

Learning for a Sustainable Future's

Thinking Forward

*Back to School Toolkits for Building
Classroom Communities in a Pandemic World*



Grades K-1

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Thinking Forward Toolkit

Rationale

Teachers will be greeting new groups of students this year after many unique and challenging months of schooling. They will be eager to begin learning together again and to build the skills, knowledge and understanding so beneficial to all students. But there are many important lessons from the past months that we don't want to miss or forget. In spite of severe restrictions, uncertainty and physical and mental challenges, there have been countless examples of adaptability, creativity and transformational actions.

Purpose and Focus of the Toolkits

These toolkits will provide educators with sessions for reflection and thinking about the Pandemic experience in a thoughtful, proactive and engaging way. They are designed for primary, junior, middle school and high school levels. The material and activities are age appropriate, applicable to diverse learners and can connect to any subject discipline or curriculum.

The focus is on key concepts which will help students to move forward with new awareness, resilience and optimism for the future. While each session connects to students' experiences, the concepts investigated are also linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, allowing students to see how their learning is useful and to act on it.



Overview

What is in the toolkit?

There are 4 sessions containing outlines, activities, and resources to explore concepts. Each lesson is designed to be 45 minutes to 1 hour in length:

Session One: The introduction to the Thinking Forward process includes creating a safe space and essential agreements for listening and responding with respect and the power of diverse perspectives. Teachers will already be working on core social skills for creating a positive learning culture, so this lesson will be useful beyond the Thinking Forward lessons.

Session Two: The session explores the concepts of Adaptability and Creativity. These qualities were critically important skills and so often exhibited throughout the year. Students will be encouraged to reflect on the many ways things changed rapidly in their world to keep them safe and to continue learning, working and staying connected. The role of technology, the importance of nature and green spaces, the adaptations made in business, health and government practices could all be included.

Session Three: This session explores the concept of trust in the Scientific Method for Evidence-Based Decisions and Actions. Many have described the last year as living through the “world’s largest science experiment”. What have we learned about seeking trusted sources and having to wait for validated results of tests and data before acting? How can we use this understanding going forward in evaluating information, seeking validated facts, managing our emotions throughout the process and taking responsible action?

Session Four: This session explores the concepts of Interconnection, interdependence and citizenship. It looks at the importance of our human connections, our societal systems and our interconnected natural world. How did we try to maintain our connections in the last year? What worked for us? What is our responsibility in helping keep ourselves safe and to help others keep safe. “What do we want to maintain and improve in our systems going forward?”

“The trees act not as individuals, but somehow as a collective. Exactly how they do this, we don’t yet know. But what we see is the power of unity. What happens to one happens to us all. We can starve together or feast together.”

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass

- The sessions can take place in any learning space, including in class, online, or outside in nearby nature.
- Several strategies are taken from LSF’s climate change education resource, [Empowering Learners in a Warming World](#) which includes [42 active learning strategies](#).
- In addition, many resources included can be accessed on LSF’s [Resources for Rethinking database](#)
- Also check out this [Emotional Resilience Toolkit for Climate Work](#) and this article, [SDGs- Why it Matters](#)

Important Note: Getting to know students at the beginning of the year is a common school practice. For many reasons, it will be important for teachers to have any information that might make this year more challenging or make reflection on the past year especially difficult for an individual student.

[Learning for a Sustainable Future \(LSF\)](#) is a Canadian charity founded in 1991 to promote, through education, the knowledge, skills, values, perspectives, and practices essential to a sustainable future.

Session 1 - Key Concepts: Uniqueness and Diversity

Background Information

The introduction to the Thinking Forward process includes creating a safe space and essential agreements for listening and responding with respect and the power of diverse perspectives. Teachers will already be working on core social skills for creating a positive learning culture, so this lesson will be useful beyond the Thinking Forward lessons

Provocation

Read [What Makes Us Unique? Our First Talk About Diversity](#) by Dr. Jillian Roberts

- Look at the [front of the book](#).
- What do you think this book might be about?
- What do you think the person on the cover might learn about?

Circle Discussion (indoor/outdoor)

Possible questions (Write down any thoughts or questions that the students might come up with):

Were you the same as any of the characters (people) in the book? | What question might you ask one of the characters in the book? | What differences might make us scared or nervous? | Why?

[Knowledge Building Circles - Kindergarten](#) (outside if possible)

One thing we learned is that we all like different things and that we are all unique but still very similar. Learn how to do a knowledge building circle and talk about the importance of respectful listening.

Possible Questions:

How should we set up our classroom so that everyone feels included? | Would other students we saw in the book need different things in the classroom?

Activity (indoor)

Students will appreciate diversity and learn that they are unique individuals. Students will acknowledge our similarities with one another and with others in the world.

Option 1

Create a unique person and share their qualities: [Everybody Is Unique](#)

Other possible questions:

- How does your unique friend like school?
- How did your friend feel when they had to stay home during COVID?
- How do you think other children in the world felt?

Taking Action: *Allowing time for students to take action is an essential part of the learning process*

Brainstorm some ideas to act on [UN Sustainable Goal #3: Good Health and Well-being: Why it matters](#)

What could we do to make people feel welcome when they come to our school? | What could we do to help the students in other classes feel welcome and included? | What could we do in our class to learn more about each other?



Session 2 - Key Concepts: Adaptation and Creativity

Background Information

The session explores the concepts of **Adaptability** and **Creativity**. These qualities were critically important skills and so often exhibited throughout the year. Students will be encouraged to reflect on the many ways things changed rapidly in their world to keep them safe and to continue learning, working and staying connected. The role of technology, the importance of nature and green spaces, the adaptations made in business, health and government practices could all be included.

Provocation

Choose one of Sandra Markle's Books:
What If You Had Animal.... (Teeth, Hair, Ears, Tails, Noses, Feet or Eyes)?

Learn about animal adaptations so that students understand human adaptations and creativity.

Watch [What If You Had Animal Ears by Sandra Markle](#)

Possible Questions:

- What do you think this book will be about?
- What is a predator and prey?
- Why do the animals need to adapt?
- What adaptation would you like to have?
- Why?

Circle Discussion (indoor/outdoor)

[KWL Chart – Empowering Learners in a Warming World](#)

How did we adapt during Co-vid so that we could all stay safe?

- What do we know about masks?
- What do we want to learn about masks?
- What did we learn about masks? (*After research and learning*)

Activity (indoor)

Objectives:

- Students identify the different purposes for wearing masks
- Students will create a mask design that expresses an aspect of their culture or identity.

[Face Mask Lesson Plan](#)

Taking Action: *Allowing time for students to take action is an essential part of the learning process*

Brainstorm some ideas to act on:

- [UN Sustainable Goal #9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure](#). Could we design face masks that share positive messages? How could we encourage people to be outside more?
- [UN Sustainable Goal #10: Reduced Inequalities: Why it matters](#). How can we make sure all the children in Canada and other countries have face masks?



Session 3 - Key Concepts: Facts and Feelings

Background Information

This session explores the concept of trust in the Scientific Method for **Evidence-Based Decisions and Actions**. Many have described the last year as living through the “world’s largest science experiment”. What have we learned about seeking trusted sources and having to wait for validated results of tests and data before acting? How can we use this understanding going forward in evaluating information, seeking validated facts, managing our emotions throughout the process and taking responsible action?

Provocation

Watch [House Hippos](#)

Possible Questions:

- Is this true?
- Do we have house hippos in Canada?
- Is everything we hear and see true?
- How can we find out if it is true?

Discussion

[Four Corners – Empowering Learners in a Warming World](#)

Put yes, no, maybe or I don’t know signs up in the four corners of the classroom.

[Coronavirus myths and facts for kids](#)

Make statements about the coronavirus and get the students to move to the corner that they think is correct. Ask them to talk about the different statements and their beliefs

Activity 3

Watch [The Color Monster, A Story About Emotions by Anna Llenas | Children's Books | Storytime with Elena](#)

[RA The Color Monster](#) (adapted from this lesson)

Write the words ANGRY, SAD, SCARED, CALM, HAPPY on the board. Read the monster cards (page 14/15) and have the children make up their own. Have the students sort the monster’s based on what they are doing.

Talk about the Coronavirus and how it makes us feel.

- Do you feel different at different times? Why?
- Have you felt some of these or all of these emotions? When?

UN Sustainable Goal #3: [Good Health and Well-being: Why it matters](#)

Learn how to do Sit Spots outside as a coping, relaxation strategy as well as a learning activity. (you may have to have the students find a quiet spot by a window if you are indoors)

Start with one minute and increase your time every day or week.

At school, we travel outside as a class with our [Sit Upon](#). We quietly move about the playground and find a place that we will go back to every week. We are a minimum of two metres apart and we sit quietly observing what is around us.

Taking Action

UN Sustainable Goal #12: [Responsible Consumption & Production: Why it matters](#)

[How to Make a Sit-Up on Out of a Reusable Shopping Bag](#). Teach other classes how to make a sit-up on.

Brainstorm other ways to reduce consumption and production in the classroom, school and community.



Session 4 - Key Concepts: Helping Each Other and Connectedness

Background Information

This session explores the concepts of **Interconnection, interdependence and citizenship**. It looks at the importance of our human connections, our societal systems and our interconnected natural world. How did we try to maintain our connections in the last year? What worked for us? What is our responsibility in helping keep ourselves safe and to help others keep safe. What do we want to maintain and improve in our systems going forward?

Provocation

Watch [The Peace Book](#)

**Sept 21st is World Peace Day UN*

Possible Questions:

- How is peace keeping the water blue for fish?
- Why is it important to keep the water blue for everyone?
- How is peace reading different kinds of books?
- Why is it important to give shoes to someone who needs them?
- How is peace everyone having a home?

Sharing Circle (outside is encouraged)

[Guide to Sharing Circles](#)

Begin and end with something that focuses the students. (could be as simple as a few deep breaths)

Possible question: When you had to stay home, what helped you and your family find peace?

**Students can pass if they aren't comfortable sharing.*

Activity 4a (Indoors or Outdoors)

Objectives:

- Students will learn some calming yoga poses
- Students will come up with their own peaceful yoga poses

[Peaceful Yoga Poses](#)

Activity 4b (Outdoors)

Students will recognize how peace looks or feels in their schoolyard or neighbourhood.

Instructions: Go on a neighbourhood/schoolyard walk and have the students use their senses to talk about the things that they see, hear, touch and smell that make them think of peace.

Taking Action

UN Sustainable Goal #16: [Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Why they matter](#)

Brainstorm: What can we do for World Peace Day? Who will we be helping?

(Focus on Inclusiveness in the classroom, school, community and world)



UN Sustainable Goal #2: [Zero Hunger: Why it matters](#)

"You can't build a peaceful world on empty stomachs and human misery." - [SDGs For Children | Community](#)

Do you think Covid made it hard for some people to get food? How can we help make sure that everyone has food in our school, community, world?

