

Kindergarten Newsletter
February 2010

Readers' Workshop

In reading, the guiding question is: What strategies are in my reading tool box to help me figure out words?

This month, students continued learning about the Guiding Principles of Independent Readers' Workshop, which are: 1.) Readers have time to read "just-right" books every day. 2.) Readers select their own books. 3.) Readers take care of books. 4.) Readers respect each other's reading times. 5.) Readers have the opportunity to talk about their books in genuine ways. 6.) Readers read the words and understand the story.

Students are learning how to respect readers' workshop time by using strategies to stay engaged with their "just-right" books. These include pointing to each word on the page as they read each word, thinking about the pattern in the book, i.e., What words repeat? and using what they know about rhyming words and word families to figure out unknown words. Also, students are using what they know about the sounds of the letters as well as picture clues to figure out "tricky" words. They are continuing to learn new "sight" words as well to help them read their "just-right" books. Teachers are continuing to hold reading conferences with individual students during this time. In addition, all three kindergarten classes continue to meet with their third grade big book buddies every other week. All students enjoy this special reading time and it also builds community within the school.

Writers' Workshop

In writing, the guiding question is: How can I write a pattern book?

Students first learned to identify patterns in "just-right" books before starting to write their own pattern books. Many students started with "I like" or "I love" as their pattern words. Lessons have been focused on helping students write so that others are able to read their work. As part of the process, students learned and practiced how to write a sentence with space between words, a period at the end,

and a capital letter at the beginning. During this unit, they also learned how to write a sentence and draw a picture for each page of the book and number the pages. They "published" their pattern books by adding color to the pages with crayon, marker or colored pencils and made a cover. Some students even wrote a dedication page in their books, like "real" authors do. As part of writing pattern books, students continued with making a page for the special "Star Name" student. The completed "Star Name" book reads like a pattern book with the name of the student repeating on each page. In addition, kindergarten students are learning to use writing checklists and criteria charts. This helps them to develop confidence and allows them to work more independently during writers' workshop.

DWOK (Different Ways of Knowing)

In project-based learning, the guiding question is: How do family members show they care for each other?

As we wrapped up our unit on how families show care through protection in the beginning of February, we asked our students to plan and create protection items for their Puppet Pals. Students were asked to reflect upon questions such as, What is the most important thing for you to think about before creating safety items for you Puppet Pal? What kind of protection does your Puppet Pal need most? Why? and Where does your Puppet Pal live? Is it cold and rainy? Hot and sunny? Students have shown great care for their Puppet Pals as they begin to realize the importance of shelter and protection in their lives and as their reflections at the end of the unit indicated, they have learned a great deal about protection.

During the remainder of February and moving into March, the students have begun to explore how families show care through food. They began their exploration by discussing what foods are "yucky" and "yummy" to them and discovered that not everyone has the same likes and dislikes. Students thought of what they already knew about food, and we made a chart of those facts. Then, students thought of what they wanted to know about food. Some questions we have begun to explore are: Why do some foods taste bad to us and why do some foods taste good to us? Are there any foods that we all like? Where do you think food comes from? When have you eaten it before? How is that food prepared? Does someone have to cook it? How? Some of our students even got to create their "yummy" and "yucky" foods

with play dough. As we continue our "research" into food, students will discover many aspects of food, including "my family's foods", healthy foods, where food comes from and how people hunt for food in the Arctic.

Math

In math, the guiding questions are: How do I use tools to measure time? and How do I identify and describe solid geometric shapes? What do the concepts "greater than," "less than," and "equal to" mean?

What do we use a calendar for? When do we use a clock? What are the days of the week? These are some of the questions we asked our kindergarteners this month in math. Our students continued learning about the concept of time and thinking about when events take place during the day, the week and the year. At home, you may continue helping your child become aware of time and different ways that we measure time. Have your child identify all the clocks in the house, point out special events that happen on certain days the week and certain times of the day. The more a child can connect time with something personal in their life, i.e., my bed time is 8:00; I have soccer on Saturday; the more time makes sense to them. You can also practice reading digital clocks and telling time to the hour.

This month our students also celebrated Day 100 of school. They shared their collections of 100 things and made "100 Day Necklaces" out of cereal. (In case your child only made it home with a wet string around his/her neck--at one point in the day, it had 100 pieces of cereal on it.) When asked how they counted the items, many students said they grouped them by tens. The students also took their Quarter 2 Math Assessment at the end of February. They loved taking this test and showing off their knowledge, and one child exclaimed, "I wish we could take math tests every day!" Please continue to count with your child at home and identify quantities. Ask them questions such as: Is ten greater than 20? Is four less than five? Is nine equal to nine? Then, ask them to explain how they know. Also, have them practice showing numbers quickly on their fingers. You are probably thinking, "Of course my child can count out numbers on their fingers," but help them get to the point where they can automatically show you a number on their fingers without having to count them out. Helping children understand quantity and trusting that "five fingers" is always going to represent five (they don't have to keep recounting) will help them when we begin to do addition and subtraction. Also, practice counting by 1's, 2's, 5's and 10's. Show your child that

there is more than one way to get 100!

Word Study

In word study, the guiding question is: How do we use letters to write about people?

Kindergarten students learn through practice and consistency. They continue to learn about letters through the "Star Name" book they help write. Almost every day, they practice writing the name of a classmate, which reinforces writing upper and lower case letters of the alphabet as well as writing conventions such as space between words and punctuation at the end of the sentence.