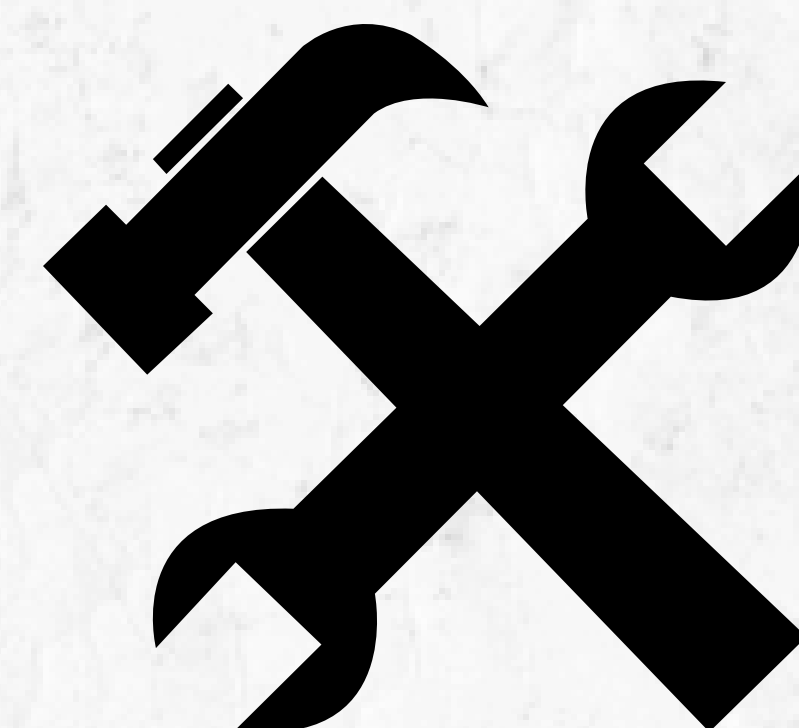


# USING MATERIALS AS THINKING TOOLS



Addison: I used to paint with them a lot but this time they worked differently. They made my brain work differently.



"When you have an idea, one of the big parts of growing that idea is putting it into a new language in art or words. It's like translating. Translating ideas helps other people to understand your ideas better.... Before you translate your idea through words or materials, you know it's there but you don't know what it is or how it works. As you change your idea into something you can say or see that other people can understand, then you sort of understand it better yourself. It's a way of understanding not just for other people, but for yourself." ~Lina

*"Some materials are good for getting unstuck, finding things, words, bringing up your story." ~Ace, age 7*

As you can see below, there many possibilities for the types of materials you can invite students to think with, and different materials offer different languages for thinking. Roberta Pucci says, "every material has its own qualities and personality. It is a kind of natural grammar. This grammar is the range of possible transformations that the material can undergo. You can have a dialogue with the material and the material will reveal itself to you."

A critical step in using materials for thinking is an exploration to discover the affordances and potential of each material. These explorations will allow you to determine, 'what can clay do?' *Once the affordances/grammar of a material have been determined*, students will have a greater understanding of what each type of material can offer them before they are asked to think with it.

## How are educators and students in the Central Okanagan Thinking With Materials?

In a grade 5 classroom, they are using materials to think about what they value about learning together.



In schools across the district, teachers and students are using materials to contemplate the question, "What is learning?" and "Is learning more like watercolour or acrylic paint?"



Is learning more like watercolour or acrylic paint?

Kateryna: I think learning is more like water colour, because it becomes soft when you add water to it. The water in learning is like the strategies. If you don't add water to water colour, then it can be more like acrylic. If you add water, then it gets easier. Water is like the practice.

A group of educators are using materials to think about the 7 OECD Principles of Learning and how they might use them to innovate teaching and learning.



Tiago: Mixing the colours is like being human, because we have a mix of emotions.

Clark: I'm painting happy colours because being who we are is being happy with who you are.



In a grade 3/4 classroom, they are using materials to think about the question: "What does it mean to be human?"

Amelia - This is Bitterroot and this is water going around it. The water is so that bitterroot can have a drink and survive.

Chief Bitterroot shows her heart by loving.



In a K classroom, they are using materials to think about the question, "How does Chief Bitterroot care for others and the land?" and "When do I feel like Chief Bitterroot?"

Gabby - The red is representing madness, injustice makes me angry, particularly Residential Schools. It makes me mad that Indigenous people were mistreated because of their culture.

It also makes me sad, which is why I added blue. I made an LGBTQ flag and I put a black line through it because not everyone is treated equally because of who they are.



Madi - I'm building on my exploration because it brought on an idea. Red and black are destruction, misery, and death. The yellow is people rising up against it.



In a grade 6 classroom, they are using materials to think about injustices in Canada.

Jaida - We start out and our identity is made up of other people and what they are telling us and what they are teaching us. That is the grey- you are not finding what you want.

You are darker and you are going lighter. When you reach that place that you are starting to find you self it is light. On my journey there are also tiny black spots because you are going to have experiences that make you fall back on those old teachings for a while.

I think you start out being taught by parents and elders and as you age you make more of your own decisions and influence yourself.

I believe that you are always looking for your identity, which is painful and beautiful because it is making you who you are.

I know for me, just this year I am realizing I can do things how I want too.



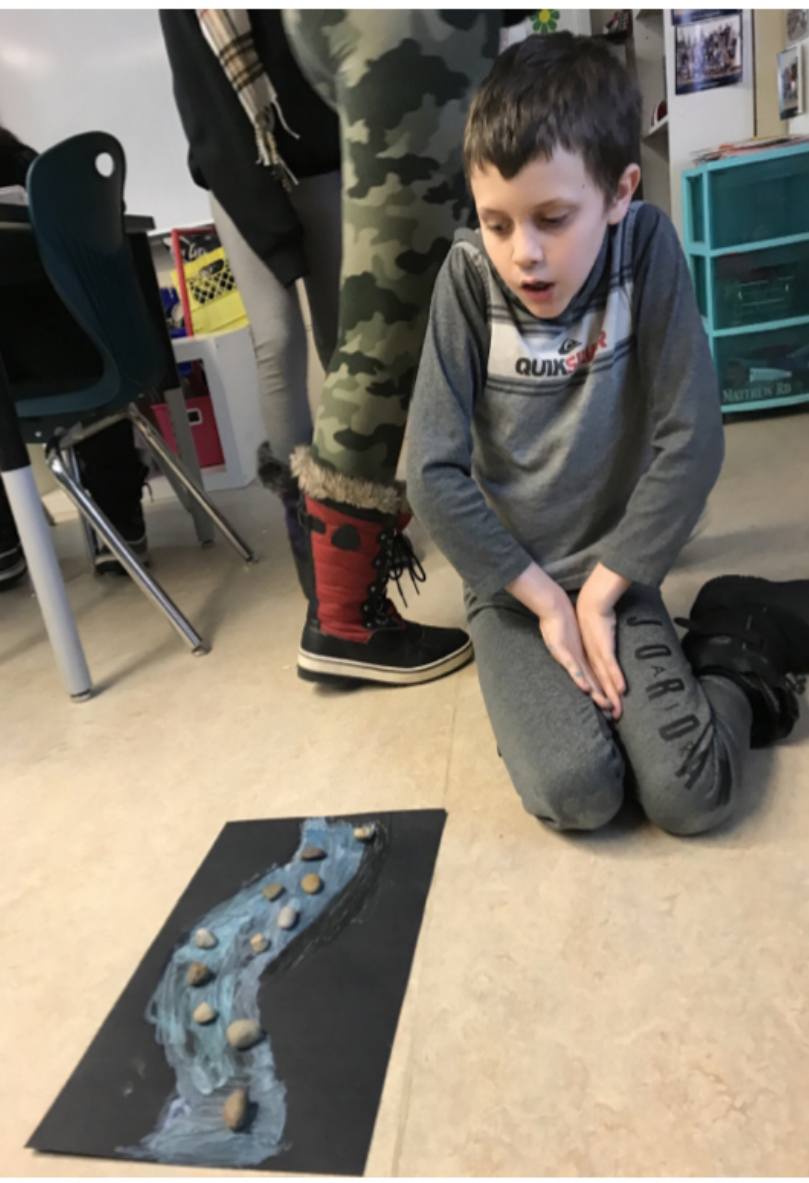
In a grade 10 classroom they are using materials to think about their identity - "Who am I?"




In a grade 5 classroom, students are using materials to reflect on how they are growing their core competencies. They are thinking about, "how can I advocate for myself?"

Kylar - The river is what you say and what are your rights, but the rocks are people who don't agree with you or try to take away your rights.

I was thinking about showing the limits, but then I realized there aren't really limits because those people can't limit you.





My topic is mental illness. The feather represents that no one is the same, just like no feather is the same. We try to put people in cages, but if you push hard enough you can break free and become shiny. The rock shows us that everyone is beautiful, despite the rough edges. ~Taylor

In a grade 12 class, students are exploring how using materials can help them to think about complex ideas.

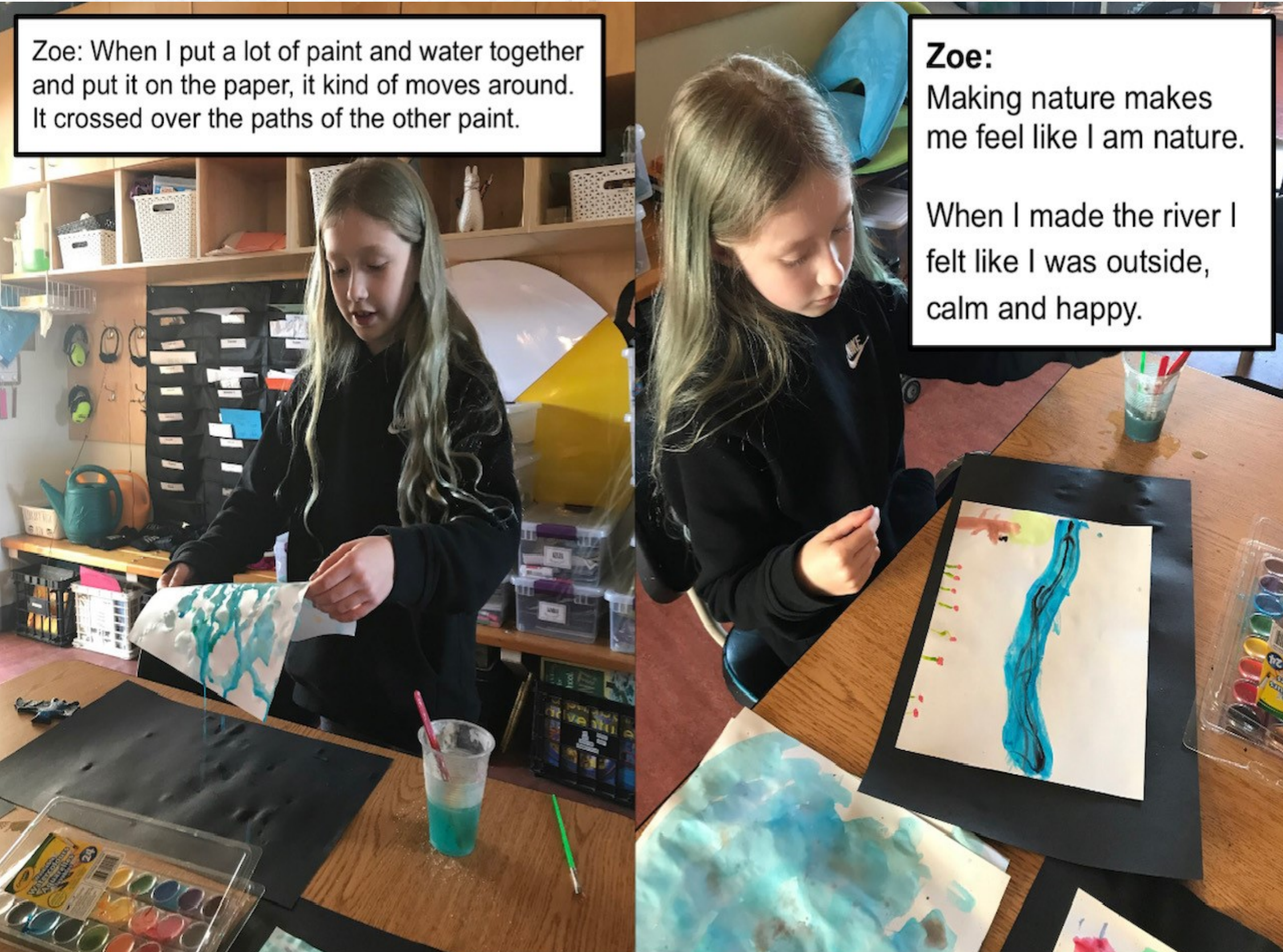


In a grade 3 classroom, students are using materials to think about nature and why it is important for them to care about it.

Zoe: When I put a lot of paint and water together and put it on the paper, it kind of moves around. It crossed over the paths of the other paint.

Zoe: Making nature makes me feel like I am nature.

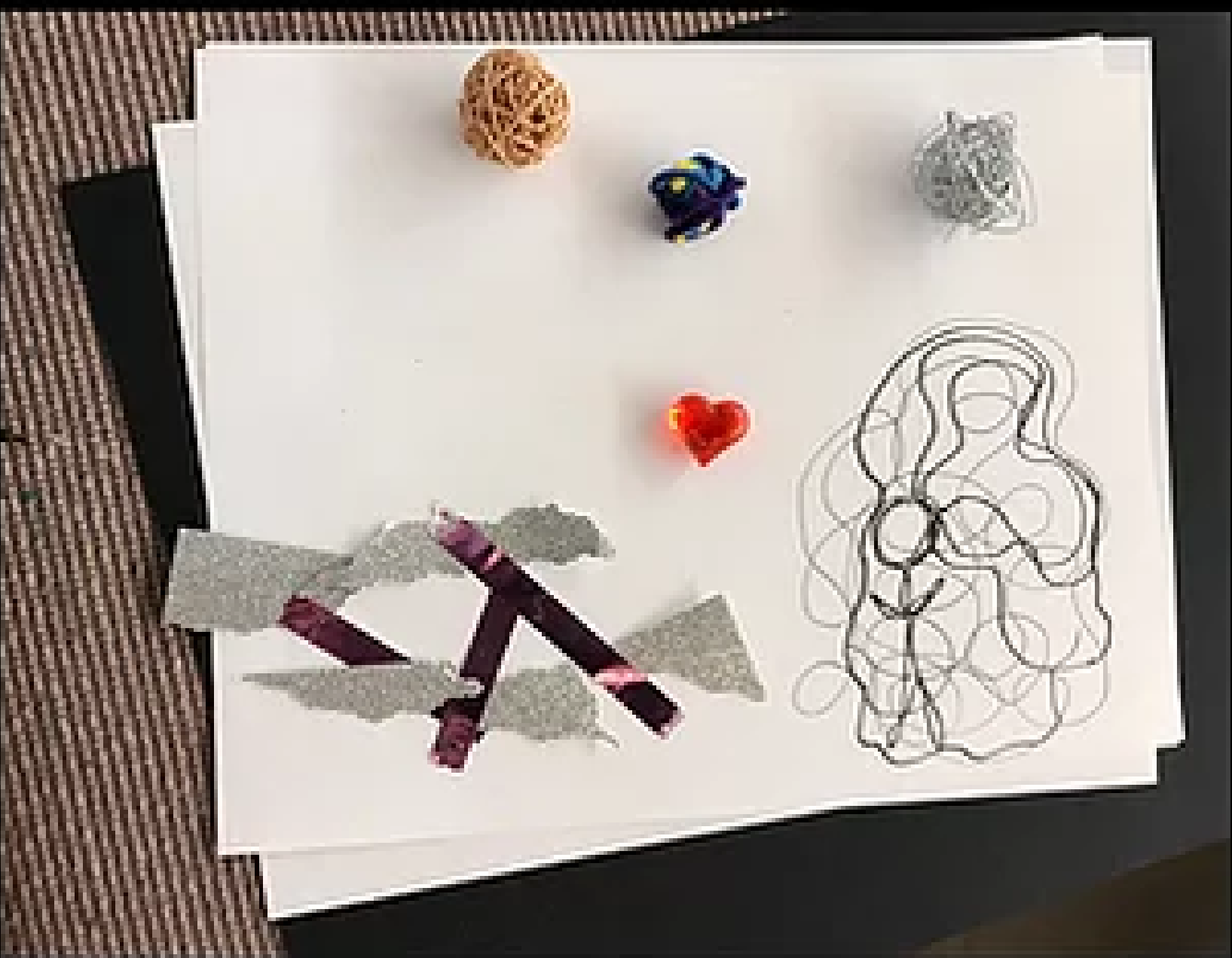
When I made the river I felt like I was outside, calm and happy.



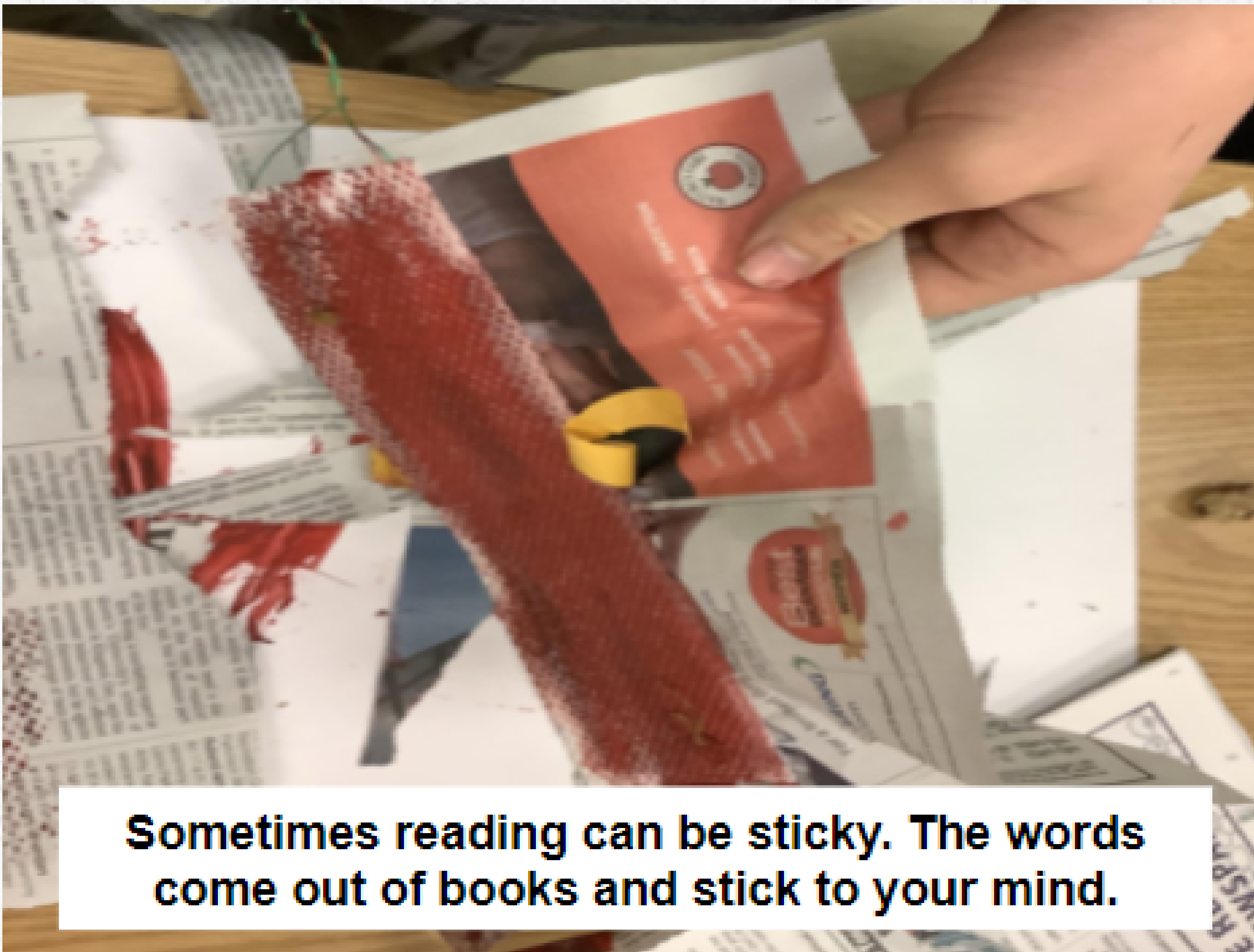
In schools across the district, students are using materials in story workshop to find the stories that they want to write about.



Mikayla: Novel - It's kind of a funny story. Craig is stuck in his own head and the heart represents the good in his life. The other items represent the struggle he has with his mental illness. The wire represents his family. I chose wire because it represents a strong bond. The tape represents the little that come and go.




In middle and secondary schools, students are using materials to think about what they are learning from the books they are reading in their lit circles.



Sometimes reading can be sticky. The words come out of books and stick to your mind.

Middle school students are using materials to think about books and reading.

Lemmy: I am thinking about love and how I can make it happen. The wire is kind of like love because it can go all in different ways.



Riley: I made an "idea catcher." When I think about injustice, I think that ideas can start arguments, but they can also help solve problems and help us move forward. My idea catcher catches those ideas.