

**Early learning**

# Never too young for the joys of physics

Children have big ideas and big questions they are keen to explore.

In the French Immersion Early Learning Kindergarten classroom at Northeastern Elementary School recently, teacher Celeste Ovens-Lamothe and Early Childhood Educator Amy Rose invited the children to explore the properties of 3D shapes. The children were interested in how these different shapes moved. They noticed that some slid and others rolled.

In Rainbow Schools, early learners are encouraged to persist and find solutions. Children are challenged to use their observations to predict and draw conclusions.

They prompt them to think about how things work.

In Ovens-Lamothe's class at Northeastern, students explored the concept of force and looked at ways they could build on their knowledge.

The educators suggested a scavenger hunt outside. Students tried different types of balls on the slides and the hills. They sought out slopes to get things rolling, which also started the children's ideas about gravity rolling.

After Let's Talk Science representatives from Cambrian College visited the classroom to demonstrate friction, the children wanted to replicate the experiment on their own, which they did.

Ovens-Lamothe and Rose used YouTube videos to introduce Rube Goldberg machines to the kids. These machines



**Big ideas**  
Norm Blaseg

use a complicated and often humorous series of steps to achieve a simple task — the students found them hilarious.

Rose invited students to draw a plan for their own and four or five emerged using marbles, cars, trucks and dominos.

She then suggested students combine their designs to build a machine to crack an egg. The children have not yet accomplished the task of breaking the egg, but they have gained a deeper understanding of the fundamental concepts of physics — friction, force, actions and reactions.

When the students see themselves as scientists, they have fun — and learn a great deal — while exploring the world around them.

*Norm Blaseg is Director of Education for Rainbow District School Board.*



Reid Zakamarko (left) and Jack Leblanc, in Early Learning Kindergarten at Northeastern Elementary School, explore the principles of physics and gravity.

SUPPLIED



Inspired by participating in the bird count, Anelli Junkala makes herself some wings in the snow.

**Nature**

# Soaring into fun at the bird count

HEIDI ULRICHSEN  
Education reporter

Through a partnership between Conservation Sudbury, the Sudbury Ornithological Society, the Backyard Birder Nature Gift Shop and Friends of Lake Laurentian, young Sudburians had their first chance to take part in the Christmas Bird Count for Kids — a Birds Canada program, in late December.

Kids and their families learned about identifying bird and animal species common during the winter, and then went on a nature walk in the Sudbury Conservation Area. The Christmas Bird Count for Kids is meant to introduce children to bird identification while at the same time getting families outside during the winter, said Daniela Stuewer of Conservation Sudbury.

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