Educating About and With Technology: Empowering Indigenous Students and Communities

"Expressions of Ndee: Writing and Illustrating Apache Stories"

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Dedication:

Dedicated to the young storytellers of Alchesay High School—whose creativity, culture, and courage inspire every page. This curriculum is a space for your voices to rise, your ideas to shine, and your truths to be seen.

Topic and Context

The curriculum unit, "Expressions of Ndee: Writing and Illustrating Apache Stories," was born out of a deep desire to support Apache students in strengthening their writing skills while honoring their identities, culture, and lived experiences. Over the years, I have observed that traditional writing instruction often fails to fully engage Native students, especially when the writing is disconnected from who they are, where they come from, and the stories they carry. Designed to honor student voice and identity, this unit integrates reading and writing with cultural insight and creative storytelling.

This curriculum invites students to write and illustrate their own stories, blending personal experiences, community knowledge, and cultural themes into rich, meaningful narratives. Students can express themselves through comic strips, short illustrated memoirs, or creative fiction rooted in Apache values. The unit encourages them to find their voice and build confidence in using written language as a tool for expression, reflection, and growth. At the heart of this unit is storytelling, a timeless and deeply respected tradition in Apache life. By guiding students through structured writing exercises that lead to the creation of illustrated narratives, students strengthen their sentence structure, organization, and word choice while validating their own perspectives and experiences. For many learners, writing becomes less intimidating when it connects to home, family, and culture.

Visual elements such as drawing, sketching, and comic panels support writing development, particularly for students who struggle with traditional methods. In this unit, students use images to brainstorm, sequence events, and understand narrative flow, all while practicing written conventions in a context that feels purposeful and affirming. Expressions of Ndee is more than a literacy unit; it is a culturally responsive approach to instruction that nurtures both academic skills and personal identity. Each student-authored story fosters confidence in communicating who they are, where they come from, and how they see the world.

This curriculum is designed for special education students at Alchesay High School in Whiteriver, Arizona, on the lands of the White Mountain Apache Tribe. My students are vibrant, creative, and resilient learners who face diverse challenges in communication, reading, and writing. Many thrive when given opportunities to express themselves beyond traditional essays. Expressions of Ndee provide these opportunities through storytelling, drawing, and cultural reflection while building confidence as writers. Alchesay High School serves a unique and diverse student population deeply rooted in Apache culture and traditions. Connecting academic content to students' cultural identity, lived experiences, and creative strengths is essential to engaging them meaningfully in literacy.

This project is also deeply personal. Growing up with a cousin who is blind taught me the importance of describing the world with care, clarity, and feeling. Helping him "see" through words and storytelling gave me insight into how language and visuals work together. That experience inspired my exploration of visual storytelling as a literacy tool, especially for students with disabilities or those whose voices have been overlooked. Over the years, I have seen how comics, drawing, and storyboarding reduce anxiety, provide creativity, and help students build writing skills step by step.

The unit builds on Apache storytelling traditions by offering students the chance to study, reflect on, and adapt cultural stories, while creating their own graphic narratives that blend tradition with contemporary literacy practices. Activities are designed to be accessible and supportive, offering sentence starters, visual aids, peer collaboration, and one-on-one conferencing to meet diverse learner needs. Instruction unfolds through a scaffolded sequence: Direct Instruction paired with multimedia resources, Guided Practice enriched by Think-Pair-Share, Collaborative Learning supported by teacher check-ins, and Independent Creation that encourages student voice. The unit culminates in Presentations followed by self and peer reflection, honoring storytelling as both a personal and collective act.

Ultimately, Expressions of Ndee aims to help students grow as writers and storytellers while honoring their heritage, providing them with a platform to say, "This is who I am. This is where I come from. This is what matters to me.

Rationale

This curriculum unit, titled "**Expressions of Ndee: Writing and Illustrating Apache Stories,**" is designed to promote culturally responsive and inclusive literacy intervention designed for students with special needs at Alchesay High School, located in Whiteriver, Arizona, on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. The school serves a majority White Mountain Apache student population, many of whom bring with them deep cultural knowledge, linguistic diversity, and unique learning needs. Yet these strengths are often underrepresented or undervalued in conventional, text-centered curricula.

This unit seeks to address those gaps by integrating traditional Apache storytelling forms with contemporary visual literacy practices, particularly the use of graphic narratives. Through the medium of comics and illustrated stories, students are offered multimodal avenues for self-expression, narrative construction, and identity development—skills that are particularly vital for students with diverse learning profiles (Siegel, 2006; Kress, 2003). By incorporating both written and visual elements, the unit supports multiple means of representation and expression, aligning with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018).

My pedagogical approach to this unit is grounded in my personal and academic journey. Growing up with a cousin who is blind shaped my sensitivity to alternative forms of communication and meaning-making beyond standard visual and written text. This early exposure cultivated a lifelong commitment to exploring how visual storytelling can support accessibility and expression for students with disabilities. Later, through academic work in multimodal literacy and my professional experience teaching comics-based writing courses, I observed how visual narratives enable students, especially those with learning challenges, to articulate nuanced and emotionally resonant experiences that traditional essays often cannot capture (Low, 2012; Sousanis, 2015).

Through the study of traditional stories, students will engage in critical literacy practices that foster reflection on their identities, communities, and futures. The curriculum's design includes

scripting, visual composition, and collaborative workshops, all scaffolded to meet the needs of learners who may require differentiated instruction and individualized support (Tomlinson, 2014).

Furthermore, the integration of Apache cultural content is a deliberate response to the need for culturally relevant curricula that not only preserve language and tradition but also position Native youth as contemporary knowledge-makers. The stories, symbols, and moral frameworks embedded in traditional Ndee narratives offer a powerful foundation for student-authored texts. This unit aligns with the framework of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, which seeks to sustain linguistic and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling (Paris & Alim, 2017). Rather than simply celebrating Apache heritage, this curriculum encourages students to reinterpret and innovate within their cultural traditions as a way to affirm their identities and develop 21st century communication skills.

Instructional Guide

This curriculum unit covers core concepts in creative writing, visual composition, multimodal literacy, and culturally grounded storytelling, with the explicit goal of developing students' expressive language skills, narrative structure, and visual literacy while reinforcing cultural identity and self-advocacy through storytelling. Central to its design is a foundation in multimodal literacy theory, which supports diverse learners in accessing and expressing meaning through varied formats. Students engage in activities that emphasize the communicative potential of nontraditional literary forms like storyboards, comics, and digital collages. This reflects the multiplicity of ways they process and share ideas.

An important content component of the unit is its grounding in culturally grounded storytelling. As discussed by Paris and Alim (2017), this approach not only affirms students' cultural backgrounds but also invites them to transform and expand these traditions in modern contexts. This is particularly vital for Apache youth, who often experience cultural marginalization within mainstream curricula. By enabling students to create original narratives rooted in Apache cultural knowledge while using contemporary visual storytelling techniques, the unit offers a space for self-determination, creative agency, and cultural expression.

Storytelling is an important part of doing research. Using comics and animation are not only great for sharing ideas, but they are also helpful in making us critical thinkers. It helps break down complex topics into both pictures and words and connect different pieces of information into clear, powerful, and meaningful stories. It makes difficult topics more manageable and easier to understand.

In today's world, sharing research in a visually appealing way can have a strong and inclusive effect. Tools like comics and animation help us share stories that are engaging, appealing, and easy to remember. Digital comics are environmentally friendly, cost-effective and flexible (Ardianti et al., 2023; Narestuti et al., 2021). Using sequential illustrations to tell stories to effectively transmit culture and values to their children has been present since prehistoric humans painted a series of pictures on caves. In the foreword of *The 500 Years of Resistance*

Comic Book, "the strength of the comic book is how it uses minimal text with graphic art to tell the story, making it more accessible not only for youth, but for those who may not want to, or cannot, read at length about the history of colonialism" (Palmater, 2021).

The unit provides foundational instruction in narrative composition, focusing on essential literary elements: character, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution. These components are embedded in lesson sequences that address both expository and creative writing strategies, such as dialogue construction, descriptive language, pacing, and tone. Visual literacy objectives include understanding how images can carry narrative weight, convey emotional nuance, and reinforce or complicate the meaning of text (Siegel, 2006; Kress, 2003).

To ensure student success, background knowledge such as familiarity with basic narrative elements, foundational skills in visual representation like sketching or using visual organizers, and prior exposure to Apache oral traditions are important. Scaffolding will be provided through mentor texts, sentence starters, visual prompts, and small-group workshops, in line with differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018; Tomlinson, 2014).

This unit also applies the SAMR technology framework, introduced by Dr. Ruben Puentedura, to effectively integrate digital tools that enhance student learning. The SAMR model lays out four levels of online learning, presented roughly in order of their sophistication and transformative power: substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition (Terada, 2020).The lesson centers on having students create a comic strip that shares a Native American story, tradition, or cultural value. At the Substitution level, students use Canva or Pixton to create comic strips instead of drawing them by hand, maintaining the original task with a new medium. In the Augmentation phase, students enhance their comics using built-in features like template, drag-and-drop images, text formatting, and spell check, which improve functionality without altering the core objective.

As the lesson progresses to the Modification level, students work together online, add pictures, sound, or links to make the comic more interesting and educational. At the highest level, Redefinition, students share their comics with people outside the classroom—like other schools or tribal leaders—and start conversations about Native American culture.   As Terada (2020) notes, "Learning is fundamentally transformed at the 'redefinition' level, enabling activities that were previously impossible in the classroom." This approach not only deepens students' understanding of Native American culture but also empowers them to use digital tools for creative expression, collaboration, and authentic communication.

Canva or Pixton is an easy-to-use, intuitive application that can be accessed by both students and teachers without requiring any software installation. They are especially effective for this unit as it offers pre-made templates and customizable layouts, allowing students to experiment with dialogue boxes, speech bubbles, characters, and color schemes (see Appendix B). The preselected bright colors, colorful backgrounds, and thoughtfully arranged images and dialogue boxes help inspire and motivate students to create their own comics without feeling discouraged by starting completely from scratch (see Appendix C). Canva is an ideal tool because students can gain confidence as digital artists (Billie-Jean, 2024).

Pixton can be used as a writing tool to improve English learning, add fun to grammar and vocabulary lessons, and help learners understand how to organize ideas into coherent writing (Schechter & Bibko, 2023). Pixton is an easy-to-use platform that allows both teachers and students to create engaging digital comics without having to have special graphic design skills (Nurhaliza & Khairunnisa, 2022). It can be used by both students and teachers across various subject areas to create customized comics aligned to the topics of their choice.

This unit hopes to help Apache students with special needs see themselves not just as learners, but as story tellers. Oftentimes they are taught technical skill development and students' identities, voices, and cultural knowledge are overlooked. By engaging students as storytellers, the unit encourages students to share their own experiences, culture, and community through stories. By creating comics and narratives, *Expressions of Ndee* offers students a framework to build their confidence, feel proud of their culture and feel that their voices matter. In doing so, it reframes literacy as a powerful tool not only for reading and writing, but also for expressing identity and preserving their culture.

To ensure that students with diverse learning profiles can access, engage with, and express their understanding of narrative and cultural identity, this unit incorporates a range of scaffolded teaching strategies rooted in multimodal literacy and culturally responsive pedagogy. These strategies are designed to support both the creative and cognitive demands of visual storytelling, while fostering collaboration, reflection, and student voice. From foundational instruction in story structure to the integration of culturally relevant content and cooperative learning routines, each approach is carefully selected to build confidence, deepen comprehension, and affirm students' lived experiences.

The following strategies are based on research and thoughtfully designed to support Apache youth. They offer useful and inclusive ways to help students build strong storytelling skills, understand visual language, and take part in meaningful classroom conversations.

Start with Storytelling Basics
To support students in understanding story structure, it's essential to explicitly introduce the key elements of a narrative: the beginning, middle, and end. Graphic organizers like storyboards help students visually map out and organize their ideas, reinforcing both comprehension and the ability to plan effectively. Demonstrating simple stories using familiar characters can also make these concepts more relatable and engaging, especially for students who learn best through concrete, hands-on examples (McLaughlin & Allen, 2002).

Use Mentor Texts
Helping students become familiar with comics involves presenting age-appropriate comic strips or graphic novels and exploring how dialogue, setting, and sequence combine to create a story. Analyzing visual elements such as panels, facial expressions, and action lines enhances students' understanding of how meaning is conveyed through both text and illustrations. For instance, facial expressions in comics can provide insight into characters' emotions and personalities, while action lines can suggest movement or sound, contributing to the overall narrative (Sexton, Grandt, & Chow, 2008).

Scaffold the Visual Language
Supporting students' visual storytelling skills involves teaching essential comic vocabulary such as panel, gutter, speech bubble, thought bubble, and caption. Mini-lessons can demonstrate how to effectively depict emotion, movement, and setting within their drawings, making the narrative clearer and more engaging. Because comics can range from simple stick figures to elaborately detailed scenes, they are conducive to hesitant creatives, children, and any other client who is struggling to articulate or perceive their personal narrative (Maggio, 2019).

Think-Pair-Share
Think-Pair-Share (TPS) is a cooperative learning strategy first introduced by Lyman (1981) to promote active student engagement and participation. The strategy follows three steps: students first think individually about a question or prompt, then pair with a peer to discuss their ideas, and finally share their responses with the whole class. This structure provides students with time to process information, articulate ideas, and refine their understanding through peer interaction.

Gallery Walk
Gallery Walk is an interactive strategy that allows students to circulate the classroom, view peers' work, and engage in dialogue through written or verbal responses. This approach promotes higher-order thinking because students must analyze, interpret, and evaluate ideas in a collaborative setting (Francek, 2006). It also increases accountability and motivation, as learners know their work will be displayed and discussed, while supporting diverse learners by offering multiple modes of engagement—visual, verbal, and written (Harste & Short, 2019). Overall, Gallery Walk fosters participation, critical thinking, and community-building, making it an effective tool for deepening comprehension across subjects.

Offer Sentence Starters and Visual Prompts
To support students with writing and idea generation, providing sentence starters such as "I remember when…" or "Let's go find…" can help spark creativity and guide their storytelling. Using visual prompts or comic templates reduces overwhelm by offering a clear framework for organizing ideas. Additionally, collaborating in small groups or pairs encourages brainstorming and allows students to share and develop their ideas together, fostering a more engaging and supportive learning environment (Gajria et al., 2007).

Incorporate Culturally Relevant Content
Encouraging students to create comics based on their personal experiences, family stories, or cultural themes helps make learning more meaningful and relevant to their lives. Inviting them to include Native languages, symbols, or familiar settings strengthens their cultural identity and engagement. This approach aligns with culturally responsive education principles, which emphasize valuing students' cultural backgrounds to enhance learning and foster pride (Boyle, 2018).

5E Instructional Model
The 5E instructional model is based on both a conceptual change model of learning and a constructivist view of learning. Its five phases are Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Elaboration, and Evaluation (Hu et al., 2017). It asserts that for conceptual learning and enduring understanding to occur, the learner must become aware of and dissatisfied with their prior ideas about a topic, become receptive to new ideas, and then integrate new information encountered in a classroom into their existing conceptual framework (Posner et al., 1982). This model brings coherence to different teaching strategies, provides connections among educational activities, and helps science teachers make decisions about interactions with students (BSCS, 2019).

At the heart of it all, Expressions of Ndee is a celebration of voice, resilience, and the sacred stories that shape Apache people. This unit helps students see themselves not just as learners, but as storytellers who share meaningful ideas from their lives and cultures. By combining traditional stories, visual art, and different ways of using language, students learn to express their voices and create powerful, personal comics. It affirms that literacy is not a neutral skill but a deeply personal and cultural act (Freire, 1970), and that students with disabilities deserve access to learning environments where their voices are centered and their stories honored.

Teaching Plan

Unit Title: Telling Stories through Digital Comics with Canva

Grade Level: 9–12
Time Frame: 5 Class Periods (Approx. 45–60 minutes each)
Final Output: A complete 3–6 panel digital comic created in Canva

Overview of the 5E Model Across 5 Days

Day	Focus	5E Stage	Teaching Strategy
Day 1	What is a Comic?	Engage	Direct Instruction + Multimedia
Day 2	Plan & Design	Explore	Guided Practice + Think-Pair-Share
Day 3	Build & Revise	Explain	Collaborative Learning + Teacher Check-in
Day 4	Finalize	Elaborate	Independent Creation

| Day 5 | Present & Reflect | Evaluate | Presentations + Self and Peer Reflection |

ELA Standards Alignment (Grades 9–12):

Reading Standards for Literature (RL) / Informational Text (RI):
RL.9-10.7 / RL.11-12.7 Analyze how visuals (like comic panels, illustrations, and layout) contribute to the meaning and tone of a story.

Writing Standards (W):
W.9-10.3 / W.11-12.3 Write narratives that develop real or imagined experiences using clear sequences, descriptive details, and effective storytelling techniques.

Speaking and Listening Standards (SL):
SL.9-10.5 / SL.11-12.5 Use digital tools and visual elements to enhance presentations and storytelling.
Language Standards (L):
9-10 L3 / L.11-12.3 Apply knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, and creating multimedia texts.

Culturally Responsive Practices:
● Encourage students to include personal experiences or cultural references in their stories, affirming their identity and community connections.
● Provide visual prompts and templates to support students with varying abilities in translating ideas into visual formats.

DAY 1: ENGAGE – WHAT MAKES A GREAT COMIC?

Objective:
Students will develop curiosity about digital storytelling by exploring comics, while learning key comic elements and how to use Canva or Pixton's comic tool.

Activities:
1. **Hook (5–7 min):**
   ○ Show a selection of humorous or emotional comic strips from GoComics (e.g., *Garfield*, *Big Nate*, *Peanuts*, *Calvin and Hobbes*).
   ○ Ask guiding questions:
     - "What makes these comics work?"
     - "How do images and text work together?"
   ○ Encourage students to notice visual storytelling techniques such as facial expressions, panel layout, and dialogue.

2. **Mini-Lesson (15 min):**

- ○ Explain comic structure and vocabulary: panels, speech bubbles, captions, character expressions, and pacing.
- ○ Use examples to illustrate how each element conveys meaning and emotion.

3. **Demo (10–15 min):**
   - ○ Show how to use Canva or Pixton's comic creator:
     - Navigating templates
     - Inserting text, characters, and design elements
   - ○ Demonstrate adjusting layouts, colors, and text to enhance clarity and expression.

4. **Student Exploration (10–15 min):**
   - ○ Students create a 1-panel comic introducing themselves using Canva or Pixton.
   - ○ Encourage experimentation with text, images, and design elements.
   - ○ Teachers provide support by checking in with students and providing guidance and technical support.

Assessment:
- ● **Exit Ticket:** "What are 3 elements you noticed in comics today?"
- ● **1-Panel Introduction Comic:** Saved in Canva or Pixton, demonstrating basic understanding of comic elements.

DAY 2: EXPLORE – BRAINSTORMING AND PLANNING A SHORT STORY COMIC

Objective:
Students will brainstorm and plan a short story with the goal of transforming it into a comic using Canva or Pixton. They will develop narrative ideas, outline story structure, and begin mapping visuals for their comics.

Activities:
1. **Review (5 min):**
   - ○ Recap key elements of effective comics: panels, dialogue, captions, pacing, and visual storytelling techniques.
   - ○ Use examples from mentor texts or previous Day 1 student comics to reinforce understanding.

2. **Think-Pair-Share (10 min):**
   - ○ Prompt students: "Describe a moment that was funny, surprising, or challenging in your life."
   - ○ Students first reflect individually, then pair up to discuss story ideas, exchanging feedback and refining concepts.

3. **Planning Guide (15 min):**
   - ○ Distribute a storyboard worksheet or comic planning template.

- ○ Students draft:
  - ■ **Characters:** Who is in the story? What are their traits?
  - ■ **Setting:** Where and when does the story take place?
  - ■ **Plot:** Outline beginning, middle, and end.
  - ■ **Dialogue/Narration:** Write sample lines or captions to convey action and emotion.
  - ○ Encourage students to think visually—what images best convey key moments?

4. **Start in Canva or Pixton (15–20 min):**
   - ○ Students open Canva or Pixton and begin creating their comic panels.
   - ○ Place basic panels, backgrounds, and characters according to their storyboard plan.
   - ○ Teachers circulate to support technical use of Canva or Pixton and to ensure students' narrative plans translate visually.

Assessment:
- ● Formative assessment via observation of student discussions and storyboard completion.
- ● Checklists to ensure students include key story elements: characters, setting, beginning-middle-end, dialogue, and visuals (see Appendix A)
- ● Peer sharing of story ideas to gauge comprehension and creative engagement.

DAY 3: EXPLAIN – CREATING AND REVISING COMPLETE COMICS

Objective:
Students will create complete comics and explain how their design choices (visual layout, facial expressions, color, and text placement) enhance and support the storytelling process.

Activities:
1. **Mini-Lesson (10 min):**
   - ○ Discuss visual storytelling techniques:
     - ■ How facial expressions convey emotion
     - ■ Use of color and layout to set tone and emphasize action
     - ■ Balancing text and images for clarity and impact

2. **Peer Review (15–20 min):**

   - ○ Students work in pairs or small groups to review rough drafts using a checklist:
     - ■ "Is the story clear?"
     - ■ "Are the characters expressive?"
     - ■ "Is the text easy to read?"
   - ○ Encourage constructive feedback and specific suggestions for improvement.

3. **Teacher Conferences (10–15 min):**

○ Meet individually or with small groups to provide feedback on narrative clarity, visual storytelling, and answer technical questions.
○ Offer suggestions for enhancing panel composition, text placement, or color use.

4. **Work Time (15 min):**
   ○ Students revise comics based on peer and teacher feedback.
   ○ Focus on improving story clarity, visual expression, and overall design.

Assessment:
- **Updated Canva or Pixton Comic Draft:** Students submit a revised comic with at least **3 panels**, demonstrating intentional design choices to support storytelling.

DAY 4: ELABORATE – FINALIZE YOUR COMIC STRIP

Objective:
Students will complete their comics, applying creativity, clarity, and effective digital design skills to communicate narrative and visual meaning.

Activities:
1. **Review (5 min):**
   ○ Show a few polished comic examples for inspiration.
   ○ Highlight design choices such as panel layout, color usage, text-image balance, and expressive characters.

2. **Independent Work Time (35–45 min):**
   ○ Students finalize all panels, speech bubbles, and visual effects.
   ○ Add a cover or title page if desired.
   ○ Export their final comics as PDFs.

Assessment:
- **Final Comic Project Submission:** Students submit a completed comic demonstrating narrative coherence, creative expression, and effective use of visual and digital design elements.
- **Informal Check-ins:** Teacher observes progress, provides feedback, and addresses technical or creative questions during independent work time.

DAY 5: EVALUATE – PRESENT AND REFLECT

Objective:
Students will present their completed comics and reflect on how their storytelling and design choices shaped the final product.

Activities:
1. **Gallery Walk (20–30 min):**
   ○ Display students' comics around the classroom or digitally.
   ○ Students circulate, view peers' work, and leave written comments on sticky notes or digitally, focusing on story clarity, creativity, and visual design choices.

2. **Reflection Activity (10–15 min):**
   ○ Students respond to prompts individually or in journals:
       ■ "What was the most challenging part?"
       ■ "What did you enjoy?"
       ■ "Which comic inspired you and why?"
3. **Class Discussion (Optional, 10 min):**
   ○ Discuss how visual storytelling differs from traditional writing.
   ○ Encourage students to share insights about how design elements—panels, images, text, and color—enhanced or changed the narrative.

Assessment:
- **Completed Self-Reflection Form:** Students articulate learning, challenges, and successes.
- **Participation in Gallery Walk or Presentation:** Informally assessed through engagement and feedback given to peers.
- **Rubric-Graded Comic Project:** Evaluated for narrative coherence, visual storytelling, creativity, and integration of feedback (see Appendix D)

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Appendices

Appendix A:
Story Elements Checklist

| ✔	Story Element	What to Check For
	Characters	Did I include main characters with names, traits, or roles?
	Setting	Did I show or describe where and when the story takes place?
	Beginning	Does my story start in a way that grabs attention or sets the scene?
	Middle	Is there a problem, action, or turning point that moves the story forward?
	End	Did I wrap up the story with a clear ending or resolution?
	Dialogue	Did I include speech or thoughts that help tell the story or show character voice?
	Visuals	Did I use drawings, panels, or images that match and support the story?

Appendix B:
Canva Compic Strip Templates
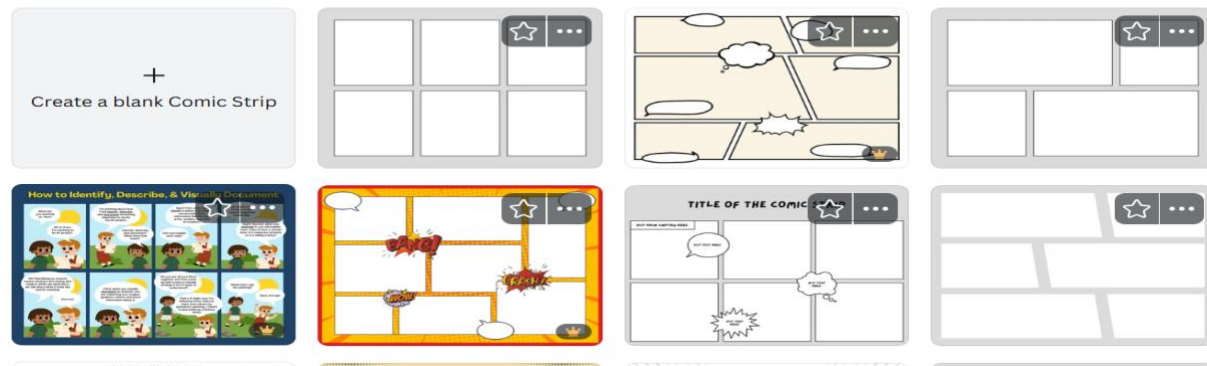
Appendix C:
Pixton Features
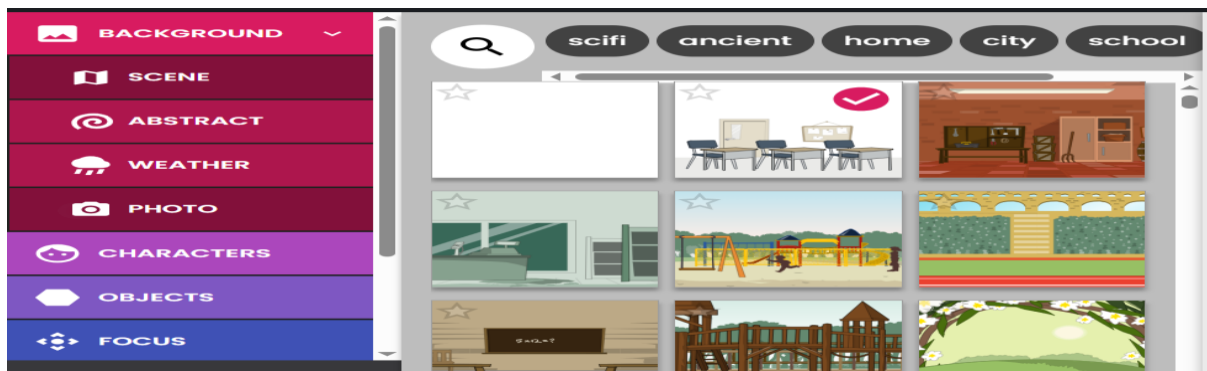
Appendix D:

Rubric: Telling Stories through Digital Comics

Skill Area	4 – Strong & Independent	3 – On Track with Support	2 – Emerging Skills	1 – Needs More Support
Story Structure	The story has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Events are easy to follow.	The story includes most parts and makes sense with some help.	The story has some parts but may be confusing or incomplete.	The story is hard to follow or missing key parts.
Dialogue & Captions	Speech bubbles and captions match the story and characters. Sentences are clear.	Dialogue is mostly clear and fits the story with some reminders.	Dialogue is present but may be unclear or off-topic.	Dialogue is missing or doesn't support the story.
Visual Organization	Panels are neat, in order, and easy to read. Canva/Pixton tools are used well.	Panels are mostly organized with some help. Canva/Pixton tools are used with reminders.	Panels are out of order or cluttered. Canva/Pixton use is inconsistent.	Panels are missing or hard to understand. Canva/Pixton tools not used effectively.
Creativity & Personal Voice	The story shows personal ideas, culture, or feelings in creative ways.	The story includes some personal or cultural elements with support.	The story shows limited personal connection or creativity.	The story lacks personal voice or connection.
Collaboration & Feedback	The student gave and received feedback respectfully and made thoughtful changes.	The student participated in feedback with reminders and made some changes.	The student needed help to give/receive feedback and made few changes.	The student did not participate in feedback or revise work.

- **Maximum Score**: **20 points** (5 categories × 4 points)

Total Points	Performance Level	Feedback Focus
17-20	**Excellent Progress**	Celebrate strengths and encourage deeper creativity or independence.
13-16	**On Track**	Reinforce skills and offer targeted support for growth areas.
9-12	**Needs Support**	Scaffold instruction and provide guided practice.
5-8	**Emerging**	Prioritize foundational skills and offer intensive support.