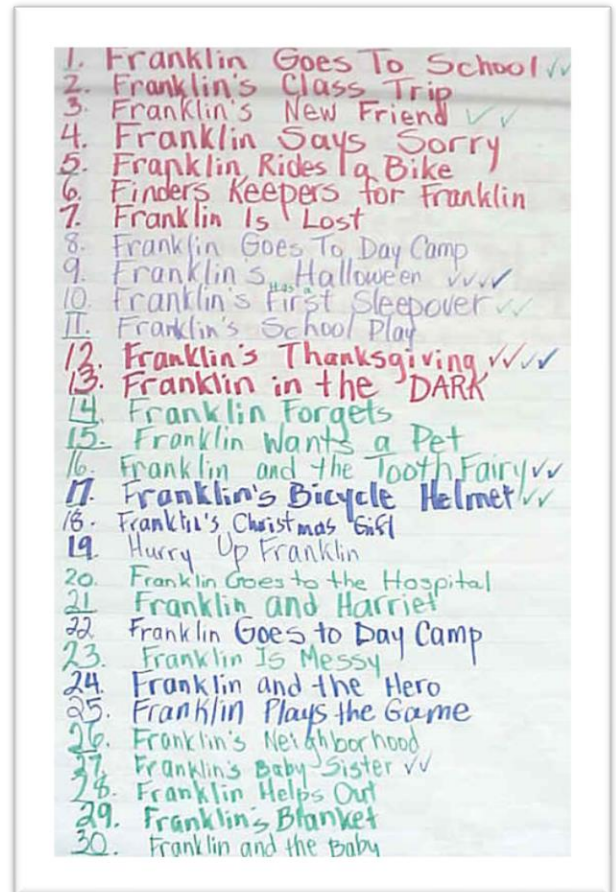
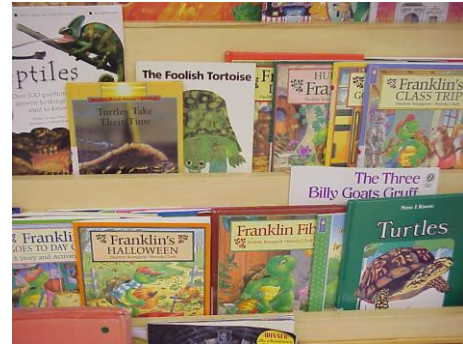
Which Franklin Stories Did We Read?

It usually only took reading three or four Franklin stories before children started to understand that this was a series. They began to anticipate and predict Franklin's behavior. They began to love the characters in the stories. Franklin soon became part of our classroom community. Children noticed the pictures on the back covers that showed mini cover images of other Franklin stories. They started searching for all the Franklin books on the A-frame bookshelf and began to compare which ones were in our classroom to the pictures on the back. A class initiative was to keep track of all the Franklin stories that we read aloud, and so we began a big paper chart with numbered titles.

The chart shows the different stories read. If the title has a check mark behind it, that means it was read it a second, or third, or fourth time. When we went through our tub of Franklin books, we realized that we still had even more Franklin books to read!

One of the daily routines for story time was that I would choose one story to listen to, which was the Teacher Choice. But I also had a Child Choice selection for read aloud as well. I kept a list of student names and going alphabetically, I would check off whose turn was next.

By doing this, children could hear their **Old Favourites**. For our Franklin story list, we tallied the extra times we read each story, and we noticed that some books were loved more than the others. The year we tallied the Franklin stories, by school day 156, we discovered that 43 of those days, children had selected a Franklin story. That is 28%, which is an incredible figure!



My reflections: *The value of tracking stories is multifaceted. Yes, it addressed curricular objectives of data collection and interpretation, numbers, and literacy. But the emotional aspect of keeping this list was far more valuable. Franklin belonged to the class. This list kept the children engaged and attached to the characters over a long period of time. It supported the disposition of reading as part of lifelong learning – of finding an author and series of books and absorbing and loving them all.*

Kindergarten children began to recognize the word 'Franklin' from this list of titles, and we used that to springboard into alphabet connections and a sight word list. Grade one literacy skills that emerged from this list included noticing the apostrophe difference between Franklin and Franklin's. Children noticed that a successful title pattern could be *character name + descriptor words*. This title pattern started being used in their story writing.



When the new Scholastic school catalogues came out, the children always recommended that we add the newest Franklin books to our classroom collection. When I tallied up the student orders, Franklin books were highly popular as they were being added to students' own collections.

Almost every Franklin story printed at that time was available in the classroom. In addition, I extended the experience by adding other turtle fiction books such as *Old Turtle* by Douglas Wood, *The Tortoise and the Hare* by Aesop, *Yertle the Turtle* by Dr. Seuss, *The Flying Tortoise* by Tololwa Mollé, *And Still the Turtle Watched* by Sheila McGill-Callahan, and my favorite, *The Name of the Tree* by Celia Lottridge.

Classroom Environment

Besides having the books, children's interest was provoked by other additions to the classroom.

Franklin Stuffy Toys

The stuffy toy, Franklin, was sought after to cuddle at story time, and was an enticement to get to the story corner early. Smaller Franklin-friends' versions also crept into children's laps.

Now, those stuffed toys didn't always behave themselves at story time, so the behaviour expectation for them, was the same as for the children. If the stuffies had a hard time sitting still, they (the stuffies) were reminded of our safe for learning rule about being a good listener and thinking about the topic without interrupting. The child who was holding the misbehaving stuffy, usually managed to modify the *stuffy's* behavior!



My reflections: A tip for helping children monitor their own behaviours during story time is to call attention to the item in their hands, versus the child's behaviour. It takes the attention and embarrassment away from the child and focuses it on the tangible object. This focused attention of keeping the item well-behaved also modified the child's disruptive behaviour. I found it a great strategy to keep a basket of stuffies for any child to hold during story time.

Franklin Backpack

With duplicate Franklin books, I created family backpacks that would travel home with different children. Included were little Franklin and friends stuffies, a few books, and a diary for the children/family to record and or illustrate their experiences. Sometimes Franklin went skating with a family, or attended a birthday party, or visited Grandma. Families told me how much they enjoyed reading what Franklin did with the other entries.



Turtle and Franklin Figurines

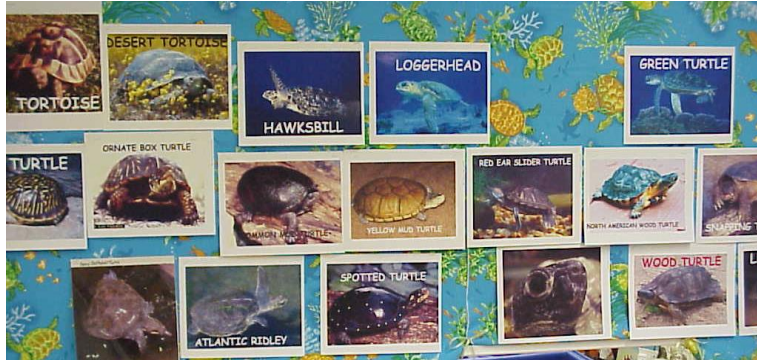
We also had model replications available to help us with investigations. As children compared the variety of turtles, they sorted them by attributes that they identified – legs, shells, colour and habitat.

Eventually, other Franklin friends came to visit on this display table with the beaver log, cattails and greenery.



Turtle Research

Visual Research Wall

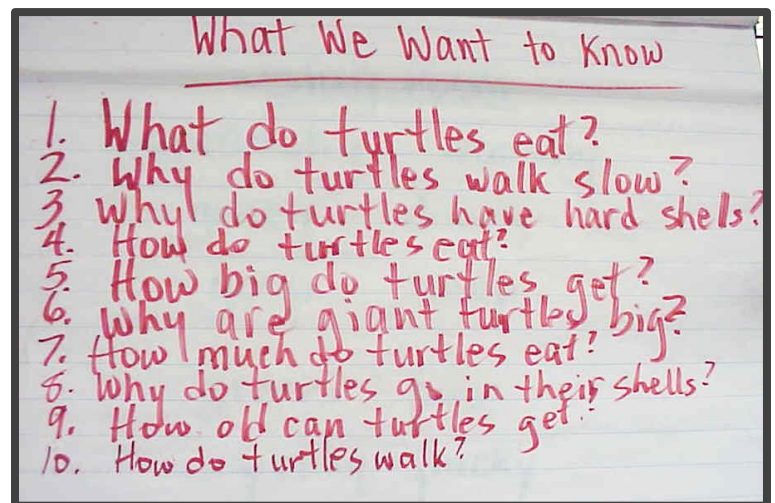


Internet images were an excellent source for research. I printed twenty 8x10 images of a variety of chelonian species. They included a fossil image, tortoises, terrapins, sea turtles and land turtles. I wanted the children to make their own observations, and by doing so construct knowledge.

One class became fascinated with real turtles. They wanted to research facts versus the storybook behaviours and habitat of Franklin. Here is their list of questions.

To guide the research questions, I asked questions to open the possibilities for research sources.

- *Where could we find out the answers to these questions?*
- *What if books don't have all the answers?*
- *Are there any people we know that could help us find out the answers?*
- *Could we figure out any of these answers by looking at photos?*



Myrtle the Turtle

One of my former teacher partners offered to bring in her turtle. Taking precautions against possible salmonella, we used gloves for touching and a disposable plastic covering on the floor.



We were able to observe the turtle, and once she became more comfortable in our classroom, she poked her head out to visit and do a walkabout, and graciously permitted a touch or two.

The questions we had prepared for general turtle research were not adequate for the emergent curiosity that developed. Now, the questions were specifically geared to the health, well-being, care, diet, and habitat of our guest turtle.



My reflections: Facilitating questions and answers are a role I've often fallen into. Sometimes a guest expert, or an accidental expert (school electrician, cyclist) doesn't quite know how to handle a barrage of questions from younger people. Restating the questions, or often experiences, in the form the guest can answer enables the exchange of information. ***'My class was wondering; we have a few questions; could you please explain'*** are all good phrases to start the flow of communication.

Student Research Book

As children gained knowledge about turtles, they realized they wanted to remember certain facts, so they asked if we could make a research book. When we found information that they considered valuable we put it into the *Turtle Book*. Each page had text and sometimes a small image, but they could illustrate each page as they wished. Here is the information they collected. They had a page piece of new information and one for each type of turtle.

My Book about Turtles

- Turtles first lived at the time of the dinosaurs in the Triassic Period, 250,000,000 years ago. Scientists found fossils of Archelon from the Cretaceous period. The largest was 12 feet long
- There are 260 kinds of turtles!

Tortoise or Turtle or Terrapin? A tortoise lives on land and doesn't need water all the time. A turtle needs to have water close by. A terrapin is a turtle who lives in water that is a little salty.

But they are all CHELONIAN

Name	Description
Tortoise	A tortoise likes to eat grass. It can build a very long tunnel. For the winter, they all gather in a den. A tortoise can pull in its head and legs when scared.
Diamondback Terrapin	Terrapins like to live in lagoons. They like to eat snails, mollusks, insects, and crabs. People used to eat these terrapins!
Green Sea Turtle	Green turtles live by the beach and like to eat algae from the coral reefs. People love to eat turtle soup from the Green Sea Turtle, and now it is ENDANGERED
Hawksbill Sea Turtle	This turtle has the most beautiful shell. It eats sea grass, sponge, and crabs. People used to make tortoise shell jewelry and ornaments. The Hawksbill is ENDANGERED!
Kemps Ridley Sea Turtle	This turtle lives by Nova Scotia in Canada. People like to eat the eggs. This turtle is ENDANGERED!
Leatherback Sea Turtle	The leatherback sea turtle lives beside Canada in Nova Scotia and in B.C. It loves to eat jellyfish! It is the biggest of all the Sea Turtles, but it is ENDANGERED!
Loggerhead Sea Turtle	This turtle got its name because the head is SO big! It eats sponges, mollusks, crustaceans, and sea plants. It lives beside Newfoundland in Canada.
Painted Turtle	This turtle can be found in Ontario and Quebec. He is often kept for a pet. He likes to eat slugs, earthworms, and plants. He lives by ponds and lakes.

Slider Turtles	These are the most common of turtle pets. Myrtle is a Red Eye Slider Turtle. They like worms, fish, bugs, chicken, vegetables, and plants.
Snapping Turtle	The snapping turtle is not protected very well in its shell. It is too small. So, it has learned to bite and snap to help protect itself from enemies. They are the largest freshwater turtle. They can be found in south Alberta all the way to Nova Scotia. It really likes rivers. It eats fish, frogs, and birds.
Wood Turtle	Wood turtles like to live by streams in the woods and near meadows. Just like Franklin! They like to eat worms, slugs, snails, insects, and plants, just like Franklin! They live in Canada, just like Franklin! They like to trick worms, by thumping the ground, so the worms think it's raining! When they come up, the wood turtles eat them right up!

Humans Hurt Turtles; We Need to Help!

1. Keep wild turtles in the wild.
2. Don't pollute.
3. Be very careful with balloons.
4. Help a turtle cross a road.
5. Protect our natural habitats.
6. Tell others about turtles so they can learn.
7. Adopt a turtle to raise money to help the scientists.

Hatching

Turtles hatch from eggs. Mother turtles lay many eggs and bury them in the sand. The sun keeps them warm. When they hatch, the babies run to the water to stay safe.

A visit to the Provincial Museum extended our knowledge. You can see a child holding a shell.

After all this research, the children concluded that Franklin must be a North American Wood Turtle. First, it is found in areas of Ontario, and that is where both Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark live. Secondly, the North American Wood Turtle lives near the woods and water ponds, just like Franklin and his friends.



Turtle Trivia

Again, from their research, the class wanted to create a Turtle Trivia document based on comparisons between Franklin stories and turtle research.

- Did you know that a turtle's bones are fused to the shell? It would be impossible for a real turtle to crawl out of his shell, like Franklin does.
- Did you know that turtles hatch from eggs that have been buried in the sand or ground by the mother? Harriet would not have been born in a hospital in real life.
- Did you know that only 1 in 1,000 baby sea turtles makes it adulthood? There are many predators (birds, crabs) and enemies (people intruding on their habitat), and pollution (toxins, plastics) that can all hurt the turtles.
- Did you know that people like to eat Green Sea Turtles? They make a special soup from the Green Sea Turtle. Now this turtle is endangered.
- Did you know that sea turtles migrate? Some Sea Turtles swim hundreds of miles from feeding areas to nesting areas.
- Did you know that Leatherback Turtles can be found in every ocean around the world?
- Did you know that the Sea Turtles were common in the Cretaceous period of 130 million years ago?
- Did you know that the Leatherback Turtle can be up to 2 meters in length?
- Parts of a Turtle:

Carapace - the top shell

Plastron - the bottom shell

Scutes - the scales over the top and bottom shells

Neck - the turtle can fold its neck in an S shape under his shell, but the sea turtle cannot

Nostrils - near the top of the turtle's head so it won't have to stick its head out far of the water to breathe

Beak - a turtle has no teeth, but the beak can catch, hold and slice food

My reflections: Part of every grade's curricular objectives is to discern what is real and what is make believe or fake. By tackling this trivia game, the children began their journey on discernment – a lifelong quest. By using Franklin as the topic, the children grasped the difference between fictious characters and their abilities, compared to the reality of real-life turtles, owls, beaver, and so on. It did not diminish their love of the Franklin stories, only enhanced the appreciation of the author and illustrator's gifts of creating these stories by using their imagination,

We also dabbled into other characters real-life attributes – the owl and the beaver. There is a full coverage of the beaver projects in a different book, but this is a snippet of what we covered.

Beaver Research

There were class field trips to the Provincial Museum and Elk Island Natural Park with interpreters and hands on materials, which enhanced our understanding of the beaver's attributes and habitat.



Beaver tail, fur, and foot artifacts from Provincial Museum



Beaver chewed log from Provincial Museum

Owl Research:



In addition to these photo experiences below, I obtained several owl pellets which the class dissected to find small rodent bones. If only I had photos of that to share! Bubba, the Great Horned Owl, from the Strathcona Raptor Centre, visiting our class.



Notice the enormous eyes and sharp beak. Bubba's ears are just behind the curved black lines on either side of her eyes. The feather tufts on top of her head are her "hair-do," not ears.



Evergreen Society brought a raptor collection to the school, so we had a chance to study the birds more closely.

Author and Illustrator Studies

When engaging in a series of books by the same authors and illustrators, children become curious about them. We had basic information about Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark from doing web research, but the class had more questions. Knowing that authors are more likely to reply to one list of questions from a class rather than individual letters, the children drew and wrote their own fan page. They had different questions for the illustrator as compared to the author.

Publisher:

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To Whom It May Concern:

For the past few years, the children in my kindergarten classes have enjoyed and appreciated the work of Paulette Bourgeois in the Franklin stories. I like the children to get to know authors to help them build in a sense of authorship and style.

Do you have any promotional posters, pictures, or information about Paulette or Franklin that you could send to us? We can use any visuals to help set up our author center.

I've enclosed two letters from the classes I teach, plus pictures from the children, that I would hope you could forward on to Ms. Bourgeois. The children would be thrilled with any kind of response.

The children are from a mixed cultural community with many children learning English for the first time. Franklin touches a spot in their hearts that brings out the love for stories. Many children have started personal collections of Franklin books, and our school library is unable to shelf any Franklin books because they turn around as soon as they have been returned. And the stuffed Franklin toy that I bought a few years back has brought hours of cuddling pleasure and play!

Thanks for your cooperation and assistance in this matter.

*Sincerely,
Carol Vaage*

Kids Can Press sent us a beautiful Franklin poster and forwarded on our mail to the author. Paulette also sent a letter to our school which addressed a few of our questions. This made sense to me, as our generative question list was very creative. The comment that struck home for the children was that she wrote the Franklin character as a 5-year-old. This comment caused a lot of discussion about characterization and using the real to generate fiction.

Class Letters:

The following two letters were composed with children's ideas. My role was scribe. The individual comments were part of the children's pictures.

Dear Ms. Paulette Bourgeois,

We learn a lot about your Franklin books, and we love how you write. We love all your Franklin stories.

We want to make a poem for you.

Franklin is nice.

Franklin is happy.

Franklin skates on ice.

Before he takes his nappy.

We have a Stuffy animal, Franklin. Franklin wears a suit of armor. Franklin is so cute.

We want to ask some questions:

- 1. Will you write more Franklin stories?*
- 2. Where do you live?*
- 3. How do you get ideas about Franklin?*
- 4. How did you learn about Franklin?*
- 5. Why do you use a turtle for Franklin?*
- 6. What does Franklin do in the winter?*
- 7. How old is Franklin? How old is he in the book?*
- 8. Does Franklin have any new friends?*

Will you please write us a letter back and send us a picture of you and Franklin?

We love you, Afternoon Kindergarten

Franklin is good. Franklin has a lot of different friends.

When I come to school, I get Franklin right away. I think he's hungry, so I get him some food - some fruits. Franklin loves fruit so he could grow and be in kindergarten like us. Franklin is a good friend to me. Write us another story: "Franklin skates on ice." That's a very good idea!

Dear Paulette Bourgeois, I like your stories.

Dear Paulette Bourgeois, I'm sending a picture to Franklin and you.

Me and Franklin are going for a walk. It's a sunny day. It's a beautiful day and Franklin is beautiful too.

Dear Paulette Bourgeois,

*We like your Franklin stories a lot. We love you. Thank you for making the stories for us.
We have some questions for you.*

- 1. Where did you get the paper for the books?*
- 2. Where did you get the ideas for the stories?*
- 3. How did you write the stories, because we want to make books too.*
- 4. How do they publish your stories?*
- 5. Do you buy any children's books?*
- 6. What color is your car?*
- 7. What color is your house?*
- 8. Why do you use a turtle for Franklin?*
- 9. Do you use a computer to write your stories?*
- 10. Do you have a turtle?*
- 11. Do you collect turtle things?*
- 12. Do you write other stories beside Franklin ones?*
- 13. Do you like rainbows?*

Will you write us a letter and send us your picture?

Love from, Morning Kindergarten

Dear Paulette Bourgeois, I wrote all these letters for you. Franklin was scared in the woods. Franklin lost his tooth. Franklin gets scared in bed. Franklin went by himself to school. Franklin played games with his friends. Franklin goes by himself to Bear's house. Franklin plays soccer with his friends. Franklin plays in the flowers. Franklin finds dinosaurs. Franklin goes home and eats supper. Franklin smells something. Franklin writes letters. Franklin uses a pencil to make a picture. Franklin doesn't touch guns. Franklin gets lost. Franklin sleeps with his Mom and Dad. Franklin plays with the balls. Franklin gets hurt. Franklin falls down and bumps his head. Franklin gets a toy. Franklin squirts out the water. Franklin can reach a cup and get water from the bathroom. Franklin looks at animals. Franklin used the bathroom and go pee and go to bed. Franklin gets a Band-Aid when he gets bleeding.

I like Franklin stories. How old are you? We have a lot of Franklin stories at school. I would like you to send us a picture of Franklin and you.

I like Paulette Bourgeois stories about Franklin.

This is Mrs. C with Franklin. We smell a rat close by.

I love you.

I like Franklin and the Tooth Fairy and Franklin is Messy. I have lots of friends in my class. I like all of Franklin stories. I love you.

Papa Turtle, Mama Turtle, Franklin, Flower. Franklin's best friend is a flower.

We like your stories about Franklin. Will you get Franklin's paper?

Do you have a turtle? Maybe you could come to our kindergarten and show us your turtle! Do you have a green car? How do you write a story? How do you make your book? When will you do another Franklin book? Franklin stories are beautiful.

This is Franklin in the dark.

My reflections: *There are moments in the day where one realizes the depth of metacognition and knowledge construction that emerges from out of nowhere. This comment about Franklin being 5 years old, generated questions and debate about real versus fantasy, using a fictional character to stand in for a human role, about the problem situations in the stories. Several children made the leap from Paulette being author, to child being author, to other authors using characters to tell real with imagination. These learning moments keep inspiring me as a teacher. These are the moments that taught me about learning and thinking more than any textbook I read, or any course I had taken.*

From a teacher's point of view, I provided the books, and the children provided the interest, the questions, and the curiosity. My job as co-creator of the emergent project evolution was to pay attention to the children's questions, comments, behaviours. Each class responded in unique ways to the Franklin provocations.

Predictable Books

Besides the student research book, I wrote two predictable books for the children – *Baby Turtles, and Turtles*. Early readers appreciate books that they can read on their own even with early reading skills. A predictable book usually has a pattern of text, or repetition, and the images give strong cues for anticipating what unfamiliar words might be. For the books, I used images for each of the pages and created the text based on the image. Text and image were enlarged and printed on card stock. I share them here to encourage others to create classroom texts that are pertinent to children’s interests.

Turtles	Baby Turtles
<p data-bbox="284 674 597 705">A Book for Kindergarten</p> <p data-bbox="284 743 591 774">This turtle is swimming.</p> <p data-bbox="284 787 542 819">This turtle is hiding!</p> <p data-bbox="284 831 574 863">This turtle is snapping.</p> <p data-bbox="284 875 558 907">This turtle is basking.</p> <p data-bbox="284 919 552 951">This turtle is smiling.</p> <p data-bbox="284 963 550 995">This turtle is visiting.</p> <p data-bbox="284 1008 558 1039">This turtle is walking.</p> <p data-bbox="284 1052 558 1083">This turtle is running.</p> <p data-bbox="284 1096 565 1127">This turtle is crossing.</p> <p data-bbox="284 1140 552 1171">This turtle is digging.</p> <p data-bbox="284 1184 599 1215">This turtle is laying eggs.</p> <p data-bbox="284 1228 578 1260">This turtle is following.</p> <p data-bbox="284 1272 540 1304">This turtle is eating.</p>	<p data-bbox="998 674 1312 705">A Book for Kindergarten</p> <p data-bbox="906 743 1308 774">Mommy turtle comes to shore.</p> <p data-bbox="906 787 1247 819">Mommy turtle digs a hole.</p> <p data-bbox="906 831 1273 863">Mommy turtle lays the eggs.</p> <p data-bbox="906 875 1308 907">Mommy turtle covers the hole.</p> <p data-bbox="906 919 1338 993">Mommy turtle crawls back to the water.</p> <p data-bbox="906 1008 1224 1039">The sun warms the eggs.</p> <p data-bbox="906 1052 1351 1083">Baby turtles hatch out of the eggs.</p> <p data-bbox="906 1096 1344 1127">Baby turtles crawl out of the hole.</p> <p data-bbox="906 1140 1289 1171">Baby turtles run to the water.</p> <p data-bbox="906 1184 1182 1215">Run, baby turtle, run!</p> <p data-bbox="906 1228 1334 1260">Baby turtles jump into the water.</p> <p data-bbox="906 1272 1230 1304">I wish I had a baby turtle.</p>

Construction Projects

1. Franklin's House

Children were intrigued by the dome structure of Franklin's house. After three months of sharing Franklin stories, one kindergarten class decided they wanted to build a big, constructed house like Franklin's for our classroom.

What could we use to build it? How big should we make it? Where would we get the materials? What should it look like?

1. Gray - different shades of gray.
2. ^{Big} Cracks on outside of house.
3. Vines over the top.
4. Sticks and curtains in the window.
5. Flower box under the window.
6. white fence
7. stone side walk.
8. Cherry wood door, door knob, circular hole with glass, keyhole
9. black paint for door lines.
10. dark gray for shadow near edge of windows and door.
- 11.

The decision was to use cardboard, to make it big enough for several children to occupy the space at the same time, and that their parents would help bring in the materials.

Large pieces of cardboard found their way to the classroom.

After researching what the house looked like in the Franklin books, we made a list of the features the house should have if it were to be an accurate representation.

When a dad was volunteering as parent helper one day, we asked him if he would like to help us build the Franklin house. The challenge, I explained, was how to get the dome shape out of rectangular flat cardboard. He stepped aside to draw a sketch and then consulted the class to see if this would suffice. His sketch was much like taking an orange cut horizontally in half, and then slicing that orange into segments from the center out. He drafted and helped measure the cardboard, and we all helped to cut out the cardboard pieces.

Here are some photos of the process of creating our own Franklin house.



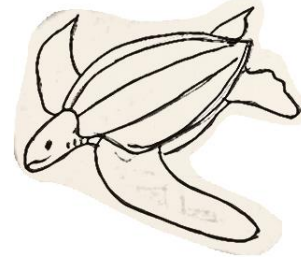


When Franklin's house was completed, the children moved some of the playhouse furniture inside and it became a favorite for domestic and dramatic play. For Valentine's Day, they chose to decorate Franklin's house rather than the classroom.

My reflections: There is no how-to manual for teachers for building unique and interesting structures. This time I was lucky because the father was an engineer! I have used that same segmented orange story for many other domed projects in the following years and shared my learning with countless other teachers at conferences and Professional Development sessions. It was one small idea with a seemed impossibility to make many possibilities. For the student's dad, it was knowledge from the real world applied here within the classroom context. The collaboration of other adults enriches our classrooms.

2. Leatherback Turtle:

Sometimes the information we read in a book seems too outrageous to believe. That was the case with the leatherback sea turtle. We read that the size of these turtles was 2 meters across. Using the meter sticks in the classroom, we held two together end to end. This turtle was a giant compared to Myrtle!



We estimated the size it would take in our classroom. And then an enthusiastic and inspired student called out, "Hey, Mrs. Vaage, we should build one!" That solitary voice soon became a chorus, and so I began the questions:

- *If we were to build it, where would we put it?*
- *What size would we need to make it?*
- *What materials could we use?*
- *How would we make the shell, the flippers, the head?*

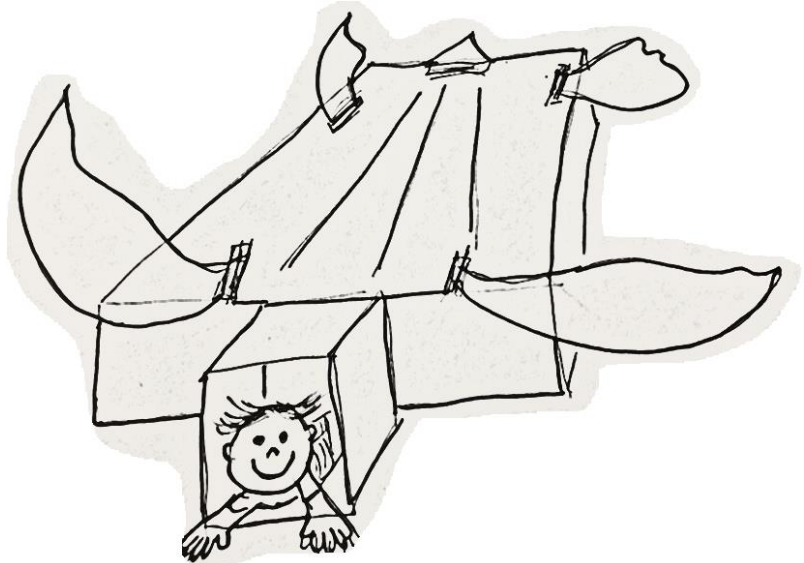
The leatherback was to be big enough to represent the size but would be dependent on the size of the cardboard boxes we could obtain.

The most important feature for this class was that the mouth was to be open, and big enough so that a child could crawl in. The class decided they wanted to know what it felt like to be a turtle - to look out the front of a shell encased body.

Once a child was inside, they wanted to be able to look out to the classroom, with their head inside the turtle head. That way, they could feel what it was like to be a turtle. From front flipper to front flipper our construction measured approximately 3 meters across. The mouth was the only opening to get inside.

Often, I'd glance over and see one of the children, lying inside, with their face showing and their bodies back inside the leatherhead. They'd be role playing, with their eyes looking left, right, and their mouths opening. Sometimes they'd have their arms out front and be making swimming motions.

The photos of this leatherback and its construction have disappeared, but the memory of seeing a child, lying inside that enormous turtle body, head inside the turtle head, smiling and *swimming*



peacefully in the sea is something I will never forget.

3. The End of Franklin House and the Leatherback Turtle

Problem solving and decision making are a big part of the curriculum in every grade.

From a teacher's point of view, having both the Franklin House and the huge Leatherback Turtle constructions in our classroom was causing a long-term space issue. The children had stalled on finishing the Leatherback. I noticed that the leatherback was not getting much attention, and that the children had moved to other interests.

I also noticed that several children had started to build block structures, but the leatherback was in the way. It was time to have the space back again.

I needed to check with them to see if it was time to let the Leatherback construction go.

I called a class meeting to solve some problems.

I stated the problem: *We do not have enough space for block building. I have noticed that we have not worked on the Leatherback turtle since the Halloween festivities.*

a. Possible solutions:

- Children suggested solutions:
 - Finish the turtle:
 1. paper maché the rest of the leatherback
 2. paint it
 3. fix the flippers
 - Teacher suggested solution:
 - Do not finish the turtle.

b. The vote:

Because part of the social studies curriculum is to foster democracy, I offered a vote to the class.

The children were only suggesting finishing it; I was the one who suggested that a choice might be "NOT" to finish it. This was startling news to several children, and some seemed reluctant to think that I was honest about it. I had to reassure them that either decision was perfectly acceptable; that as a classroom community, we could make decisions to change our plans for learning.

c. The Decision

The children voted 16 – 6 in favor of finishing the leatherback turtle.

The outstanding problem was the Franklin house. What to do with it?

Someone asked if we could change the Franklin house into a bear den. When we discussed this idea, other children thought of new ideas, too.

Possible Solutions:

Make a bear den.

Make a 3 bears' house.

Make the house a pumpkin patch.

Turn the house into an apartment.

Turn the house into a hospital.

Leave the house just as it is. One boy said, "Couldn't we leave it just like it is?"

When the vote came back to leave it just like it is, I realized that change is not always welcomed. Children like some continuity too.

d. Later Decision Making:

This huge construction along with the Franklin house, remained part of our classroom till the end of the year. We had a draw (parental consent required) for the Franklin house to go home with one of the children. However, the turtle, was carried out by the entire class to the cardboard recycle bin, with a fond farewell celebration.

My reflections: *I had a regular sized classroom, so space was at a premium. The children did not seem to notice the space restrictions, only the adults! The parents encouraged me to dispose of these building projects after a while, but I honored the children's connection to the investment of themselves and their ownership to the Franklin house and the leatherback turtle.*

e. Letter to the Parents:

The children were so responsible and focused on making their individual choices. Very little discussion occurred between friends, so votes were genuine, not peer influenced. This was very mature for 4- and 5-year-olds. They seemed to know that their opinion counted, and that each opinion was just as valid as the next. All children were very accepting of the group decision.

I explained that this entire process was part of Math, Data Collection and Data Analysis. I reminded them that adults must do this same thing when we need to make big decisions in a group. They thought it was a very normal process to be democratic and have choices. They expected and treated it as their right and responsibility.

Thank you, parents, for raising your children so well!

Art Projects

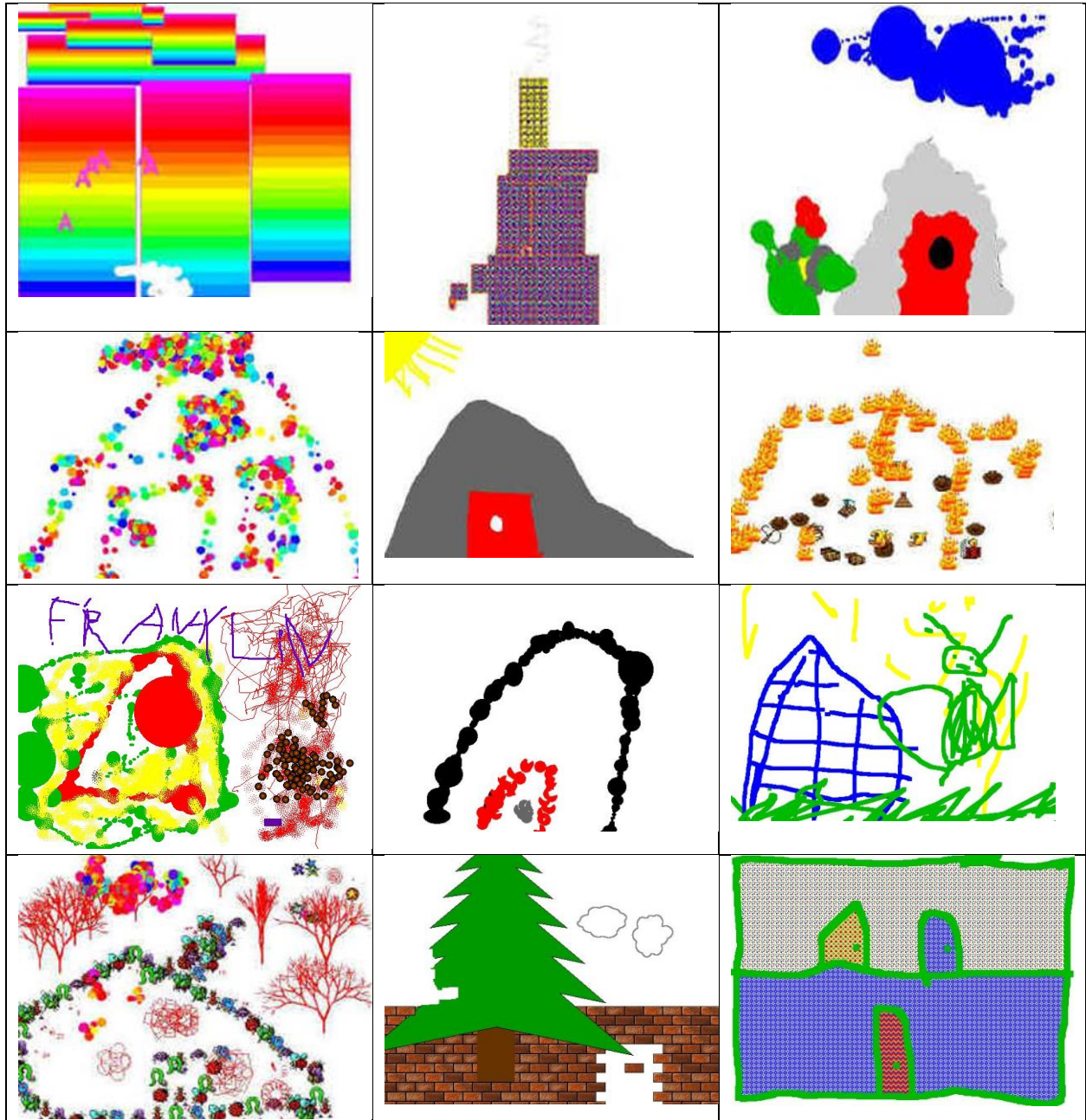
1. Clay Turtles

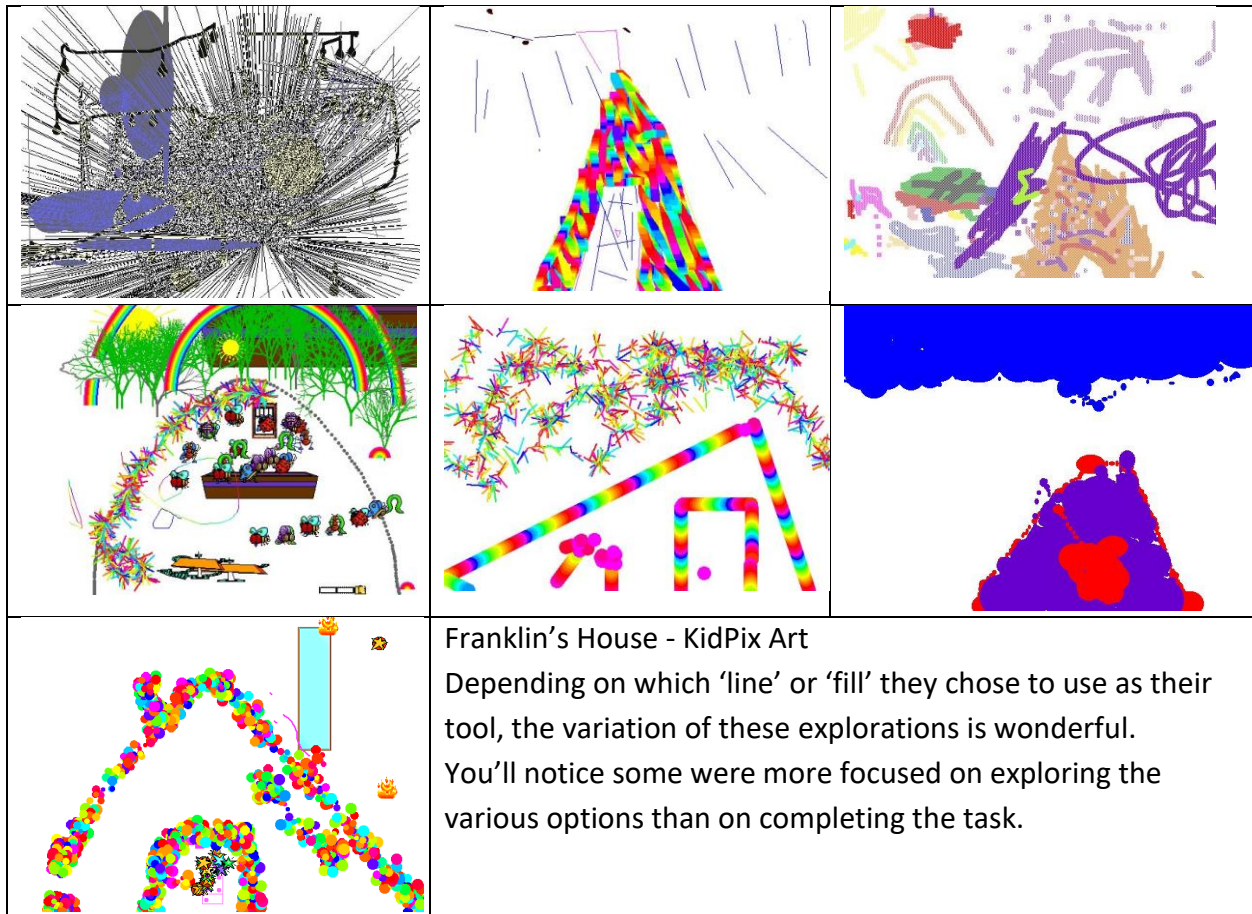
Another class wanted to make their own Franklin. One of the student's grandma, and her friend, came into the kindergarten to help the children work with clay. Here is a sampling of photos to show the process of learning and creating. The Grandma also surprised the class by sharing a box of Turtles – the chocolate yum!

 <p>dropping the clay to flatten bottom</p>	 <p>forming it into a round shape</p>	 <p>making it longer</p>
 <p>rolling it round between your palms</p>	 <p>make two balls - one big, one small</p>	 <p>drop it to flatten bottom</p>
 <p>letting it drop</p>	 <p>making designs for turtle shell</p>	 <p>sticks work well for indents</p>

Kid Pix Computer Art

Representing what you know in different media helps solidify knowledge and make it concrete. Each medium of representation takes time to explore to develop competence and mastery to adequately demonstrate the student knowledge. Below are images of a Grade 1 class's attempts to represent Franklin's house by using Kid Pix.





Franklin's House - KidPix Art
 Depending on which 'line' or 'fill' they chose to use as their tool, the variation of these explorations is wonderful. You'll notice some were more focused on exploring the various options than on completing the task.

They are not identical, but you can see within each one the attempt to control the medium to show what they understood. Some have the dome structure in place, others have the doorway, and others solidity of structure. Creating an arc was a challenge and nearly impossible with some of the tools, like brick making. Some added extra features, others were minimalistic.

My reflections: *When children created art, I tried to avoid direct comparisons between works. If we debriefed an art experience, I would ask, "What do you like about this piece?" It is a different framework than offering suggestions. When children focus on a positive attribute, the language of appreciation develops. Children that were literal and realistic in their work began to see that more abstract art had value as well. Children who struggled more with realistic art picked up tips and strategies to help them along their own journeys.*

Influences of our Franklin Project for Other Classes

The timeline of these big Franklin projects coincided with the 2learn.ca telecollaborative project funding. If several classes collaborated on a topic and could identify the learning outcomes, grants would be given to those schools.

Franklin Telecollaborative Project

The Franklin telecollaborative project celebrated the Franklin books by Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark. Our intent was to make Franklin come alive through the eyes of children by having the students extend their learning from the story experience.

Following is a list of possibilities that were developed:

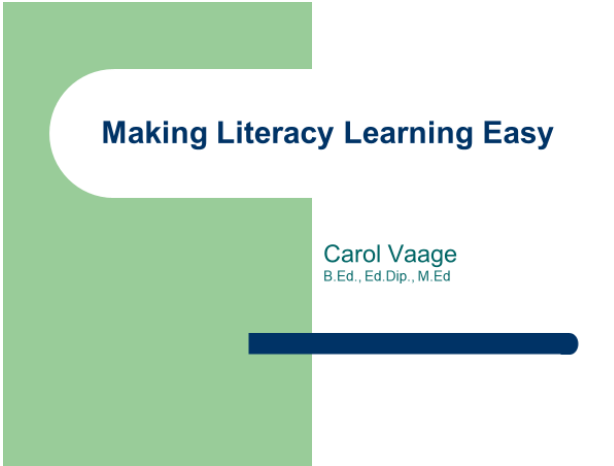
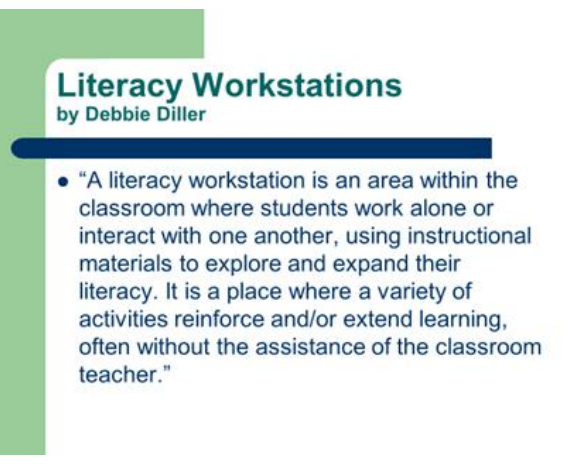
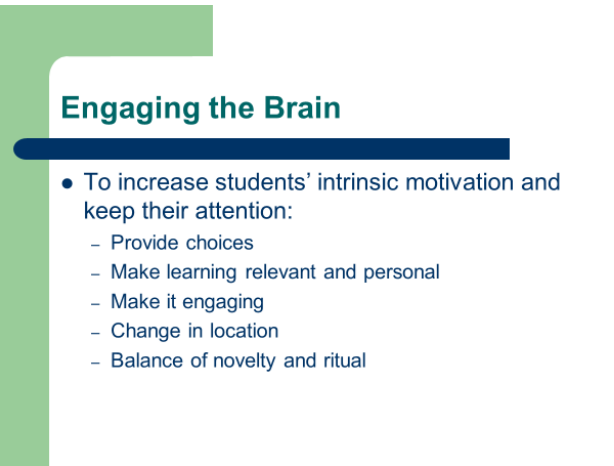
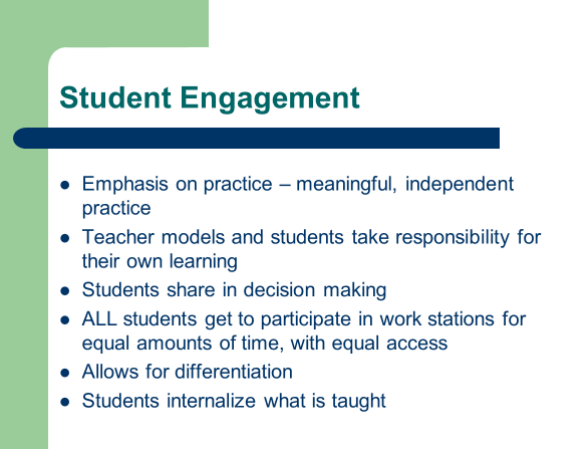
1. Author/Illustrator study
 - a. biographies of Paulette and Brenda
 - b. bibliography – perhaps an online vote for favorite story
 - c. questions that children want to ask them and their answers
 - d. photos
2. Character study
 - a. Franklin’s friends
 - b. family diversity
 - c. similarities and differences
3. Habitat analysis from illustration
4. Animal study based on characters from book
 - a. beaver
 - b. otter
 - c. bear
 - d. etc.
5. Extending knowledge of Franklin stories
 - a. create different versions
 - b. create original stories
 - i. St. Patrick’s Day
 - ii. new moral issue (e.g., fighting)
 - iii. new activity for Franklin (e.g., music lessons)
 - c. introduce new friends or situations
 - d. create poems, songs, plays
6. Compare the TV and video stories to the book versions
7. Link to other stories about turtles/tortoise:
 - a. Tortoise and Hare
 - b. The Name of the Tree
8. Movement Activities based on characters

9. List things that Franklin can do and have children dictate, illustrate and document to other children how it can be done:
 - a. tie shoes
 - b. count by two's, etc.
10. Emotional learning
 - a. learning to express feelings
 - b. gaining confidence
 - c. social skills
11. Turtle study:
 - a. activities
 - b. qualities and attributes
 - c. types
 - d. habitats
12. Art Gallery
 - a. children's art inspired by Franklin
 - b. models and construction
13. Themes of stories (morals and values)
 - a. teamwork pays off
 - b. it's better to take turns
 - c. be honest
14. Cultural events introduced through Franklin books
 - a. specific holidays (Christmas, Valentine's, etc.)
 - b. fine art appreciation (play, arts)

Eleven teachers and ten classes collaborated on this project, with each class developing unique studies. Specific character studies, science research, creative writing, story themes/morals, and so on. The website we created was a phenomenal showcase for other K-3 classes, showing what social constructivism does to enhance learning. My class learned from the other classes' work, and they learned from mine.

Franklin Literacy Presentations:

Franklin was the motivation for this PowerPoint called *Making Literacy Learning Easy* which a colleague (A.B.) and I created and presented across Alberta during the time that Balanced Literacy and particularly, Literacy Workstations was popular.

 <p>Making Literacy Learning Easy</p> <p>Carol Vaage B.Ed., Ed.Dip., M.Ed</p>	 <p>Literacy Workstations by Debbie Diller</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “A literacy workstation is an area within the classroom where students work alone or interact with one another, using instructional materials to explore and expand their literacy. It is a place where a variety of activities reinforce and/or extend learning, often without the assistance of the classroom teacher.”
 <p>Engaging the Brain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To increase students' intrinsic motivation and keep their attention:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide choices- Make learning relevant and personal- Make it engaging- Change in location- Balance of novelty and ritual	 <p>Student Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasis on practice – meaningful, independent practice• Teacher models and students take responsibility for their own learning• Students share in decision making• ALL students get to participate in work stations for equal amounts of time, with equal access• Allows for differentiation• Students internalize what is taught

Training the Class

- Whole class instruction
- Modeling, showing how to do something
- Inviting students to help out
- Gradually turning over more of the task as student skills increase
- Move into independent practice
- Risk-free peer interactions; acceptance, peer-tutoring; constructivism

Practice and Purpose

- Begin with what it is you are trying to teach – your purpose – then figure out what materials you want to use
- E.g. author/illustrator terminology; characters in story; retellings

Link to your Teaching

- If student practice is directly tied to instruction, students will follow-through and will understand process
- www.franklin.ecsd.net
- www.k-3learningpages.net
Resources - Franklin



Slow Down

- Take lots of time at the beginning of the year.
- End of October?
- Class management in place; routines and structures understood
- Gradual addition of material

Balance Process and Product

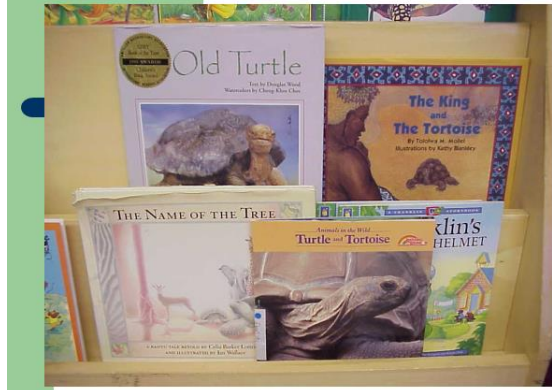
- Include opportunities to create products at some, but not all stations/centers.
- Process offers effective practice for proficiency

In the beginning...

- Show children exactly:
- How to use equipment
 - How to share materials
 - How to take turns
 - How to use planning board
 - How to solve problems
 - Where to go for help
 - How to put things away
 - How to switch to next station

Classroom Library

- Browse
 - Franklin books in a basket
 - Turtles, bears, moose...
 - Pond life
 - Woodland animals
- Stuffed Franklin toys
- Class created Franklin books
- My favorite Franklin book chart
- Tally which characters are in which stories
- Turtle legends
- Compare TV and book versions



Movie/Book Comparisons

- **Franklin's Christmas Gift**
- Movie:
- The elephant was white and bear gave a sled.
- Same:
- He gave the same gifts. HE gave marbles and he tried to fix a blue truck.
- Book:
- Aunt Harriet came to visit. The elephant was purple. Bear gave a puzzle
- I liked the book better because it had better pictures.

Character Studies

- Bear
 - From the Story: Franklin's Bad Day
 - Was sledding behind Franklin
 - Is Franklin's friend
 - Is a boy
 - Is big and brown
 - From the Story: Franklin's New Friend
 - Plays outside with Franklin
 - Is Franklin's Old Friend
 - From the Story: Franklin's Secret Club
 - Likes to eat snacks
 - Is very big
 - Is brown
 - Has a yellow backpack
 - From the Story: Franklin's Neighborhood
 - Likes to eat berries
 - Is bigger
 - Has a blue hat
 - Catches fish

Character Tally

	Fox	Bear	Goose	Franklin's Mom	Franklin's Dad	Franklin's Sister	Other	Skunk	Patsy?
Franklin is Lost	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Franklin's Secret Club	✓	✓					✓		✓
Franklin and the Tooth Fairy	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Franklin Rides a Bike		✓		✓		✓			
Franklin Plays Hockey	✓	✓				✓			✓
Franklin Takes the Blame	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Franklin is	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

Favorite Stories



Story Tally

1.	Franklin Goes To School ✓✓
2.	Franklin's Class Trip ✓✓
3.	Franklin's New Friend ✓✓
4.	Franklin Says Sorry ✓✓
5.	Franklin Rides a Bike ✓✓
6.	Finders Keepers for Franklin ✓✓
7.	Franklin Is Lost ✓✓
8.	Franklin Goes To Day Camp ✓✓
9.	Franklin's Halloween ✓✓
10.	Franklin's First Sleepover ✓✓
11.	Franklin's School Play ✓✓
12.	Franklin's Thanksgiving ✓✓✓
13.	Franklin in the DARK ✓✓
14.	Franklin Forgets ✓✓
15.	Franklin Wants a Pet ✓✓
16.	Franklin and the Tooth Fairy ✓✓
17.	Franklin's Bicycle Helmet ✓✓
18.	Franklin's Christmas Gift ✓✓
19.	Hurry Up Franklin ✓✓
20.	Franklin Goes to the Hospital ✓✓
21.	Franklin and Harriet ✓✓
22.	Franklin Goes to Day Camp ✓✓
23.	Franklin Is Messy ✓✓
24.	Franklin and the Hero ✓✓
25.	Franklin Plays the Game ✓✓
26.	Franklin's Next Neighbour ✓✓
27.	Franklin's Baby Sister ✓✓
28.	Franklin Helps Out ✓✓
29.	Franklin's Blanket ✓✓
30.	Franklin and the Baby ✓✓

Franklin Book Reviews

● Franklin Goes To the Hospital

- This book is about Franklin going to the hospital to operate on his shell that got cracked when he was playing soccer. I think this book teaches kids to be brave even when we are scared. It is okay to show that we are scared. I love this book because Franklin went to the hospital and I went to the hospital a little while ago to get my tonsils out. I wasn't scared because I knew people were there to help me. Franklin and I went through the same things. I had an operation so did Franklin and we both had the patch on the hand so the needle wouldn't hurt.

Big Book Station

- Class created big book:
 - Retelling
 - Original story with Franklin characters
- Non-fiction:
 - Reptiles, mammals
 - Canada book
- Pointers – e.g. Franklin sword or dowel with red kerchief tied on one end
- Use masks to reenact

Writing Station

- Pattern stories:
 - Franklin is _____. (hiding, drawing...)
 - I like _____. (Franklin, Bear...)
 - I see _____. (Franklin, Bear, the pond...)
 - This is _____. (Franklin's Mom...)
- Franklin Mailbox
 - Letter writing props and materials
- Shared Writing – Write to Paulette Bourgeois, Brenda Clark
- Create original stories where Franklin meets a different animal

Drama Station

- Scan characters or photocopy (enlarge & color) for stick puppet characters
- Shadow puppet retellings
- Franklin puppets (turtle, bear, fox...)
- Masks
- Flannel board with child created characters
- Foam characters with magnets on woodland background
- Dress-up like Franklin; plays; retellings
- Produce a class-play like Franklin's class

ABC/Word Study

- Put turtle/woodland/animal letters in alphabetical order
- Match upper & lower case (Franklin colors)
- Write Franklin words on dry-erase boards
- Create sentences with word wall words from Franklin stories
- /f/ phoneme sound – Picture of Franklin and all /f/ pictures go with him; /b/ for Bear... (e.g. flies, fan, banana, baby...)
- Franklin word searches
- Match characters images with word cards
- Stamp character names from word cards
- Building blocks – make words

Poetry Station

- Turtle, bear and other animal poems
- Create new poems: e.g.
“I count by twos, I tie my shoes
I look for clues, I watch the news” or

“1 little, 2 little, 3 little turtles...”
- Songs: There was a little turtle...
The bear went over the mountain

Computer Station



- Play Franklin games
- Franklin DVD's
- Franklin web site
- KidPix – create Franklin images; characters, map, habitat, Franklin house
- Kidspiration
 - Web character traits
 - Retellings
 - Finding images for each character

Listening Center

- CD's for Franklin stories
- Your recorded readings of Franklin stories
- Children's recordings of their reading Franklin stories

Puzzles, Games

- Franklin games and puzzles
- Original games from books – memory, Bingo...
- Math sorting – character attributes – feathers, skin, fur
- Who Am I? – list character attributes

Pocket Chart

- Take one page from a book written on word cards; students must rebuild text
- Song or chant or favorite sayings from stories cut apart (e.g. Franklin could count by twos and tie his shoes.)

Overhead Chart

- Enlarge text from a page; have children find focus words
- Have a character image at the top of the page with other images below – have students circle the ones that start with same sound

Creative Station



- Art materials – creative drawings (like Franklin's Starts School); post in Franklin Gallery
- Draw Franklin's house; other characters' homes
- Scientific drawings and labels for real animals
- Clay creations

Science Station

- Research turtles; find out what type of turtle Franklin is
- Compare sea turtles, turtles, tortoises
- Books and materials for pond study
- Bear study – different types, what they eat, size, features
- Woodland animals
- Sort reptile figures – snakes, etc.
- Create Venn diagrams – real & imaginary comparisons
- Life cycle studies

Animal Reports



The Bear by Ruth

- **How Big Are They?** Bear is big and little. Baby is small. Bear in big blue house is really big bear. My mommy knows, she watch with me.
- **What Colour Are They?** Bear is brown. Bear is black.
- **What Do They Eat?** Bear eats the plants, eats the berries. The bear is eating a fish. The bear eating honey.
- **How Do They Sleep?** Bear is sleeping from the tree. Bear is sleeping in the cave. Bear is sleeping in the winter. Bear like the summer. He find food in summer.
- **Where/How Do They Live?** Bear lives in big house. I see the movie, that's why I know bear lives in the house.
- **How Do They Move?** He walk. He have four leg. Bear stand on two legs, very big. Very scary.
- **Can They Do/Have Anything Special?** Bears are playing. Bear have claws. Bear have big teeth. Mommy take care of baby bear. She good mommy.

Bear Habitats



- **Bear (Franklin)**
 - Bear lives in a tree with his family.
 - Bear stays awake all year long.
 - Bear has a stuffed animal rabbit that he sleeps with.
 - Bear eats blueberries, honey, and plants.
- **Bear (Wild)**
 - Bears in the wild live in bear dens.
 - Bears in the wild hibernate during the winter months.
 - Bears in the wild are comforted by their mothers or siblings.
 - Bears in the wild eat berries, plants and other animals.

Social Station

- Map Franklin's neighborhood
- Create a table top reconstruction of the neighborhood; mapping playdough; paint; create characters and community props
- Build a feelings chart to document the feelings from each story (Franklin in the Dark)
- Chart problem-solving strategies
- Canada map puzzles and games
- Growing older (Franklin's blanket)
- Document how to be a good friend
- Create a diorama
- Having a pet

Story Themes

- If you have a bad day, you shouldn't scream at your mom. This is the message we learned in this story. Franklin sent a letter to Otter because he missed her. This is something we can do when we feel bad.



Sand Center

- Franklin figurines, trees, pan for pond water for children to create original dramatic play
- Turtle figures – to reenact turtle egg laying process

Water Center

- Sea and land turtle figurines
- Frozen water – Franklin figurines – playing hockey, skating
- Snow – Franklin figurines - sledding

Blocks/Construction Center



- Build a Franklin house in your classroom
- Create life-sized turtles
- Create a zoo for all of Franklin's animal friends
- Create a park/playground for Franklin and his friends, like Franklin's Secret Garden

Gym

- Play soccer, learn strategies
- Floor hockey
- Baseball
- Movement like animals
- Hide and seek outside
- Scooter boards
- Other games renamed to be Franklin games

Cooking Center

- Make "fly" pie...
- Other cooking and tasting experiences relating to stories; e.g. brussel sprouts
- Have a turtle food party...

Home Liaison

- Franklin Activity Packs
 - Materials:
 - Franklin back pack/ suitcase or any kind of bag
 - Franklin story
 - Franklin puzzle
 - Franklin doll
 - Paper
 - Felts
 - Activity sheet



Welcome to my Home, Franklin



- Each day one child takes home Franklin (you can purchase a 15" stuffed Franklin doll in most toy departments and over the internet), along with the writing journal. In the evening, the child writes about his/her sleepover visit with Franklin, from Franklin's point of view. The following day, that child reads the journal entry to the class. Each day is a new and exciting adventure for Franklin, which often involves experiencing new cultures, traditions, games, food etc. It is also quite common for Franklin to return to school sporting a new outfit, or with a special treat to share.
- "Last night I went to Caitlynn's house, and she let me help her read The 'Trumpet of the Swan' and boy that was a great book. I clapped when she finished her piano lessons, and then she showed off her tap and Jazz steps. I even learned some cool steps. I met Robbie, Caitlynn's little brother, and her Mommy and Daddy. They were very loveable. I enjoyed my lovely visit to her home."

Literacy Stations

- Any topic your class is working on, interested in
- Any specific skill you are targeting
- Individual or small group
- Open-ended materials that can be resorted and reorganized for another topic

Concluding Thoughts:

When I retired from teaching and passed my Franklin collection to someone else, it felt like that tub of books was full of memories and rich learning. It was hard to let them go. It was more than just children's books.

Captured within those pages were so many emotions. Excitement, joy, frustration, pride, love. Creativity sparked by the characters and plots brought Franklin to life and into our classroom. Children gained so much knowledge about literature that would carry them through the years ahead. The projects undertaken were original, realistic, long-term, based on the children's interests. Curriculum objectives across many subject areas were surpassed. The learning was rich and deep and not superficial or contrived.

The open-ended method of planning, brainstorming, creating, implementing, and completing each project was fulfilling. Children trusted that they were capable learners. And to me, that was the mantra that I carried throughout my teaching years. *I want children to know that they can learn anything that they want to.* Franklin, thank you for inspiring us.

About the Author

Carol Vaage, BEd, Ed Dip, MEd (degrees are all in Early Childhood Education)

Carol started her teaching career in 1967, where children sat in rows, and curriculum was taught by turning the page in the teacher manuals.

Taking a break from teaching, raising four children, she learned much insightful knowledge about what held children's interests and engagement. If a project initiated from the children, it was fun, enjoyable and learning was higher than it was otherwise.

Returning to University, Carol experienced the inspired and updated style of teaching. Inquiry based, project based, co-creation and observation. She became motivated by the Reggio Emilia pedagogy and documentation of learning. She travelled to Italy twice to attend teacher inservices – one for kindergarten and preschool, the other for continuity to grade one.

Carol was a frequent presenter for Teacher Conventions, Early Childhood Conferences and PD workshops, using examples from her classroom experiences. She also coordinated telecollaborative projects for Alberta teachers.

Her professional involvement with the Alberta Teachers Early Childhood Education Council included positions of President of the Provincial Executive as well as the Edmonton local.

Awards:

- Alberta Education – Teacher Excellence Award
- ECEC (Early Childhood Education Council) Award
- ECEC Recognition of Service Award

Carol is now retired and excited to be sharing the wonderful learning stories from her years of teaching.

