

1. What is our purpose?

To inquire into the following:

- **transdisciplinary theme**

How we express ourselves: An inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic.

- **central idea**

Signs and symbols can be used to communicate a message

Summative assessment task(s):

What are the possible ways of assessing students' understanding of the central idea?

Students will create their own sign or symbol reflecting on the message communicated through the sign or symbol and the features used.

Task: Communicate a message through creating a sign or symbol.

It can be presented in different ways - visual arts, IT, music.

Students create a mind-map to show the process and purpose of their sign or symbol. They must explain their mind-map to someone else.

What evidence, including student-initiated actions, will we look for? Students can

- *Identify signs and symbols used in the local community*
- *Discuss the reasons why signs and symbols are used*
- *Describe the features used to express a message*
- *Create and present signs and symbols*
- *Demonstrate an understanding of how signs and symbols can be used to communicate a message.*

The following transdisciplinary skills will also be assessed through this task:

Thinking skills: application – can apply their knowledge to create a sign or symbol in a variety of ways; metacognition – able to use reflection to improve and create new signs and symbols.

Class/grade:

Age group: 5-6 years

School:

School code:

Title: Signs and Symbols



PYP planner

Proposed duration: 12- 13 hours per week as follows
Japanese 45 min, Art 60 min, Music 45 min, Library 45 min, Maths 45x3
ICT 45x2 Language 45x3 Play 60x3

Number of weeks: 8 weeks

2. What do we want to learn?

What are the key concepts (form, function, causation, change, connection, perspective, responsibility, reflection) to be emphasized within this inquiry?

Key concepts: form, causation, function

Related concepts: communication, expression

What lines of inquiry will define the scope of the inquiry into the central idea?

- *Signs and Symbols (form)*
- *Reasons for signs and symbols (causation/function)*
- *Features used to communicate locally and globally (function)*

What teacher questions/provocations will drive these inquiries?

What is a sign or a symbol?

Why are signs and symbols used? (locally and globally)

What features are used to express a message through signs and symbols? (What makes a good sign?)

3. How might we know what we have learned?

This column should be used in conjunction with “How best might we learn?”

What are the possible ways of assessing students’ prior knowledge and skills? What evidence will we look for? What are the possible ways of assessing student learning in the context of the lines of inquiry? What evidence will we look for?

Students make a sign considering the colour, lines etc (preparation for summative task)

What will we be looking for? (related to lines of inquiry):

- *Identifies signs and symbols in the environment.*
- *Discusses the reasons why signs and symbols are used.*
- *Describes the features used in their sign or symbol to express a message.*

Play-based inquiries (linked to development of transdisciplinary thinking skills): As students are engaged in the play tasks, the teacher will question individual students to prompt and deepen their thinking. Teachers highlight each student’s understandings on a checklist. Play activities documented more fully in section 9, but include:

- *Design a personal logo to go on their school bag/ jumper or desk*
- *Design a sign or symbol to use in the classroom*
- *Paint signs and symbols using different techniques (e.g. colour, line width)*
- *Go on a symbol and shape hunt around the classroom*
- *Search through magazines/ junk material for signs and symbols*

What will we be looking for?

- *Applies their knowledge to create a sign or symbol in a variety of ways.*
- *Reflects to improve and create new signs and symbols*

5. What resources need to be gathered?

What people, places, audio-visual materials, related literature, music, art, computer software, etc, will be available? How will the classroom environment, local environment, and/or the community be used to facilitate the inquiry? *Range of written texts and visual texts (images) depicting literal and non-literal signs in the school and wider community.*

Picture books: Changes, the Tunnel, Zoo (by Anthony Browne); Rosie Sips Spiders, The Journey Home (by Alison Lester); Tuesday (by David Wiesner)

Possible primary resources: Sign writer, screen printer, environment walk around local area, sign language and designer, local road safety officer, local transport department; Environment walks

Thinking strategies including Six thinking hats (Edward De Bono); t-chart; y-chart

4. How best might we learn?

What are the learning experiences suggested by the teacher and/or students to encourage the students to engage with the inquiries and address the driving questions?

Provocation: Put up a barricade (flashing lights etc) across the door to the classroom and display a sign (eg. Stop – Beware, Enter at own risk etc). Follow this up with a class discussion. Firstly identify the problem and then ask 5 “why” questions to elicit and record student responses to the problem.

Signs we see in our school: Go on a signs/symbols hunt around the school. Record wonderings and findings (T-chart).

What makes a good sign and symbol? Record student responses.

Signs in our community: During class sharing circle, ask students to interpret and explain features (e.g. shape, size, location) of examples of signs (advertising, road signs and packaging etc). Link discussion to teacher questions.

Using magazines, brochures, empty packages etc students find examples of signs and symbols. What is the purpose of each? What techniques are used to create signs?

Bundling activity: In small groups, sort and classify signs and symbols into various groupings. Do this more than once, leading students towards developing a list of purposes for signs (e.g. classifications, such as safety). Discuss and record purposes with whole class.

Play-based inquiries (see box 9)

Display classifications on posters and keep adding student thinking to display. Throughout the unit students add signs to the display as they find more.

Roleplay scenarios where signs and symbols are used

Visual arts: Explore features used on signs (colour, line, shape, tone)

IT: students create/design signs/symbols in kidpix. During a gallery walk to look at each other’s work, students can give feedback on designs in order to make improvements.

Japanese: Explore similarities and differences in signs used and message conveyed through Kanji characters

Performing arts (music): Inquire into symbols that represent loud and soft, thick and thin texture and high and low sounds

Thinking carousel: Students walk around the room and add their responses to various wall charts linked to the three teacher questions. This is leading to the development of criteria for what makes a sign or a symbol work well (e.g. colour, words, symbols)?

What would happen in a world without signs and symbols? What this would look like, feel like, sound like? Record on a Y-chart.

Take your stance: Do we need signs and symbols? Debate your position.

What opportunities will occur for transdisciplinary skills development and for the development of the attributes of the learner profile?

Learner profile: thinker, communicator, reflective

In addition to the development of thinking skills (application and metacognition) it is anticipated that this unit will provide natural and authentic opportunities to develop communication skills, in particular viewing and non verbal communication

Attitudes: Creativity and confidence

6. To what extent did we achieve our purpose?

Assess the outcome of the inquiry by providing evidence of students' understanding of the central idea. The reflections of all teachers involved in the planning and teaching of the inquiry should be included.

We changed the central idea and the lines of inquiry to more child friendly language. All children demonstrated an understanding that a sign or symbol communicates a message - we believe this is due to a collaborative approach with all single-subject teachers.

All specialists were pleased to use the same approach to teaching the features and using the same language to talk about signs and symbols. This provided a cohesive and connected learning experience for the students.

IT: students were able to learn new skills in kidpix (ie paintbrush, drawing and adding sound). The gallery walk was a successful way to self reflect and peer assess. Next time it would be good to have two lessons a week so skills are reinforced, rather than spaced out over the term. All students were able to create a sign and convey a message.

Japanese: Students were able to understand the meanings of the different kanji characters. We allowed for differentiation by introducing the Japanese names for some students.

Visual arts: Learning the features individually with a follow-up activity enabled students to create a sign or symbol using all those features. Also, the students developed art skills such as collage, printing, colour and line. Next time having Teacher Support would benefit the students when requiring help.

Performing arts (music): Students focused on one musical symbol at a time, and were able to practise and apply their knowledge.

How you could improve on the assessment task(s) so that you would have a more accurate picture of each student's understanding of the central idea.

The reflection task was successful because we could understand most children's thinking. However scribing was required for the 'Mind Mapping' task. Next year we could split the summative reflection up, therefore enabling more children to have success without scribing,

Focusing on the transdisciplinary skill assessment was very successful as it showed the children who were able to apply their knowledge and skills during play-based inquiries or with single-subject teachers – therefore being transdisciplinary!

What was the evidence that connections were made between the central idea and the transdisciplinary theme?

We found that a strong connection could be made between the central idea and the transdisciplinary theme of How we express ourselves. The children were given the opportunity to explore and discover in more creative ways with a wider variety of signs and symbols (mathematics, advertising, Japanese etc). Reflecting after play helped the children to always comeback to and have a deeper understanding of the three teacher questions.

Children were continuously creating, inquiring, making connections and applying their knowledge in all curriculum areas in order to express their understanding and their ideas about the unit.

7. To what extent did we include the elements of the PYP?

What were the learning experiences that enabled students to:

- **develop an understanding of the concepts identified in “What do we want to learn?”**
- **demonstrate the learning and application of particular transdisciplinary skills?**
- **develop particular attributes of the learner profile and/or attitudes?**

In each case, explain your selection.

By providing a range of frontloading experiences about form and function of signs, symbols and sounds the teachers were able to see the development of each student's individual understanding throughout the unit. The concepts of form, function and causation were closely linked to the central idea, lines of inquiry and initial teacher questions and focusing on them during discussions helped support conceptual understanding.

The demonstration of communication skills was very evident. The students had to listen to directions, listen to and speak with others and communicate their learning in a range of modes, e.g. speaking – expressing ideas clearly and logically; stating opinions; non-verbal communication – recognizing the meaning of visual and kinesthetic communication; recognizing and creating signs; interpreting and utilizing symbols.

Many of the learning engagements provided the opportunity for us to observe the development of students as thinkers and communicators as well as demonstrate the attitudes of creativity and confidence.

8. What student-initiated inquiries arose from the learning?

Record a range of student-initiated inquiries and student questions and highlight any that were incorporated into the teaching and learning.

Looking at advertising signs from a primary resource without being directed to by a teacher

In library time, students looked at the features that are used in maps (e.g. use of colour, arrows for directions, symbols for the countries)

Sign language

Using and creating signs for every day routines

What student-initiated actions arose from the learning?

Record student-initiated actions taken by individuals or groups showing their ability to reflect, to choose and to act.

The children created their own signs, symbols and sounds

Found signs, symbols and sounds around the school (during lunch and recess times)

Found signs and symbols at home and in other environments.

Signs around their environment (i.e. finding mathematics symbols when doing addition, and symbols in/on books and with music)

A child created a 'No Pram' sign for display during Student Led Conferences

9. Teacher notes

Language - outcomes relating to visual literacy: including recognizes features in visual texts, e.g. product logos (see language addendum).

ICT - creates an image using a computer to convey a message

Play-based inquiry. The following learning engagements were set up during play based inquiry sessions. Teachers roamed to question students to prompt and deepen thinking. A class discussion took place at the end of each session with connections made back to the purpose of the unit as well as an opportunity to reflect.

- *Computers – Create a sign or symbol expressing a message.*
- *Visual literacy – Look for signs, symbols and shapes around the classroom. Record what symbols and shapes you see.*
- *Sort and classify the signs and symbols on the interactive whiteboard.*
- *Design a sign or symbol that communicates a message at school or at home.*
- *Make a sign or symbol using playdough. What colour did you use? What shapes did you use to make the sign or symbol?*
- *Construct a 3D sign or symbol using different materials.*
- *Look at a sign using de Bono's six thinking hats strategy: White hat – facts and information; Red hat – feelings and emotions; Black hat – critical judgement; Yellow hat – positive; Green hat – new Ideas; Blue hat – the big picture*

Play was an important part of our inquiry. During play sessions, students were able to apply their knowledge of creating and making a variety of signs. Reflection after play helped students to make changes and improvements to their work to help communicate their message more effectively.