

The Panicked Pumpkins

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The inspiration for this lesson comes from an article found [here](#)

This lesson is intended for a Parenting/Child Development class, for use in the unit covering labor and delivery

The Google Slides deck for this lesson is found [here](#)

Supplies needed:

Padlet or Lino-it, or a chalkboard or whiteboard

Water based markers

10 pie-sized pumpkins

10 paper plates, pieces of cardstock/posterboard

Black and white foam, posterboard, cardstock, or felt

Assorted foam, posterboard, cardstock or felt scraps

10 metric rulers

10 baking pans

Individually wrapped Life-Savers candies

Paper towels

10 safety carving knives

10 spoons

Set

Ask the students to think about what they have heard other people say about labor and delivery. Ask them to add these perceptions to a digital sticky-note site, such as Padlet or Lino-It, or simply brainstorm the list on the board or projection screen.

As students respond, ask for clarification as needed, and also probe students as to where they may have heard this information.

Ultimately, one would expect pain and contractions to be described as an important piece of labor and delivery. Once those responses are noted, transition the discussion into the question of why contractions cause pain and what the purpose of contractions really is.

Step-by-step lesson:

Give each student an individually wrapped Life Saver candy. Ask them to enjoy that candy, but to pay close attention to how the shape changes as the candy dissolves. Ask if anyone notices that not only does the hole in the middle get bigger, but the entire candy gets thinner. Explain

to the students that the “getting thinner” result is similar to the change called “effacement”, when the expectant mother’s cervix gets thinner during contractions.

Provide each student with a metric ruler. Ask them to find the 1 cm marking, and then the 10cm marking. Ask the students if anyone knows what centimeters have to do with labor and delivery? Explain that these two measurements represent the cervix before dilation occurs and the end of dilation. Explain that the painful contractions the mother feels are actually changing the thickness (effacement) and the diameter (dilation) of the cervix so that she can effectively push the baby through the birth canal.

Explain to the students that they will be helping you create a visual to represent the changes to the cervix as full dilation takes place. Supplies needed include: 10 pie-sized pumpkins, metric ruler, carving knives, water-based markers, paper towels, posterboard or paper plates, scissors, and baking pans (to catch the mess).

Divide students into 10 equal groups, or have some students work independently. Explain that each pumpkin’s “mouth” will be cut to a size that represents one of the steps in dilating from 1cm to 10cm. So, each mouth will have a different size measurement. Ask each group to measure and draw a circle on the cardstock, posterboard or paper plate to represent their assigned measurement. After each group has drawn their circle, ask them to cut the circle out, then have the students line the circles up and look for any inconsistencies.

Once it is determined the circles are accurate, ask each group to trace around the circle onto the pumpkin with a water-based marker. These will smudge, but they will also wash off. After students have drawn the circles, ask them to carefully use the carving knives (I recommend the safety ones that can be found at many discount stores in the fall---they have a jagged, dull blade and will be less likely to cause an accident) to cut out only their circles.

After cutting the circles, ask each group to draw then cut a hole around the stem at the top. Removing the stem will allow each group to clean the pulp and seeds out of the pumpkin. Use the baking sheet or tray to catch the pumpkin waste as the students work.

Once the pulp and seeds are removed, ask students to dampen a paper towel and wipe the outside of each pumpkin. Ask students to use the pattern provided to create the eyes for their pumpkins from felt, posterboard, cardstock or craft foam. Ask students to glue the eyes together, then glue to the pumpkin. Note: the pattern for the eyes is recommended to keep all parts except the mouth of the pumpkin consistent in size, in an effort to emphasize the difference in the stages of dilation.

Ask each team to design a hat for their pumpkin from paper, craft foam, cardstock or posterboard. Ask each team to indicate the size of the mouth measurement on their hat; attach hats to pumpkins.

When the group has finished, line the pumpkins up in order and ask the students to reflect on the changes necessary in order for the baby to be delivered. Suggestions include: Did you know the cervix had to change that much? What do you think would happen if the mother tried to push the baby before dilation was complete? What would the doctors or midwives do if the mother failed to fully dilate? What questions does this generate for you? Ask the students to complete the “Panicked Pumpkin” reflection sheet.

Helpful resources:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/pregnancy/cervix-dilation-chart#stage-1>

<https://parenting.firstcry.com/articles/a-guide-to-cervix-dilation-during-labour-birth/>

https://www.3bscientific.com/in/cervical-dilation-easel-display-1012488-w43093-wrs-group-79738.p_1178_18301.html

<https://www.parents.com/pregnancy/giving-birth/labor-and-delivery/cervix-dilation-chart-pictures-that-explain-the-stages-of-labor/>

Panicked Pumpkin Reflection Sheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

What was one thing you learned during this activity?	What was one thing you liked about this activity?
What questions did this activity generate for you?	Why is this important information to know?
List the three stages of labor and describe what happens during each stage:	Why are pregnant women not asked to “push” until dilation is complete?

