

FROM COMPLIANCE TO CURIOSITY

Building Classrooms that THINK!

CASS Annual Learning Conference

March 2026

Welcome!

Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard

Quality superintendent leadership occurs when the superintendent's ongoing analysis of the context, and the superintendent's decisions about what leadership knowledge and abilities to apply, result in quality school leadership, quality teaching and optimum learning for all students in the school authority.

ALBERTA EDUCATION MINISTERIAL ORDER #003/2020

- 1 Building Effective Relationships
- 2 Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning
- 3 Visionary Leadership
- 4 Leading Learning
- 5 Ensuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education for All Students
- 6 School Authority Operations and Resources
- 7 Supporting Effective Governance

Leadership Quality Standard

Quality leadership occurs when the leader's ongoing analysis of the context, and decisions about what leadership knowledge and abilities to apply, result in quality teaching and optimum learning for all school students.

ALBERTA EDUCATION MINISTERIAL ORDER #002/2020

- 1 Fostering Effective Relationships
- 2 Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning
- 3 Embodying Visionary Leadership
- 4 Leading a Learning Community
- 5 Supporting the Application of Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit
- 6 Providing Instructional Leadership
- 7 Developing Leadership Capacity
- 8 Managing School Operations and Resources
- 9 Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context

Christie Watson

Asst. Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

Dr. Jessie Shirley

Superintendent

Henri Chauvet

Director of Student Services

Roger Lauck

Director of Teaching and Learning



**Grande Prairie and District
Catholic Schools**

Activity

A
Building Thinking Classroom
approach for
high school English.



Random Groups

Together...

Read Summary aloud



As a group...

- Read through quotes (start with ones outside your envelope)
- Discuss
- Place your quote on the picture that best matches the statement

Random Groups

Compare

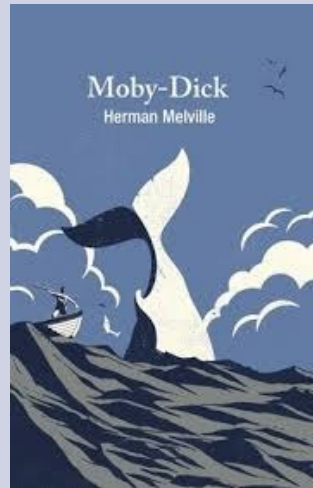
De-Brief



Determine Themes

Together...

- Pick top 2 themes
- Write them on your chart paper



As a group...

- Discuss your thematic choices with another group
- Narrow the theme down to the one that is the strongest choice.

Final Thoughts

Consolidation	Brainstorm
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment• Individual vs Group Contribution• Independence vs Requiring Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to use this approach in the elementary classroom?• How to use this approach in other subject areas?



Activity



the Flower Man



Group Task 1

First...

Read the book together.



Then...

- Go back to the beginning of the book
- Decide on one word or phrase (3-5 words) that depicts the first page—write this on your index card.
- Then, write the word(s) on a stickie note and place it on the vertical page it corresponds to.
- Repeat this with each successive page.

Group Task 2

Themes	Sharing the Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read through all the words (and phrases) on your index card.• Develop a theme for the book and write it on a stickie.• Place the stickie on the theme vertical surface.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gallery walk of all words for the book, as well as the theme page.

One More Task

Summarizing	For Example...
<p>Write one sentence that encompasses the story using humour (much like random group selector used at the beginning of this session).</p>	<p>Monsters are people, too...pieces of people! <i>-Frankenstein</i></p> <p>An oppressive patriarchy controls women's bodies...this book is also about that. <i>- The Handmaid's Tale</i></p> <p>Four sisters get married...except Beth. <i>- Little Women</i></p> <p>Be good or else! <i>- The Bible</i></p>

Consolidation

Themes

- Write a story for the book after seeing the pictures.
- Thematic poem
- Write a full sentence per page
- Write the prequel or sequel using pictures or words
- Any other ideas...?



Table Discussions

Reflection

- How did you feel about the learning experience?
- What did you notice as a learner?
- What did you notice from the teacher?
- What did you notice about the curriculum?



Curricular Outcomes

High School – Moby Dick

English 20-1 & 20-2

- **2.1.2 (g):** Analyze visual elements and explain how they contribute to the meaning of texts.
- **2.2.1 (a):** Analyze a variety of text forms and explain the relationships of form to purpose and content.
- **1.2.2 (b):** Expand interests in a range of genres... and explain how the content and style of various texts appeal to audiences (e.g., various versions of the same text).

English 30-1 & 30-2

- **2.2.1 (d):** Assess the medium of a presentation in terms of its appropriateness to purpose and content.
- **2.2.2 (e):** Explain the contribution of motif and symbol to controlling idea and theme.
- **2.1.2 (c):** Assess the contributions of setting, plot, character, and atmosphere to the development of theme.

1. Formulating and Defending an Interpretation (Outcome 2.3.1 & 2.3.2)

The core of a CARL is being able to form a strong thematic interpretation of a text and defend it.

ELA 20-1: Students are required to "respond personally and analytically to ideas developed in works of literature".

ELA 30-1: Students must "form positions on issues that arise from text study; and assess the ideas, information, arguments, emotions, experiences, values and beliefs expressed in works of literature".

ELA 30-1 & 30-2: Students must "assess the appropriateness of own and others' understandings and interpretations of works of literature and other texts, by referring to the works and texts for supporting or contradictory evidence".

How the activity fits: When your groups discuss *why* a specific quote (like Ahab's "solid bronze" form) matches the "Captain" image and the "Authority & Will" theme, they are actively forming positions and debating interpretations using textual evidence.

Curricular Outcomes

High School – Moby Dick

2. Selecting and Evaluating Evidence (Outcome 4.2.1) The diploma rubric for the CARL heavily weights the student's ability to select precise, relevant, and accurate evidence to support their controlling idea.

ELA 20-1: Students must "review own critical/analytical response to literature for plausibility, appropriateness of interpretations, and precision, completeness and relevance of evidence".

ELA 30-1: Students are expected to "assess the plausibility and appropriateness of literary interpretations and the precision, completeness and relevance of evidence when reviewing and revising critical/analytical responses to literature".

ELA 30-2: Students must "assess own critical/analytical responses for consistency, completeness and relevance of evidence; and strengthen reasoning as needed... to provide reliable and pertinent evidence and make effective arguments".

How the activity fits: By giving them complex, metaphorical quotes (e.g., "The diver sun... goes down; my soul mounts up") and forcing them to link it to the broad theme of "Ambition vs. Nature", you are training them to recognize what *highly effective* textual evidence looks like.

3. Understanding the Relationship between Elements and Theme (Outcome 2.1.2) To write a successful CARL, students need to explain how literary devices and elements construct a text's broader meaning.

ELA 30-1 & 30-2: Students must "assess the contributions of setting, plot, character and atmosphere to the development of theme" and "assess the contributions of figurative language, symbol, imagery and allusion to the meaning and significance of texts".

How the activity fits: As students analyze symbols like the "barbaric white leg" or the "coffin," they are practicing how to write body paragraphs for a CARL that connect specific symbols and character motivations to a universal theme.

Teacher Tip for the Diploma: You could easily extend this activity into a direct diploma-prep writing task. After the group matching is done, you could ask students to write a single, perfectly structured body paragraph (a "mini-CARL") using one of the quotes to support the theme they just matched it to!

Curricular Outcomes

High School – Moby Dick

Discussion Questions for the Class:

1. Form & Audience (ELA 30-1 Outcome 2.2.1):

◦ *Question:* "The board book uses the word 'Sail,' but the quote talks about Ahab's 'soul mounting up.' Why did the authors choose this complex quote for a simple image?"

◦ *Target Answer:* To show that the "voyage" is internal as much as external. The form (board book) simplifies the plot, but the content (Melville's text) retains the philosophy.

2. Symbolism (ELA 20-1 Outcome 2.1.2):

◦ *Question:* "Look at the match for 'Leg' and 'Trauma.' How does the 'barbaric white leg' symbolize Ahab's internal state?"

◦ *Target Answer:* The artificial leg represents how his humanity has been replaced by his obsession with the whale (he literally stands on whalebone).

3. Medium (ELA 30-2 Outcome 2.2.1):

◦ *Question:* "Does the 'Cozy' format (felt puppets, one word) trivialize the story, or does it distill it to its most important parts? Is this an appropriate medium for a tragedy?"



Curricular Outcomes

Elementary	
<p>Division 1 (Kindergarten to Grade 3) For the younger grades, the activity focuses heavily on sequencing the plot, recognizing story elements, and making connections to personal feelings.</p> <p>Text Forms and Structures (Sequencing & Story Elements) Kindergarten: Students are expected to "Discuss the beginning, middle, and ending in a message" and "Investigate story elements [characters, setting, and events] within a variety of imaginary stories". Having them place the 12 <i>Cozy Classic</i> words in order perfectly matches this.</p> <p>Grade 1: Students must "Sequence four to six events from a text".</p> <p>Grade 2: The activity fulfills the requirement to "Sequence four or more events from a text" and "Retell or dramatize a story, including characters, setting, and plot, in sequence".</p> <p>Grade 3: Students "Determine how the structure of texts can help organize the expression or understanding of ideas or information".</p>	<p>Comprehension (Connecting to Feelings/Emotions) Kindergarten: When asking students how Ahab feels about his leg, they are practicing how to "Share connections between a text and personal feelings or experiences".</p> <p>Grade 1 & 2: Discussing the emotions tied to words like "Mad" and "Smash" helps students "Share personal connections to ideas or information in texts".</p>

Curricular Outcomes

Elementary

Division 2 (Grades 4 to 6)

In upper elementary, the focus shifts to deeper character analysis and understanding how a story is constructed to create an effect or message.

Text Forms and Structures

Grade 5: The activity supports understanding that narrative texts can be structured using a "beginning, problem, multiple events with many details, resolution of problem, ending". Deconstructing the 12 words helps students visualize this specific narrative arc.

Comprehension (Character Motivation and Context)

Grade 4: By asking students to look at the story from Moby Dick's perspective (e.g., is he mean or just protecting himself?), they hit the outcome: "Examine connections between texts and self, between a text and other texts, and between texts and the world".

Grade 5: Students "Analyze the actions or feelings of characters in stories, considering the context". Discussing *why* Ahab is "Mad" and linking it to the "Leg" provides the context for his actions.

Grade 6: Students are expected to "Examine changes in context that affect actions, behaviours, or feelings of characters in texts" and "Compare personal perspectives to varied perspectives found in texts".

Junior High

Junior High (Grades 7 to 9)

In junior high, you can use the board book vs. novel comparison to look closely at media types, artistic choices, and symbolism, which falls under **General Outcome 2: Comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.**

Constructing Meaning & Character Analysis

Grade 7: Discussing Ahab's obsession allows students to "compare the choices and behaviours of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts with those of self and others".

Grade 8: Students "identify and describe characters' attributes and motivations, using evidence from the text" and "identify and discuss theme and point of view in oral, print and other media texts".

Grade 9: Students "analyze how the choices and motives of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts provide insight into those of self and others".

Curricular Outcomes

Junior High

Appreciating Artistry & Visual Texts

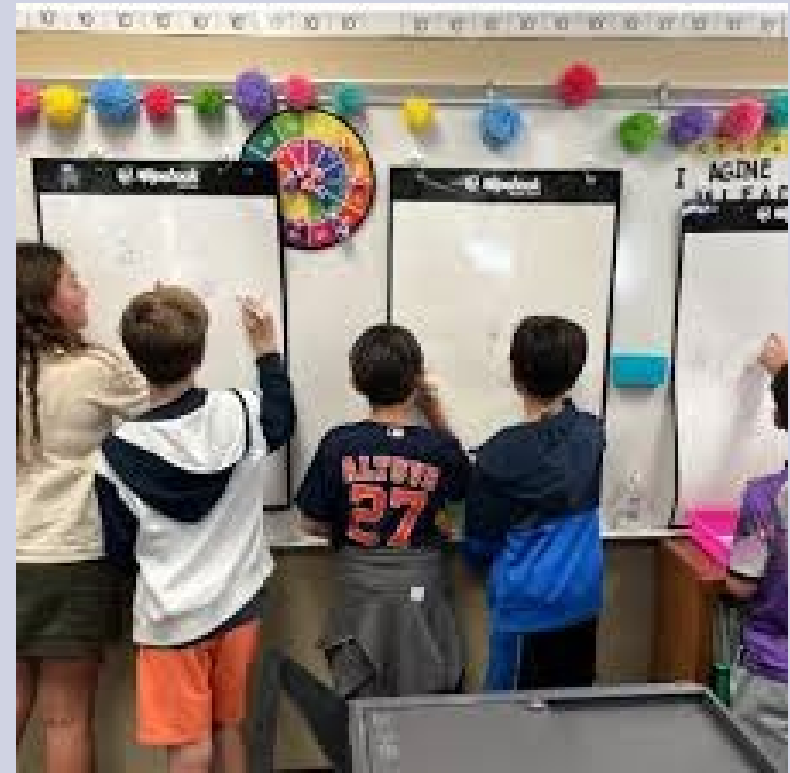
Grade 7: Analyzing the felt images of the *Cozy Classic* addresses the outcome to "discuss how techniques, such as colour, shape, composition... are used to communicate meaning and enhance effects in oral, print and other media texts".

Grade 9: By matching the themes (e.g., the coffin representing rebirth) to the images, students learn to "discuss how techniques, such as irony, symbolism, perspective and proportion, communicate meaning and enhance effect in oral, print and other media texts".

Understanding Forms, Elements, and Techniques

Grade 8: Exploring the plot using only 12 words hits the outcome: "discuss connections among plot and subplot, main and supporting characters, main idea and theme in a variety of oral, print and other media texts".

Grade 9: Comparing the board book to the classic novel meets the outcome to "evaluate the effectiveness of different types of media texts for presenting ideas and information



Curricular Outcomes

The Flower Man

1. Identifying Theme and Summarizing the Story The lesson asks students to identify the main theme or message of the wordless book and write a summary sentence.

Grades 3-4: Students are expected to "summarize a text, including the main idea and key ideas" and learn that "summarizing includes identifying main ideas and using supporting evidence".

Grade 5: The outcome explicitly states that students must understand that "elements of fiction include theme, which is the underlying message of a text".

Grades 7-9: Students must "identify and discuss theme and point of view in oral, print and other media texts".

High School (Grades 10-12): Students are required to "summarize the plot of a narrative, describe its setting and atmosphere, describe development of conflict, and identify theme".

2. Making Text Connections The consolidation activity requires students to write down how the theme relates to them via "text to self, text to text or text to world".

Grades 3-4 & 5-6: The curriculum directly mirrors this activity, requiring students to make "connections with texts that can provide evidence include text to self, text to text, text to world".

Grades 7-9: Students must "relate the themes, emotions and experiences portrayed in oral, print and other media texts to issues of personal interest or significance".

High School (Grades 10-12): This aligns with General Outcome 2.3.1, "Connect self, text, culture and milieu," where students "respond personally and analytically to ideas developed in works of literature and other texts".

Curricular Outcomes

The Flower Man

3. Word Choice, Creative Writing, and Poetry The activity tasks students with brainstorming 3-5 descriptive words per page and ultimately creating a thematic poem or a full-sentence storybook.

Grades 3-4: This aligns with writing craft outcomes where "in creative writing, word choice includes interesting details that keep audiences engaged". It also hits poetry outcomes where students "experiment with creating verse, free verse, or concrete poetry" or "poetry of various structures".

Grades 5-6: The activity matches outcomes for applying creative-thinking processes where "words can create effects or emphasis, including simplicity, clarity, colourfulness, precision, appeal".

Grades 7-9: Students are expected to "choose forms or genres of oral, print or other media texts for the particular affects they will have on audiences and purposes" and "experiment with figurative language, illustrations and video effects to create visual images, provide emphasis or express emotion".

High School (Grades 10-12): This aligns with specific outcomes for creating text: "1.1.2 Experiment with language, image and structure" and "4.2.3 Consider and address matters of choice," where students "use words and expressions appropriately... to evoke images in poetry and narrative texts".

4. Group Collaboration and Gallery Walk The lesson relies heavily on group work, consensus building (choosing the final words and sticky notes), and viewing other groups' work.

Grades 7-9: Aligns with General Outcome 5.2, "Work within a group," where students "contribute collaboratively in group situations, by asking questions and building on the ideas of others".

High School (Grades 10-12): This activity matches General Outcome 5.2.1: "Cooperate with others, and contribute to group processes," where students must "respect, be open to, and be supportive of the thoughts, opinions and contributions of others in a group".

2024-2028 GPCSD 4 YEAR PD PLAN



Building Thinking Classrooms (ALL subjects) and Assessment

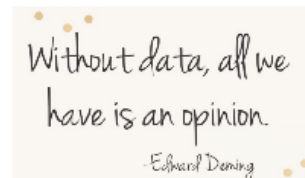
4 Years At a Glance

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 and 4
District grade level groups Building Thinking Classrooms - Back to the basics Assessment: Outcome Mapping	District subject area groups Building Thinking Classrooms Toolkit Assessment: Triangulation and Feedback	District grade level groups Assessment Practices through Building Thinking Classrooms. Outcome Based Assessment

- begin lessons with good tasks
- form visibly random groups
- use vertical non-permanent surfaces
- verbal instructions
- de-front the classroom
- answer only keep thinking questions

- use mindful notes
- build autonomy
- use hints and extensions to manage flow
- level to the bottom
- assign check your understanding questions

- communicate where a student is and where they are going
- evaluate what you value
- report out based on data (not points)



"I wanted to build, what I now call, a thinking classroom – a classroom that is not only conducive to thinking but also occasions thinking, a space that is inhabited by thinking individuals as well as individuals thinking collectively, learning together, and constructing knowledge and understanding through activity and discussion."

- Peter Liljedahl

SESSION 1	
All Admin in district (Principals and Assistant Principals)	Kyle Webb BTC Day 1
Teachers new to BTC - volunteer	Kyle Webb BTC Day 2
Teacher leads and school leads	Kyle Webb BTC Day 3
SESSION 2	
All Admin in district (Principals and Assistant Principals)	Kyle Webb BTC Day 4
Teachers new to BTC - volunteer	Kyle Webb BTC Day 5
Teacher leads and school leads	Kyle Webb BTC Day 6
SESSION 3	
All Admin in district (Principals and Assistant Principals)	Kyle Webb BTC Day 4
Teachers new to BTC - volunteer	Kyle Webb BTC Day 5
Teacher leads and school leads	Kyle Webb BTC Day 6

Thursday, August 29 th	School-Based
Friday, August 30 th	AM School Based
	PM District Mass
Friday, September 20 th	School-based
Friday, October 25 th	Division – Collaborative Groups
Friday, November 22 nd	Division – Collaborative Groups
Friday, December 13 th	District Wellness Day
Friday, January 31 st	School-Based
Friday, February 28 th	Division – Collaborative Groups
Friday, March 21 st	Division – Collaborative Groups
Friday, May 16 th	Division – Collaborative Groups
Friday, June 6 th	School-Based

TRAINING DAYS

Train the Trainer K-9	Wednesday, Oct 9
Train the Trainer 10-12	Wednesday, Oct 10
Train the Trainer K-9	Wednesday, Nov 6
Train the Trainer 10-12	Thursday, Nov 7
Train the Trainer K-9	Wednesday, Jan 15
Train the Trainer 10-12	Thursday, Jan 16
Train the Trainer K-9	Wednesday, March 12
Train the Trainer 10-12	Thursday, March 13
Train the Trainer K-9	Wednesday, May 7
Train the Trainer 10-12	Thursday, May 8

Feedback

Student Perspectives	Teacher Perspectives
<p><i>"I like random groups because you can get a perspective of how others think and how they learn."</i></p>	<p><i>"We were able to cover complex topics in much less time than a lecture format, as they had discovered the concepts themselves."</i></p>
<p><i>"I hate it, but truthfully it helps me learn... It makes me really think out of the box."</i></p>	<p><i>"My non-readers were able to participate in groups... it puts every student on the same level."</i></p>
<p><i>"It helps me because it makes me think more and then I will most likely remember it more."</i></p>	<p><i>"It almost forces students to think where they have gotten used to being provided 'the answer'."</i></p>
<p><i>"I am a physical learner and if I don't write it down or try it out I won't understand."</i></p>	<p><i>"My lowest students are still engaged in meaningful group discussions and feel like they are part of a team."</i></p>

Our Responsibility

Why do this?

- If we're not talking about teaching and learning, who is?
- Instructional Leadership is the establishment of processes, tools, and a learning culture in which the work of effective teaching can happen.
- Instructional Leadership ensures that pedagogical quality remains the top priority.



Closing Comments

Create an environment where students and staff enjoy coming to school!

Leadership requires two things: a vision of the world that does not yet exist, and the ability to communicate it.— Simon Sinek

You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together we can do great things.— Mother Teresa



Spoon feeding in the long run, teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon.—E. M. Forster

*Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.
- John F. Kennedy*

You can't do this on your own. If you don't have a team, develop one.

Instructional leadership is not about improving teachers...it is about creating conditions where teachers can improve themselves. - Douglas Fisher

Thank you for your time 😊

