



The Search for Syrup Curriculum Ideas

We're thrilled to present *Search for Syrup* curriculum ideas curated by early education expert, (and Viri's mom!) Sarah Cady Becker. These ideas can be used for classroom, distance learning, or home-schooling, depending on materials available and appropriateness for the group of children. These can also be used by parents and their children as fun activities at home. Our lessons can be adapted for children from preschool through older elementary school.

1. Create Your Own Search for Syrup Characters

The characters in *The Search for Syrup*, like Koala Pear, and Bumble Pea are composites of our favorite animals and comfort foods. Have your children invent new animal/food characters!

- After reading the *The Search for Syrup*, have the whole group brainstorm a list of favorite animals.
- Next, in either the large group or small groups, have them brainstorm a list of favorite foods.
- Now, challenge the children to combine an animal name with a food to come up with a new character.
- Animals with two part names such as Bumble and Bee work well as do animal names with multiple syllables; for example, Alligator could become Alli-tater, a combination of Alligator and Tater tot!
- If the children have broken into smaller groups, have them bring ideas back to the group
- Have the children utilize whatever art materials are available to bring these new characters to life!



HOW TO ADAPT FOR DIFFERENT LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

For distant learners or home-school learners

- Have children represent their character with paper and any available kind of drawing materials such as crayons, markers, or pencils to share the results on-screen.
- Those with scissors, glue, and colored paper could also use those.
- Additionally children could do a digital representation with a Paint or Photoshop program.
- Encourage detail in whatever way a child chooses to work.

For in-school

- Choose from whatever mediums are accessible in your classroom: Drawing materials, papers or collage materials.
- Additional alternatives could include paint, clay, or plasticine.
- Consider making the same characters on a different scale or dimension - Go very large! Go 3-D!



2. Circle Story Adventures for The Children's New Characters

This exercise is an add-on to the first curriculum! Now that you have new characters, create large or small group circle stories.

- Have the group select a few of the newly created characters to use in a large or small group circle story.
- Let the group know this will be a brand new adventure story.
- Have one of the children offer a few sentences to begin the story, then proceed around the circle for each child to add a new brief piece to the story.
- Keep the turns for contributions going as long as it makes sense.
- Consider having a teacher (or a child in an older group) write the story down or audio or video record the storytelling so that it can be transcribed later.
- Have the children illustrate pages of the new story.
- A whole new classroom book (or several) can be published for your classroom!
- Share the stories with parents on your classroom blog, or in a classroom reading where the class showcases their new authors and illustrators!



HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF CIRCLE STORYTELLING

- Sometimes children become upset if the idea they had contributed takes an unexpected turn with the next child. Before beginning the group storytelling, share that everyone will have a turn to be the author and, “we’ll see how it turns out!” If disappointment comes up during the process, you can remind them, “remember, so and so gets to be the author now.”
- Children often want to add details to circle stories that come from other stories, TV, or movies. Urge them to tell a story today that has “never been heard on earth before” to encourage their creativity.
- When children are stuck coming up with an idea, prompt them with a question. “Such and such just happened. Where are they? What does it look like there? How does the character feel? What’s going to happen next?”
- Occasionally review the action. Ask, “What would be an interesting detail to add now? How can we find an ending? What other action needs to happen to help resolve our problem?”

- In groups of children, sometimes violent details can arise in their told stories. Decide ahead of time if there are any agreements the group can make about how to deal with violent details if something comes up. How can problems in the story be solved without hurting or weapons? If you have a classroom agreement where the group norm is “no hurting or everyone stays safe,” then that can be true for telling or writing stories as well.

3. Act Out the The Search for Syrup!

A wonderful way to deepen the reading of our book is to act out the story! This can be done as a simple play-acting exercise in class circle or as a full-fledged ‘theater’ production. The children can be the actors or they can create a puppet show!

Make the production with children as actors:

- Work with the children to list out the characters in the book; they will become the characters in the production.
- There are likely more children in the class than characters in the book:
 - › What other characters can the children invent that the characters might meet along the way to the pancake palace?
 - › Elements of the various places on the adventure can become characters with simple spoken lines. For instance, can the “oat boat” talk? What might the broccoli trees have to say? Have the children look through the book and suggest what in the illustration could be brought to life.
 - › Additionally, are there roles for stage managers, acting coaches, costume designers, musicians, or even lighting designers?

Make the production a puppet show:

If your children are interested in making physical representations of characters, a puppet show can be great fun for smaller groups!

- Puppets can be made from tongue depressor sticks and card stock or decorated sock puppets.
- For more elaborate puppets, create them by sewing and making papier mache heads.
- Turn a table on its side to become a puppet theater behind which children can hide.





PLAY ACTING

For the youngest groups:

- The children can simply act out the story as the teacher reads the book or a narrative that the children have helped to create.
- Have the children offer simple lines for each character for the teacher to write down and tuck into the story with post-it notes for the teacher to read the additional lines.

For all children:

- Before assigning roles, remind the children that all roles are equally important and that children can take another role when it's acted out another time.
- Ask the children what movements, gestures, or voices they can use to enhance their roles.
- Brainstorm simple props, scenery or costumes that they can make to help tell the story.

For older students:

- Have the whole group list the characters and scenes needed.
- Break up production responsibilities into smaller groups.
- Have each of these groups write a separate scene.
- Bring the scenes to the whole group.
- How will these scenes need to be reworked in order to have the whole play make sense?
- As with younger groups, decide on props, costumes, and scenery needed.
- Focus on movements to enhance the acting.
- Can the group add or create some music or songs?
- How about back-drop scenery?
- Rehearse with one scene at a time while the rest of the group works on other assignments until the scenes are ready to be practiced as a whole.
- Hooray! You have a play!
- Share the work!
 - › As with any great project, how can the work be shared with other classrooms or parents?
 - › For distance classrooms, plays can be acted out on Zoom, or create a live socially-distanced outdoor performance.
 - › Have the children share the process or the work on the classroom blog.



ABOUT SARAH CADY BECKER

Sarah was the founding director of the Williams College Children's Center. As an educational leader responsive to the ideas of children and the needs of families, she has extensive experience as an early childhood and elementary school teacher. Sarah has taught courses in early childhood education at the college level. As an agent of program enrichment and change, her focus has been to support professional inquiry and leadership as well as children's and teachers' strengths. Sarah has always incorporated movement, music, and the arts as well as project learning in her practice. Sarah is currently focused on learning through play, using loose parts as essential learning tools, emergent curriculum development, outdoor learning in nature, and the creation of inspiring environments.

SHARE YOUR WORK WITH US

We adore seeing your photos and videos interacting with *The Search for Syrup*, and we would love to see how you bring these curriculum ideas into your classroom. You can share your work with us by emailing thesearchforsyrup@gmail.com or DM'ing us on our Instagram [@searchforshrup](https://www.instagram.com/searchforshrup). When sharing classroom work or children's art, please comply with your school's confidentiality policies. We may be sharing this work online, so if you don't have direct parental permission for us to share, please block out children's faces before sending!

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