



ATHLETE STORIES

Piper Gilles





TEACHING GUIDE

TEACHING VALUES THROUGH OLYMPIC STORIES

The Olympic philosophy of education is about a balance of intellectual instruction, cultural development and physical education. It is about participation, effort, and knowing you have given your all in the pursuit of excellence.

Olympic stories of triumph and disappointment can engage learners in discussions about important value issues. Through the stories and challenges of Olympic athletes, children and youth can explore and connect values to their lives, and perhaps begin to see their world in new and different ways.

TEACHING GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

Current curriculum theory emphasizes the importance of reinforcing values education messages through narratives, storytelling, art, posters, drama, and physical movement, activities based on the stories, events, ceremonies and symbols of the Olympic Games stories have school-wide relevance.

THE OLYMPIC VALUES

The core Olympic Values are identified as Excellence, Respect and Friendship. The narratives which follow highlight these values. When you engage your learners with these narratives you will be expanding their moral and physical understanding and capabilities.

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

The following principles of learning are highlighted in order to engage students actively in the values education process:

1. Learning is an active and not a passive activity. Students need to be actively engaged in discussion, sharing their ideas in small groups and exploring differing points of view.
2. People learn in different ways. Some people learn best by reading; some people learn best by listening; some people learn best by moving around. The activities associated with these narratives' present different ways of learning.
3. Learning is both an individual and a cooperative activity. Young people need opportunities to work together as well as independently. They also need to practice cooperative behaviours in order to learn competitive behaviours.

STAGES OF THE LEARNING SEQUENCE

Successful learning is built upon a carefully scaffolded series of steps that **connect** to students' prior understanding, actively **process** or practice new information, and finally **transform** their understandings into powerful demonstrations of learning.

Each values story is presented at three reading levels: Grades 3-4, and Grades 5-6. The accompanying activities are sufficiently open-ended to address a diverse range of learning styles and proficiencies. They focus on six main facets of understanding:

Explaining, Interpreting, Applying, Taking Perspective, Empathizing, and Developing Self-Knowledge. These critical thinking skills are woven into all three stages of the learning sequence in order to promote deep understanding of the values and concepts.

“Olympism is a philosophy of life; exalting and combining in a balanced whole quality of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example, and respect for universal, fundamental ethical principles.”

— Olympic Charter, Fundamental principles, Paragraph 2





PIPER GILLES

Chasing Excellence

Piper Gilles started skating when she was just two years old. As a little girl, she dreamed of being a pairs skater. She loved the throws, lifts, and spins. But when she couldn't find a pairs partner, she decided to try ice dance instead.

Ice dance is about rhythm and telling a story with your moves. Piper worked with her coaches and her partner to dance to music on the ice. Costumes helped tell the story too. Piper and her mom, Bonnie, would spend hours making her costumes perfect. That's where they both fell in love with fashion—and grew even closer.

Bonnie was always there for Piper. She cheered loud at every competition, traveled with her, and welcomed Piper's skating friends into their home.

At first, Piper skated for the United States. In 2011, she didn't have a partner. Then Paul Poirier asked her to skate for Canada. Piper said yes and moved to Toronto to train.

Bonnie supported her every step of the way. She and Piper both dreamed of her competing in the Olympics. Skating was a big part of their lives, and they were happy that Piper was doing so well.

But one year before the 2018 Olympics, disaster struck. Bonnie started acting differently. She forgot things and got sick often. Doctors gave the terrible news—Bonnie had fast-growing brain cancer.

Piper was heartbroken. "Knowing my mom would not survive was almost impossible," she said. But she knew her mom wanted the family to keep living life fully and with joy.

Bonnie had many treatments, but she got weaker. She hoped to see Piper skate at the Olympics. She was too sick to travel to South Korea, so she watched proudly on TV. Piper and Paul placed 8th at the 2018 Games. A few months later, Bonnie passed away.

Even though she was heart broken, Piper kept skating. She remembered what her mom taught her: always get back up and keep going. At the 2022 Olympics in Beijing, Piper and Paul placed 7th and helped Canada finish 4th in the team event.

Then, in late 2022, Piper got her own bad news. Doctors found a tumor on her ovary. She had surgery and found out it was cancer. Instead of quitting, she stayed strong and focused on healing.

Only two months later, Piper and Paul won bronze at the 2023 World Championships. It felt like winning gold.

Piper is still chasing her dreams. In 2025, she and Paul won silver at the World Championships and gold at the Four Continents Championships.

Piper is brave, strong, and never gives up—just like her mom taught her. Bonnie's fight gave Piper the strength to keep going. Now, Piper skates with her heart full of love, courage, and hope.

What is cancer?

What can we do to cure it?

Your body is made of tiny cells that grow and work together to keep you healthy. Sometimes, cells grow the wrong way and don't stop. This is called cancer. These bad cells can form lumps called tumors or spread to other parts of the body. They can push out the healthy cells. Doctors treat cancer with surgery, strong medicine (called chemo), powerful rays (called radiation), or new ways that help the body fight back. Cancer is serious, but with help and care, many people get better.





PIPER GILLES

Chasing Excellence

Piper Gilles started skating when she was just two years old. As a little girl, she dreamed of being a pairs skater. She loved the throws, lifts, and spins. But when she couldn't find a partner, she decided to try ice dance instead. Ice dance is more about rhythm and storytelling, and that's where Piper's creativity really began to shine.

In ice dance, every move tells part of a story. Skaters work with their coaches and partner to match music with beautiful dance steps on ice. Costumes also help bring the story to life. Piper and her mom, Bonnie, would spend hours with the seamstress making sure her costumes were perfect. That's where they both fell in love with fashion—and grew even closer.

Bonnie was always by Piper's side. She was the kind of mom who cheered loudly, traveled to every competition, and welcomed Piper's skating friends into their home.

Piper first skated for the United States, but in 2011, she found herself without a partner. It was then that she was approached by Paul Poirier about skating for Canada. As a dual citizen, this was an option, and she moved to Toronto to train.

Bonnie supported her every step of the way. Her mom shared her dream of competing at the Olympics. Skating was the center of each of their lives, and both were enjoying Piper's rise up in the ranks of international skating.

But things changed just a year before the 2018 Olympics. Bonnie started acting differently. She was forgetful and often sick. Doctors gave the heartbreaking news—Bonnie had a fast-growing brain cancer.

Piper said it was hard to accept. "Knowing my mom would not survive was almost impossible," she shared. But she knew her mom would want their family to keep living fully and with joy.

Bonnie had many treatments, but her health got worse. She held on in hope of seeing Piper skate at the Olympics. Though too weak to travel to South Korea, she watched proudly on TV as Piper and Paul

placed 8th at the 2018 Games. A few months later, Bonnie passed away.

After losing her mom, Piper returned to skating. She remembered Bonnie's lesson: always get up and keep going. Piper and Paul competed again at the 2022 Olympics in Beijing. They placed 7th in ice dance and helped Canada earn 4th in the team event.

Then, in late 2022, Piper faced her own health scare. Doctors found a tumor on her ovary. She had surgery and learned the tumor was cancer. But instead of giving up, she focused on healing and training. Just two months later, she and Paul won a bronze medal at the 2023 World Championships. For them, it felt like gold.

Now, Piper continues to chase her dream. She and Paul won silver at the 2025 Worlds and gold at the Four Continents Championships. Through it all, Piper stays strong—just like her mom taught her.

Bonnie's battle with cancer gave Piper the strength to fight her own. Her courage, both on and off the ice, shows just how much love and resilience her mom left behind.

What is cancer? What can we do to cure it?

Your body is made of tiny cells that grow and divide to keep you healthy. Cancer happens when some cells grow the wrong way and don't stop. They can form lumps called tumors or spread to other parts of the body. Cancer cells crowd out healthy cells. This can be very dangerous. Doctors treat cancer with surgery, strong medicine (chemotherapy), powerful rays (radiation), or new treatments that help the body fight back. Treatment can be hard, but with care, courage, and support, many people beat cancer.





LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CONNECTING

Building a foundation for new learning

Teacher: What happens when a rubber ball hits the ground?

Students: It bounces back.

Bounce a ball on the ground to demonstrate this principle.

Teacher: Resilience means being able to bounce back after something goes wrong. It is the ability fight back from injury, sickness, disappointments and setbacks.

GAME (ALL GRADES)

Students form a circle and pass the ball to a classmate.

When a student catches it, they share a time when they faced a challenge (real or made-up). They also share how they could “bounce back” from it. For example, “I didn’t make the soccer team. I can bounce back by practicing more and trying again next year.”

If someone is stuck, the class can help come up with bounce-back ideas.

PROCESSING

Using strategies to acquire and use knowledge

Ask the students to read the story silently on their own.

Reread the story with the students.

CLASS DISCUSSION (ALL GRADES)

How Piper had to demonstrate resilience?

CLASS BRAINSTORM (ALL GRADES)

Brainstorm a list of ways that you can stay encouraged and show resilience?

TRANSFORMING

Showing understanding in a new way

MY BOUNCE BACK MOMENT (GRADE 3-4)

Ask the students to make a poster of a time they had to show resilience and bounce back. Ask them to write a short paragraph explaining the story of their resilience. Examples could be troubles at school, a difficult time with a friend or family member, learning to ride a bike, or learning a difficult song on the piano.

MY RESILIENCE STORY (GRADE 5-6)

Ask the students to draw a cartoon story about when they had to show resilience.

They should explain each of these prompts in their cartoon strip story:

- What was the challenge? (square #1)
- How did I feel? (square #2)
- What did I do to keep going? (square #3)
- What happened in the end? (square #4)
- What did I learn about myself? (square #5)



ACTIVITY

Draw a poster of of a time they had to show resilience and bounce back.



Write a short paragraph explaining the story of their resilience.



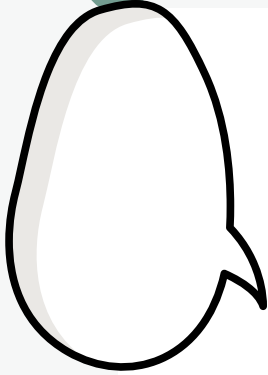


ACTIVITY

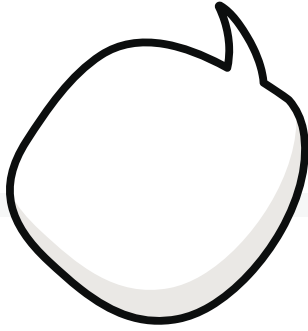
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My Resilience Story

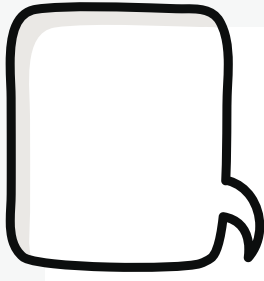
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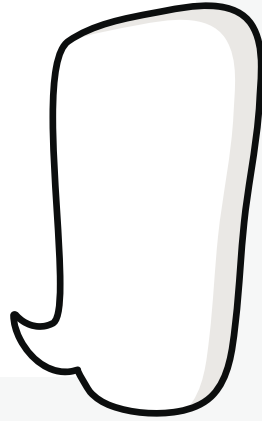
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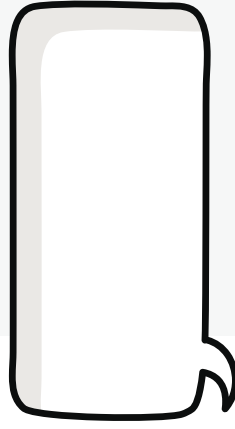
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5



What I learned about myself is: _____