

Having Fun in Elementary School Stamp Clubs

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“Look at this one!” is a familiar cry at home and in the classroom when we are going through the stamp bin. The high level of detail and imagery on stamps quickly grabs a child’s attention and they can’t wait to share their excitement. Both my sons have been interested in stamps since they were young, probably because they saw my husband and I poring over them at the kitchen table. My husband has collected stamps since he was a child and there were many weekend mornings when he had the entire kitchen table covered with towels and upside down stamps drying after being soaked off of envelopes. The two would see their dad’s pleased smile when he completed a full page of stamps in the Unity Canadian Stamp Album. However this sort of stamp collecting is quite different from what I do in school, mainly due to time and resource constraints.



For my first years of running a stamp club at my elementary school, I was lucky enough to have Don Shorting come to my school’s stamp meetings and mentor me. He always started the meeting with a bit of a lesson or story, then handed out stamp packages and allowed time for students to trade.

When I started running the club on my own, I first considered what my sons enjoyed about coming to the Vancouver Island Philatelic Society meetings. Even though the meetings were later in the evening, they were always eager to go. The boys liked learning about stamp stories such as Neil Donen and his story of the earthquake in India and how the cancellations changed was one highlight and he shared this story with all the Grade 5 students one year.

Another big attraction for my sons are the stamp auctions with Firmin as auctioneer. I remembered there used to be Victoria Philatelic Society meetings for children run by Robin Clarke and others. They would teach kids a few interesting facts about stamps, then have a trivia session where they quizzed them about what they had learned. The kids would have an opportunity to earn “money” when they answered questions which they could then use for the auction at the end of the meeting. This is the format I use for my stamp club meetings and students love it! I use monopoly money and ask easy questions worth \$1 and harder ones for \$5 - \$10. Students are engaged and pay attention when I am teaching them so they can answer the questions and earn money. I make sure all stamp members have money for the auction. Auctions can get quite loud as students bid and make deals to outbid each other. Discussing what stamps interest each child is a good first step as they will look out for stamps for each other as well.

I find it heartwarming when a student comes running into a meeting exclaiming they have some cartoon stamps or cat stamps for another student’s collection. They love learning new things about stamps, looking at the items up for auction, making deals, trading and sharing their collections with each other. Many have gone home to discuss stamps with their families and have been surprised to learn that their grandparents or aunts and uncles have stamp collections too. It has been a way that children have learned more about their families or created stronger bonds with them. It is an exciting avenue for students to learn about history, geography, social studies, science and popular culture all in one setting. Now my students are teaching me new and interesting things about the world through stamps and I love it!