

Math Lives Here: Helping Social Justice Take Flight

Primary Students Sound the Alarm: Finding Voice and Agency

>> We use student interest to motivate student action. You want the students to feel that their voice can make a difference, that it will change a decision in some way, shape or form. Not that just they'll be heard, but that they can change something. They can be impactful.

>> Why do you need to build a bridge?

>> I wonder why don't Metrolinx and Options for Davenport agree with each other?

>> You have another option instead of a bridge.

>> What will happen if you don't build the bridge right now?

>> Can you try to make the electric train first...

>> Why can't you make them electric now?

>> We don't want pollution in our community.

>> When we began, we had conversations about the bridge. And I tried very much to be an unbiased party. I tried very much not to sway them, and let all of the questions and all of the ideas come from the students.

>> Some people still don't know about the bridge. That's not fair. If people don't know about the bridge, then me and my class, we're going to tell people. And we told people. And now more people know.

>> We actually didn't know very much about the proposed bridge that was going to be built. So when they came home and started talking about that, and we were communicating with their teacher and coming to a meeting, that we actually -- my husband and I both came to the meeting that the Metrolinx had come into the classroom to have a meeting with the children. We came in, and we found out quite a bit more. We didn't even know about a lot of the issues that were happening with that bridge.

>> My students went from measuring the height of a bridge in a park to writing to the mayor of their city, persuading their city council to vote against the bridge 38 to 1, writing to the premier of their province, creating a persuasive video that centred around more than three math strand, with math facts, to support the position of the tunnel. They learned about the water cycle. They learned about acid rain. They learned about the effects of air and water pollution on their local watershed, and how a diesel train in their neighbourhood, or more than one diesel train, would affect their local air and water, their local watershed. We got an email addressed to my principal saying that Metrolinx would love to come and meet these grade twos,

and discuss and clarify any misunderstandings, or educate them on the reason that they were building the bridge.

>> This guy from Metrolinx came to our class and explained. We were asking him questions, and he answered our questions. And he was persuading us about the bridge.

>> I learned that Metrolinx is going to make diesel trains on the bridge.

>> A bid of people changed their mind about the tunnel, because now we knew that they would have to close down Campbell Park. I was thinking now I should vote for the bridge, because I think it would be worse if it was summer and people like to go there a lot, they would not be able to use it, or to go there.

>> I want the tunnel instead of the bridge, because I still don't think the bridge is a good idea.

>> I kind of like the idea of the train to go over and cars go under.

>> I think a good option is the tunnel, because it's less noisy and because it has less pollution.

>> You see the evidence, right, that happens in the classroom. And it's improved student learning, right? It's improved student engagement. It's improved the relationships between parents and community as well. You can see from the work that's been done here around the Metrolinx and the notion of a bridge versus a tunnel, so engaging not only the mayor, but the premier and the learning that's happened. So these grade two students realize that they have a voice in their community and in their world.

>> I wonder if the bridge will fall.