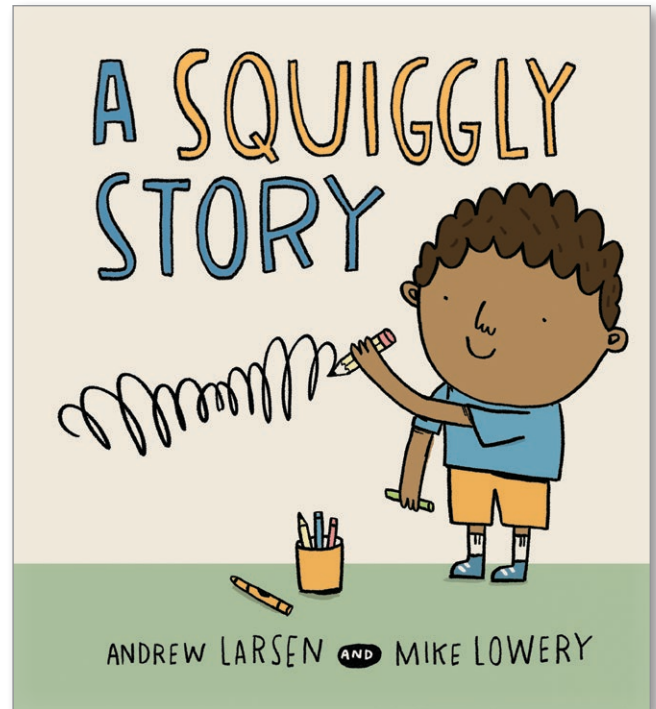


# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## ABOUT THE BOOK

A young boy wants to write a story, just like his big sister. But there's a problem, he tells her. Though he knows his letters, he doesn't know many words. "Every story starts with a single word and every word starts with a single letter," his sister explains patiently. "Why don't you start there, with a letter?" So the boy tries. He writes a letter. An easy letter. The letter I. And from that one skinny letter, the story grows, and the little boy discovers that all of us, including him, have what we need to write our own perfect story.

This picture book from award-winning author Andrew Larsen playfully and imaginatively explores a young child's process of learning to express himself. It promotes the idea that stories are available for everyone to tell, whatever way we can, and will inspire pre-readers to try writing stories of their own. The lively, fun illustrations by Mike Lowery incorporate story panels with dialogue bubbles, adding visual texture. Also helpful, the boy's story is shown both as he actually writes it — with just a few letters, some punctuation marks and typographical symbols — and as he imagines it. Celebrating self-expression, self-discovery and imagination, this book would enhance an early language arts lesson on writing, particularly on the parts of a story. It beautifully highlights the exciting worlds that are opened up when children begin to read and write. In a sweet touch, the boy and his sister model a close and supportive sibling relationship.



ISBN 978-1-77138-016-4

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**ANDREW LARSEN** lives in a neighborhood in Toronto that has tall trees, old houses and lots of stories. He lives with his wife and two children. Sometimes Andrew goes looking for stories and sometimes stories come looking for him.

As a young boy, Andrew dreamed of being a hockey player. His first job was delivering newspapers to the houses in his neighborhood. He has had many jobs over the years, but once he started a family, Andrew discovered his true calling: he became a stay-at-home dad and started writing stories. He still loves to skate.

Andrew spends his days cooking, cleaning, daydreaming and writing. He often visits schools and libraries, where he encourages children to discover their own stories.



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**MIKE LOWERY** is an artist living in Atlanta, Georgia. Mike's work has been seen on everything from greeting cards to children's books to gallery walls all over the world, and he is Professor of Illustration at the Savannah College of Art and Design Atlanta. He lives in an atomic ranch house surrounded by trees, where he likes to draw little animals in party hats and other silly stuff.

# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is anchored in **critical consciousness literacy**<sup>1</sup>.

*What is critical consciousness literacy anyway?*

Many educators may be familiar with critical literacy. **Critical literacy** embraces the belief that every text, whether a picture book or an essay, needs to be a platform to better read and understand the world. Only when young people are afforded the opportunity to read the world do they have the capacity to create a better one.

*Where does culturally relevant pedagogy fit in?*

A key principle of **Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy**<sup>2</sup> is that students see themselves in the learning and know that who they are is valued. When children engage in any form of literacy where they feel connected and their educational needs are being met, learning will take place. As well, a curriculum that provides opportunities to envision diverse ways of being and lived realities gives students opportunities to learn about other experiences and builds both understanding and respect.

This brings us to **Critical Consciousness Literacy** which asks us to focus on the child by embracing both culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy and critical literacy. Students' development of a "critical consciousness" in their acquiring of critical literacy skills is crucial in that it is this "consciousness" that results in an awareness of the culture and the dynamics of societal power. Understanding oneself in relation to societal power means exploring concepts such as social identities, stereotyping, bias, discrimination, privilege and marginalization. This then prepares students to become agents of social change, giving them the wherewithal to challenge the status quo and to be proactive towards social justice issues. Therefore, a pre-activity was designed to support the building of connection between the text and the reader. This **pre-activity**, which contains a component for the teacher and a separate one for the student, is foundational to this guide.

## CRITICAL LITERACY means ...

- Recognizing that texts contain certain perspectives and biases
- Recognizing that point of view influences how a text is interpreted and understood
- Determining whose voices are present or absent
- Evaluating multiple perspectives for bias, reliability, fairness and validity
- Analyzing how language is used
- Taking a stance and engaging in a response in the interest of equity, fairness and social justice
- Using technology to see divergent perspectives, interact with authentic audiences, and express ideas

— *Adolescent Literacy Guide* (2016, p. 26)

## OVERVIEW

	Grade	Theme	High-Yield Strategies
<b>Pre-Activity</b>	All	Finding the Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comparing and contrasting</li><li>• Cooperative learning</li><li>• Higher-order thinking</li><li>• Reinforcing effort and providing recognition</li><li>• Nonlinguistic representations</li></ul>
<b>Activity 1</b>	3–8	Self-esteem through Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cooperative learning</li><li>• Nonlinguistic representations</li><li>• Higher order thinking</li><li>• Reinforcing effort and providing recognition</li></ul>
<b>Activity 2</b>	K–3	Community Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cooperative learning</li><li>• Higher order thinking</li><li>• Reinforcing effort and providing recognition</li></ul>
<b>Activity 3</b>	3–6	Independent Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cooperative learning</li><li>• Reinforcing effort and providing recognition</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> "Critical Consciousness Literacy" is a term anchored in the work of Paulo Freire (2004) combined with the critical consciousness tenet in the work of Ladson-Billings (2002) in *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*. (Gaymes-San Vicente, A. & A. Te, TDSB Presentation, Spring 2017)

<sup>2</sup> "A nuanced approach to challenging the power and privilege that remain within our school walls can be seen in the fusion of *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings) and *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (Geneva Gay). These two distinct bodies of research (building on the work of Paulo Freire and his dialogic teaching, discussed more fully below) have recently been fused together by curriculum activists at the Centre for Urban Schooling at OISE/University of Toronto, into what has become known as Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP). (Clanfield et. al., 2014, p. 268)

# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## PRE-ACTIVITY – FINDING THE CONNECTION

### TEACHER REFLECTION

Children learn best when learning is relevant and meaningful for them. Using critical literacy as well as a culturally relevant and responsive approach, this activity is designed to support students by creating meaning and connections to the picture book. Therefore, this essential pre-activity begins with an opportunity for teacher reflection prior to engaging in the pre-activity with the students.

“Teaching for critical literacy empowers students to be active thinkers, to look at the world from multiple perspectives and to develop questioning habits that encourage them to think and act on their decisions.”

— *Adolescent Literacy Guide* (2016, p. 26)

“Developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive program planning is therefore essential in facilitating literacy learning experiences ... learning opportunities that we design need to be grounded ... in intentional consideration of who our learners are and what experiences will enable them to learn, adapt and achieve literacy success.”

— *Paying Attention to Literacy*, p. 3

### LEARNING GOAL

Teachers will learn to recognize who is automatically included and positively valued through the use of *A Squiggly Story*. For any reader, connection to the book can take place through social identities. Social identities include, but are not limited to: race, indigeneity, sexual orientation, social class, gender identity and language. Those who feel connected to the book are more likely to be engaged. Therefore, this knowledge is essential, as it allows you to consider how to create inclusion for those who are not automatically included.

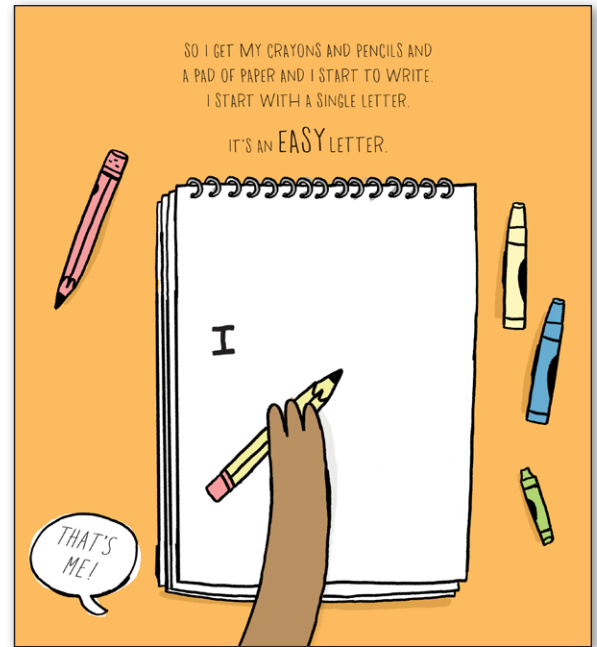
1. Consider your favorite picture book or novel — something that you really enjoyed reading.
2. On the “Making It Stick” chart, **Appendix A**, complete Section A.
3. Read *A Squiggly Story* with the following question in mind: “How do you feel personally connected to *A Squiggly Story* through the text, pictures, messages or characters?”
4. On the “Making It Stick” chart, Appendix A, complete Section B.
5. Review the elements of the book (content, pictures, character gender/race etc.) that gave you automatic inclusion, or not. Recognize that students who automatically and positively connect to the book (through any social identity) have an advantage as their connection can allow them to more readily engage in and demonstrate comprehension through subsequent activities. Their connection can allow them to engage in subsequent activities more readily. It becomes imperative for you to create a connection for those students who do not automatically connect. This connection can be the difference between engagement and disengagement as well as equal access to the learning.
6. Review the first two columns of “Guiding Questions for Critical Literacy and Culturally Responsive Teaching” chart, **Appendix B**.
7. Review a list of students who you intend to use this book with. Consider which students might struggle to connect to the book.
8. On the “Making It Stick” chart, Appendix A, complete Section C.



# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## PRE-ACTIVITY

1. Show students the cover of *A Squiggly Story*.
2. Slowly leaf through the pages so that students can see the pictures.
3. Post the following connection prompts on a chart paper:
  - This reminds me of ...
  - The picture looks like ...
  - The title makes me think of ...
  - Other
4. Depending on the grade, ask students to articulate orally, through writing, or through visual art how they connect with the front cover or the pictures in the book.
5. Make an intentional effort to check in with students recorded in Section C of the “Making It Stick” chart who may struggle to connect with the book.
6. Identify, post and review key or unfamiliar words from *A Squiggly Story*.



## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

A great learning opportunity for everyone might be to explore what the front cover would look like if each child were to design it. Using an age-appropriate art medium (paint, clay, plasticine etc.) have students redesign the cover to create something that they feel includes them.

## ACTIVITY 1: SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH DRAMA

### MATERIALS

- *A Squiggly Story*
- Board or chart paper for brainstorming

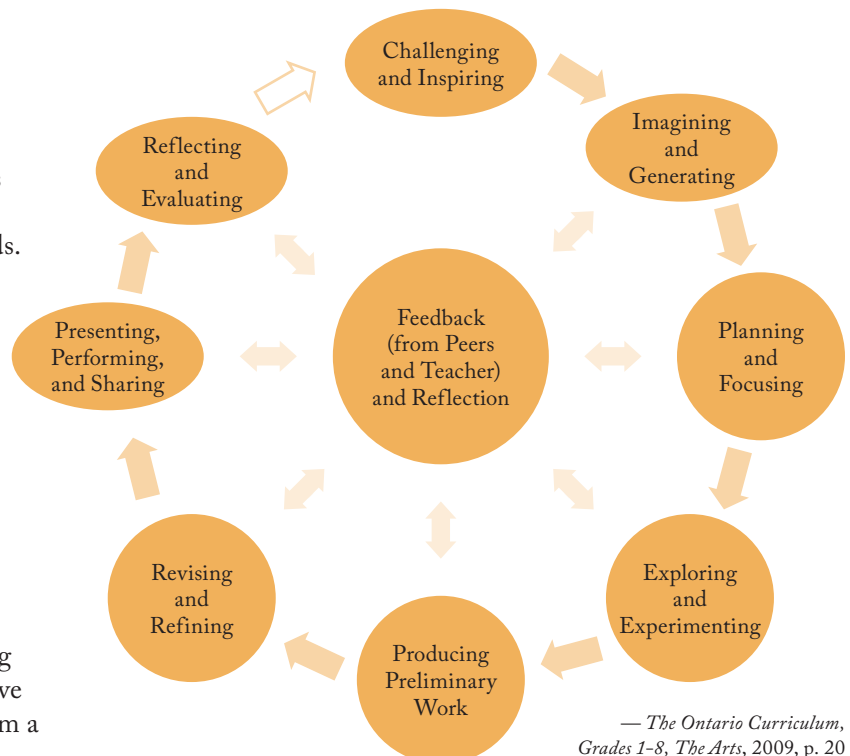
### OVERVIEW

*A Squiggly Story* is a beautiful story of a young boy who overcomes feeling “not good enough.” He wants to write his own story, but he doesn’t think he can because he only knows how to write letters, not words. With the guidance and support of his sister, he learns to challenge his own thinking about himself. Feeling “good enough” is an important factor in children reaching their potential. Unfortunately, many children do not feel “good enough.” In this activity, children will challenge the notion of being “not good enough” by exploring this belief through a story of their own.

### LEARNING GOAL

Students will identify a time in the past where they did not feel “good enough” and were wrong. Utilizing the Exploring and Experimenting stage of the creative process (right), students will also produce and perform a three-scene play about this experience.

### THE CREATIVE PROCESS



— *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8, The Arts*, 2009, p. 20



# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## ACTIVITY

1. Complete the student pre-activity, "Making it Stick." **Note to Educator:** If it is not possible to complete the pre-activity, review Appendix B and proceed to step 2. If you have engaged in the pre-activity, skip to step 4.
2. If you have not completed the pre-activity show the cover of *A Squiggly Story*. Ask students what they think the story will be about. This will allow students to share thoughts, make connections and activate prior knowledge.
3. Identify, post and review key or unfamiliar words from *A Squiggly Story*.
4. In small groups or as a whole class, give students the opportunity to make a prediction about the story. Ask students, "Based on the title or the pictures what do you think the story is about and why?"
5. To activate prior knowledge, let the students know that this is a story about a young boy who is finding something challenging to do. Ask students to close their eyes and think of a time when something was challenging for them. **Note to Educator:** Depending on the students, ask students to share in pairs.
6. Before reading the story, you may want to pose a guiding question for them to think about: How did the main character overcome the feeling of not being good enough?
7. Read the book and stop on page five.
8. Ask the class, "Can you identify a time when you or your classmate felt like you couldn't do something, that you were not good enough?" Record the responses on the board or chart paper. **Note to Educator:** These experiences could range from making it onto a team, doing well on a test, playing with new friends, etc. It is important for students to realize that these times can be anything that made them feel "not good enough" and that this feeling is normal. It is important to remind students that experiences they share should be ones they are comfortable sharing to ensure that you do not invoke trauma.
9. Ask students to think about what or who can help them move past the feeling that something is too hard to try to do.
10. Return to the book and continue to read or start the book again, if needed.
11. Remind students of the guiding question: How did the main character overcome the feeling of being "not good enough?" They need to listen for at least one way that helped the main character move past this feeling.
12. Finish reading *A Squiggly Story*.



## ACTION

1. Working in pairs, give students an opportunity to dramatize an experience when they thought they weren't good enough to try something, but were wrong. **Note to Educator:** Again, it is important to remind students that experiences they share should be ones they are comfortable sharing to ensure that you do not invoke trauma.
2. Give students an opportunity to pick the experience they wish to dramatize.
3. Explain to students that they will dramatize this experience in three short scenes.
4. Explain to students the following:
  - Scene 1: Should demonstrate a time when they did *not* feel "good enough."
  - Scene 2: Should demonstrate what or who helped them realize that they *were* "good enough."
  - Scene 3: Should demonstrate how they felt after they accomplished what they thought they could not do.

## CONSOLIDATION

1. In small groups, students will present scenes to one another for feedback.
2. Based on the feedback from their peers, students will have an opportunity to strengthen their drama.
3. Students will have an opportunity to present their play in larger groups or to the whole class.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Using paint or another art medium, give students an opportunity to create an artistic representation of each scene.
2. Create three monologues for each scene.

# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## ACTIVITY 2: COMMUNITY WRITING

### MATERIALS

- *A Squiggly Story*
- Board or chart paper for writing

### OVERVIEW

*A Squiggly Story* is a reminder that all children come to the table with their own knowledge and their own story. Even though the young boy did not know that he had a story to tell, with the careful support of his sister, teacher and classmates he wrote. Although it was not without challenges, he owned his story and it was validated by important people in his life. Similar to the main character, in this activity students will have an opportunity to engage in community writing. Community writing is a supportive writing experience which allows young people to better understand choices that writers make.

“Community writing is a time to write together as a class, or in small group, with all students’ contributions given consideration. The writing pieces are generated from authentic talk, shared experiences, or inquiry-based projects.”

— Johnson, P., & Keier, K, 2010, p. 85

### LEARNING GOAL

Using elements from a comprehensive literacy framework, students will use their voice in the co-creation of a story using a community writing approach.

### ACTIVITY

1. Complete the essential student pre-activity, “Making it Stick” chart. **Note to Educator:** If it is not possible to complete the pre-activity, review Appendix B and proceed to step 2. If you have engaged in the pre-activity, skip to step 4.
2. If you have not completed the pre-activity, show the cover of *A Squiggly Story*. Ask students what they think the story will be about. This will allow students to share thoughts, make connections and activate prior knowledge.
3. Identify, post and review key or unfamiliar words from *A Squiggly Story*.
4. In small groups or as a whole class, give students the opportunity to make a prediction about the story. Ask students, “Based on the title or the pictures what do you think the story is about and why?”
5. Before reading the story, pose a guiding question for students to think about: What were some of the things that helped the main character write when he was stuck?
6. Read *A Squiggly Story*.
7. After reading the story, go back to the guiding question and ask students again, “What were some of the things that helped the main character write when he was stuck?”
8. Record thoughts and ideas from the students.
9. Let students choose which of the following story starters they would like to utilize, you may choose to write as a whole class or take turns and write with one small group at a time:
  - a) Deep in a forest ...
  - b) On the water ...
  - c) It was a sunny Friday ...
  - d) Two girls walked into a grocery store ...
  - e) Create starters that are relevant to your students or have one of the students suggest a starter.

“Within the context of community writing, the students not only learn about letters, sounds and how words work, but also about decisions writers make, such as what to include, how to best structure a sentence to make a point, or how to organize thoughts on a topic.”

— Johnson, P., & Keier, K, 2010, p. 86

# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## ACTION

1. Ask the students, "How should we begin our story?"
2. Begin to write the story by recording what one of the children suggests.
3. Ask another child to continue the story.  
**Note to Educator:** You may need to provoke thinking and read the story after each sentence is added (see example to the right).
4. Continue to add sentences until the story is complete.

## CONSOLIDATION

1. Read the story to the students and reinforce the focus of learning, whether it is letter sounds, story structure, etc.
2. Thank each child for their contribution to the story.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Begin a class library of community-written stories.
2. Place each sentence from the community-written story on different pages and give students the opportunity to illustrate it.

### Example

**Educator:** How should we begin our story?

**Kira:** *Two girls walk into a grocery store.*

**Educator:** The letter "t" is at the beginning of our sentence. Kira, can you please write a capital "T" and I will write the rest? Thank you.

**Educator:** I wonder why they walked into the store? Who wants to decide?

**Makai:** I know. *They were sent to buy flour for dumpling soup*

**Educator:** Excellent, can you write that sentence Makai? We have been working on the "th" sound. You will see this sound in the word "they" that Makai will write. Does anyone remember what we put at the end of a sentence?

**Kaiden:** *I know! A period.*

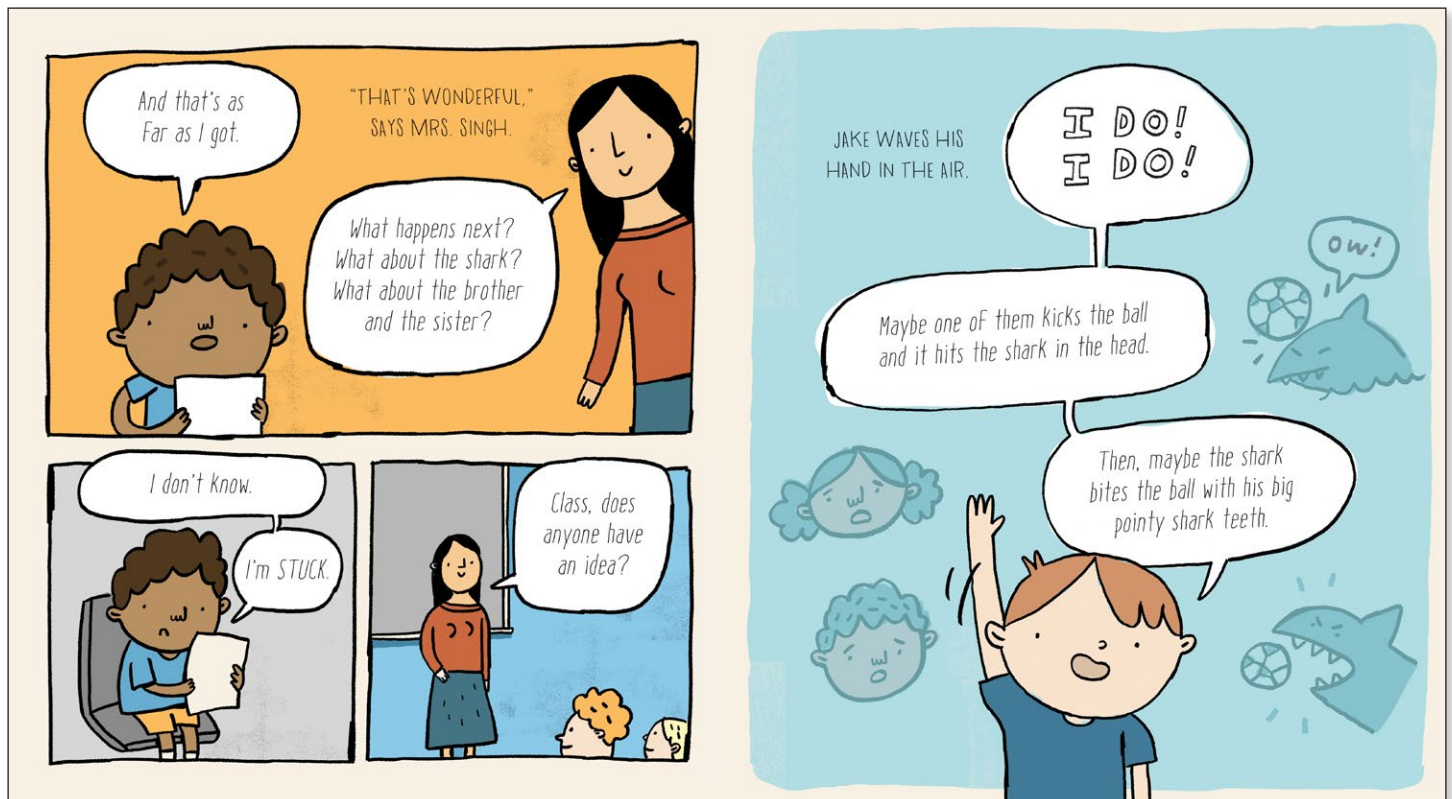
**Educator:** Great! When Makai finishes writing, please place a period at the end of Makai's sentence.

**Educator:** Thank you. Okay, who can read our story from the beginning?

**Zane:** I can. *Two girls walk into a grocery store. They were sent to buy flour for dumpling soup.*

**Educator:** I wonder what will happen next. Who would like to add to our story now?

**Makayla:** I will ...



# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## ACTIVITY 3: INDEPENDENT WRITING

### MATERIALS

- *A Squiggly Story*
- Board or chart paper for brainstorming
- Paper and pencils for writing
- Copies of the writing process

### OVERVIEW

As articulated in Activity 2, *A Squiggly Story* is a reminder that all children come to the table with their own knowledge and their own story. In this activity students will learn that they also have the ability to write their story. Using the writing process diagram as a guide, children will plan, draft, revise, edit and publish a story.

### LEARNING GOAL

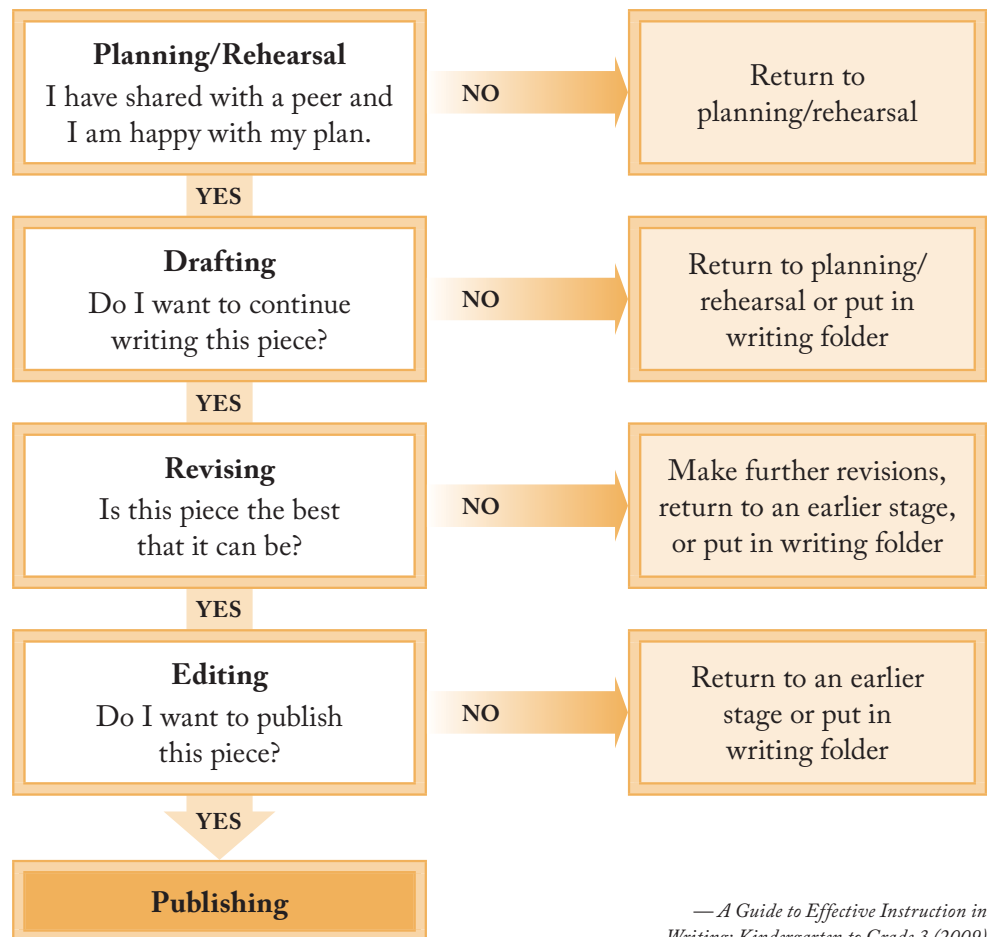
Using the writing process students will create a story of their own.

### ACTIVITY

1. Complete the student pre-activity, "Making it Stick."  
**Note to Educator:** If it is not possible to complete the pre-activity, review Appendix B and proceed to step 2. If you have engaged in the pre-activity, skip to step 4.
2. If you have not completed the pre-activity, show the cover of *A Squiggly Story*. Ask students what they think the story will be about. This will allow students to share thoughts, make connections and activate prior knowledge.
3. Identify, post and review key or unfamiliar words from *A Squiggly Story*.
4. In small groups or as a whole class, give students the opportunity to make a prediction about the story. Ask students, "Based on the title or the pictures what do you think the story is about and why?"
5. Read *A Squiggly Story*.
6. Hand out copies of the writing process.

"In order for children to become writers, they must be given lots of time practice. In many schools, children are given an independent writing time daily, also known as writing workshop. They are in charge of topic selection, negotiating the content, writing the words on the page and illustrating the text."  
— Johnson, P., & Keier, K, 2010, p. 89

### THE WRITING PROCESS



— *A Guide to Effective Instruction in Writing: Kindergarten to Grade 3* (2009)



# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## ACTION

1. Place students into groups. Have students determine how the main character moved through the stages of the writing process as a way to review the various stages.
2. In groups or as a whole class, have students share how the main character went through the writing process.
3. Give students a chance to brainstorm some creative writing ideas in their groups. **Note to Educator:** There are multiple tools online that can be used to provoke thinking with respect to topics and ideas.
4. **PLANNING/REHEARSAL STAGE:** Ask students to orally share a plan with their group. **Note to Educator:** It is important to give children an opportunity to speak about what they intend to write (please see what the research has indicated to the right).
5. **DRAFTING STAGE:** Give students time and the environment to write quietly.
6. **REVISING STAGE:** Give students an opportunity to review and revise their work. They may want to share their story with a partner or a group for feedback or potentially engage in shared writing.
7. **EDITING STAGE:** Give students an opportunity to edit their work.

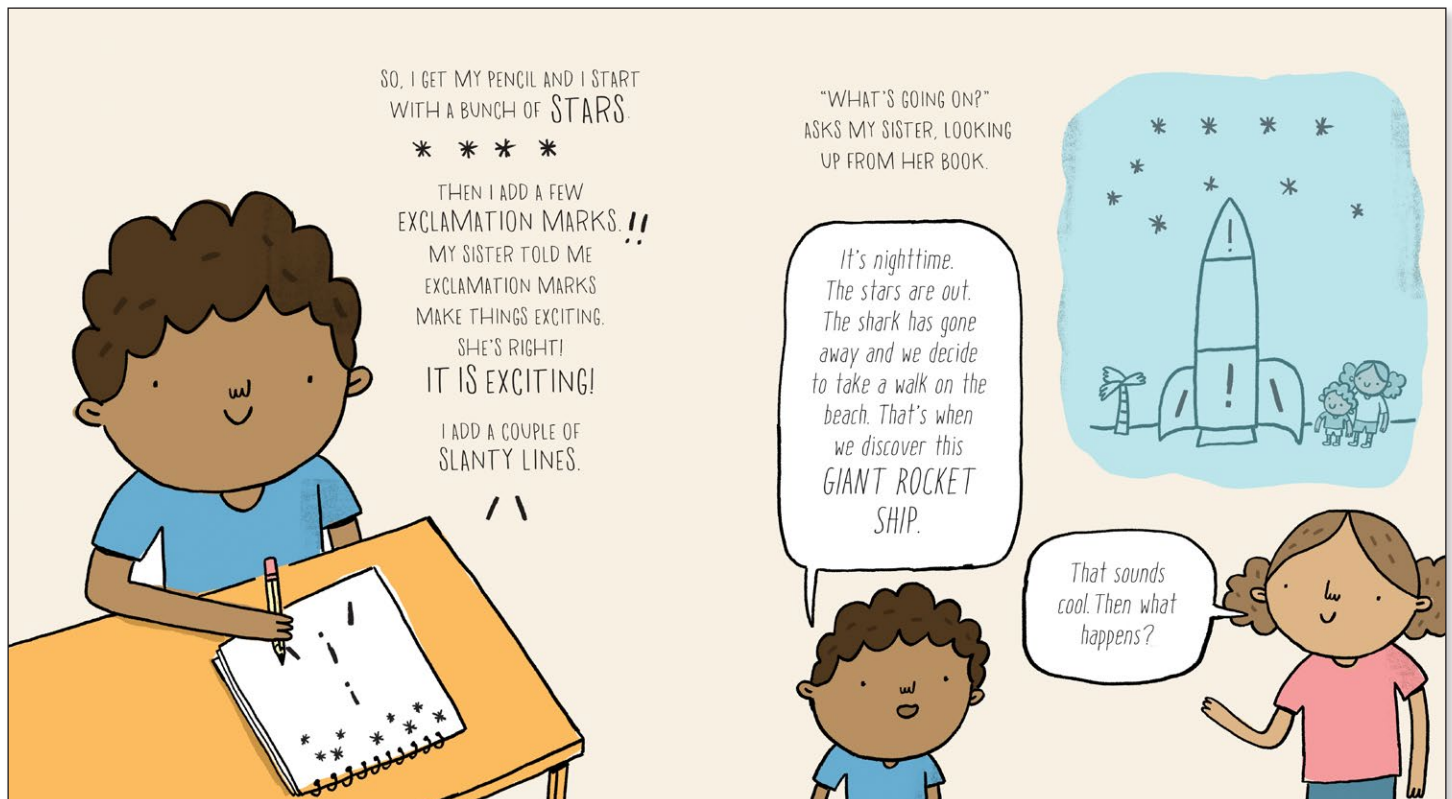
### Research tells us:

- Oral language is the foundation of literacy development.
- Classroom discussion promotes higher-level thinking and problem solving, fosters deeper literary awareness and enhances communication skills.
- Sharing writing in conversations and conferences with peers and teachers increases the motivation to write and the desire to improve writing.
- The social nature of writing requires that students learn to write inside a community.

— Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009

## CONSOLIDATION

1. **PUBLISHING STAGE:** give students and opportunity to publish their story.
2. If possible, give students a chance to share their work with their reading buddies for another class.



# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## APPENDIX A: MAKING IT STICK

### Section A

**PROMPT** Consider your favorite picture book or novel — something that you really enjoyed reading.

Why was this one of your favorite picture books or novels? Think about the images, the text, the connections you were able to make.

### Section B

**PROMPT** How do you feel personally connected to *A Squiggly Story* through the text, pictures, messages, or characters?

Consider some of the following social identities:

Race	Sexual orientation	Social class	Indegenuity
Gender identity	Language	Religion	Others
Ethnicity	Culture	Abilities	

How many of these identities created a sense of inclusion for you?

### Section C

**PROMPT** Are there students that might struggle to connect to the book?

Record the names of students who will be included by 4–6 social identities and record their names.

Record the names of students who will be excluded because they are connected to less than four social identities.

Consider how you might include them.

# A SQUIGGLY STORY \* TEACHING GUIDE

## APPENDIX B: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL LITERACY AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

	Questions to consider PRIOR to using the book	Questions to consider PRIOR to leading an activity
<b>What is being reinforced?</b> <i>Thinking about bias and stereotypes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are your biases? (We all have biases about race, class, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, etc.)</li> <li>How might your personal beliefs and bias influence your understanding of this text?</li> <li>What stereotypes, as well as conscious and unconscious biases, are present in the book? What other resources can you integrate?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can you challenge conscious and unconscious biases in the book?</li> <li>How can you challenge stereotypes in the book? What other resources can you integrate?</li> <li>What stereotypes might students have in relation to this text?</li> </ul>
<b>What is the connection?</b> <i>Thinking about inclusion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who will connect most with the main characters in this book?</li> <li>Who will connect most with the social identities of the main characters in the book?</li> <li>Who will connect most with the story and main ideas in the book?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can you support all students to make a personal and meaningful connection to the book?</li> </ul>
<b>Who benefits most?</b> <i>Thinking about power and privilege</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are male, female or transgender voices most present?</li> <li>What race or culture is most present?</li> <li>Are different abilities valued?</li> <li>Whose voices are missing?</li> <li>Who has the power and privilege?</li> <li>What is the historical context of the book?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can you include the missing voices?</li> <li>How can you address issues of power and privilege in the book?</li> <li>How can you contextualize the book to engage more diverse lived experiences and values?</li> <li>How might you address conflicting viewpoints and values? How might you validate underrepresented voices?</li> </ul>
<b>How do we make a difference?</b> <i>Thinking about personal impact</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What stereotypes or biases does this book challenge?</li> <li>For what issues of social justice can this book serve as a springboard?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How might you raise awareness of social justice issues that students are unfamiliar with or invested in?</li> </ul>

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## NOTES: