



Share-One



September – October 2003 Issue #42

Welcome Back!

I hope you are happy to head back to the classroom! The summer is over and now you are starting fresh with a new group of children and new enthusiasm. Each September we begin with a clean slate (.....or should I say 'a clean chalkboard?') and we are able to begin again with all the knowledge of our past experience and no left-over problems. It is wonderful to have this renewal of interest and enthusiasm!

Make a few 'New Year's' resolutions as you begin the school year. How can you improve your lessons? Do you model your expectations as much as you should? Are your lessons planned well? Are you as organized as you would wish? Can you do more to help your children become proficient readers? Pick one or two areas to improve. Five minutes a day on organization, for example, will make a huge difference in your classroom, or an extra ten minutes a day modeling your expectations will make a huge difference with your class.

Have a great year!

Jean



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The holidays are over.....
 "What holidays?" I say -
 I did go to the beach
 And my kids and I did play.
 But every day, no matter what
 I did, or where I went,
 From working in my garden
 To camping in a tent,
 September first was with me
 And thoughts of things ahead.
 I planned when I was swimming
 And while I lay in bed.

They all say that teachers
 Have this cushy year
 With two months off each summer -
 It makes me shed a tear.
 For teaching's always with me
 Especially with this grade.
 The great responsibility
 Never seems to fade.
 It seems odd to say this,
 And I'm sure it isn't cool -
 But I'm glad the summer's over
 And I am back at school!

Jean R.



Poetry for September and October

I love September!
September is cool.
In early September
We go back to school.

September brings
The autumn breeze.
The leaves are falling
From the trees.

Brown leaves and yellow leaves
Orange leaves and red,
Bright leaves are everywhere
Falling on my head.

A Little Elf

A little elf
Sat in a tree
Painting leaves
To throw at me.
Leaves of yellow
And leaves of red
Came tumbling down
About my head.

October is
A month of change,
It really does
Seem very strange.
Suddenly
The trees are bare,
And signs of frost
Are in the air.



Thanksgiving Colours

Orange is a pumpkin.
And orange sweet potato,
Green are the beans
And a fat red tomato.
Brown is the turkey
And brown gravy, too,
Red are the cranberries,
Yellow corn cobs for you.
Thanksgiving colours
Are the colours of fall.
But these colours are best.....
I can eat them all!



Thanksgiving Time

I love the turkey.
I love the stuffin'.
I love the gravy.
I love corn muffins.
I love my family,
Gathered all together.
I love Thanksgiving
In the autumn weather.

Five Fat Turkeys

Five fat turkeys are we,
We slept all night in a tree.
When the cook came around,
We couldn't be found.
So that's why we're here, you see!

Thanksgiving Time

Thanksgiving time is here,
Let's clap and give a cheer
For food and friends and family --
Thanksgiving time is here!

Turkey, turkey, gobble, gobble -
Eat too much, waddle, waddle.

Witches Brew

_____, _____, _____, too.
Stir them in my witches brew.
I've got magic - Ala-kala-ma-zoo!
OoooooMy witches brew
OoooooWhat's it going to do to you?
Boo!

*Have the children give you 2 words to go in each space, such as:
dead leaves, rotten eggs, spider webs, moldy bread, mucky mud, purple paint, finger nails, lunch pails, apple cores, wrinkled prunes, etc.*

Ghosts

I think I'll wear a sheet,
A big, white, ghostly sheet;
And go about on Halloween
To scare the folks I meet.
I'll be entirely covered up -
All white from head to feet,
And I don't think they'll ever guess
That I'm inside that sheet.



What Will We Be?

Aidan will be an astronaut
Bill will be a bat.
Megan's a ballerina
And Pat's a pussy cat.
Vic will be a vampire
And he will give a scare
Joan will be a princess
With flowers in her hair.
Michael is still thinking
And Sally can't decide
Will Michael be a monster
And Sally be a bride?
Hallowe'en is lots of fun
With many costumes made.
They all will be for you to see
In the Hallowe'en parade!

Poetry to Begin the Year

I love the month of September,
The nights are dry and cool.
The days are warm and sunny
And we all go back to school!

Me

What will happen
In this school year?
Grade One is best
And now it is here!

I will learn to read
And write and spell.
I am quite nervous.....
And there's the bell!

Good Day Everybody

Good day everybody,
Good day everybody,
Good day! Good day! Good day!
Smile everybody,
Smile everybody,
And chase those frowns away.
Shake hands everybody,
Shake hands everybody,
Let's make new friends today.

Open them, shut them,
Give a little (great big) clap!
Open them, shut them,
Fold them in your lap.
Creep them, creep them, creep them,
Right up to your chin.
Open up your little mouth
But don't let them in!
Creep them, creep them, creep them,
Right up to the sky.
Flutter them down and let them lie.
Open them, shut them,
Give a little (great big) clap!
Open them, shut them,
Fold them in your lap.
Now we're ready to listen.

Days of the Week

To the Adam's Family tune....
Days of the week (snap snap)
Days of the week (snap snap)
Days of the week
Days of the week
Days of the week (snap snap)

There's Sunday and there's Monday
There's Tuesday and there's
Wednesday
There's Thursday and there's Friday
And then there's Saturday!

Days of the week (snap snap)
Days of the week (snap snap)
Days of the week
Days of the week
Days of the week (snap snap)

The End of the Day

This is the way we say good-bye,
Say good-bye, say good-bye.
This is the way we say good-bye,
To all our friends at school!
Good-bye! See you on _____!

See You Later

See you later, alligator,
Bye-bye, butterfly,
Give a hug, ladybug,
Be sweet, parakeet,
Blow a kiss, goldfish,
See you soon, racoon,
Take care, polar bear,
Out the door, dinosaur!



Pumpkin

Pumpkin pumpkin
big and round,
I'm glad you grow
upon the ground.
I'm glad you don't
grow in a tree
for then you might
fall down on me.



Jack -

O'Lantern

The jack -o'lantern chuckled
Then winked his funny eye,
'I would rather be a pumpkin-face
Than be inside a pie!'

Rainbow

I'm pink I'm pink
I think I'm pink
And orange and yellow as well.
I'm red I'm red
I said I'm red
And green and purple as well.
I'm blue I'm blue
It's true I'm blue
As near as I can tell -
But do not say that I am gray
For that would be terribly wrong
I'm a rainbow I'm a rainbow
You knew it all along!

In (*fingers in*), out (*fingers out*),
In, out, (*same actions*)
Give a little clap!
In, out,
In, out,
Hands in your lap.

Dead Horses and Bathwater

Reflections on Teaching Reading

I heard a quote about reading methods earlier this year, and when I heard it I applauded the sentiment: “If the horse is dead, it is time to get off.” Then, with further reflection, I came to the conclusion that getting off horses may be the cause of some of the reading problems. Every time philosophies for teaching reading have changed, people have insisted that the previous philosophy or method was dead and left it behind and found a new one – sometimes better than the preceding one and sometimes not. And these horses were not really dead, just ageing! It is similar to the old saying which asks us to not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Each new philosophy has justifications. Educators are able to justify change, often by vilifying the previous reading philosophy. Reading specialists all seem to attach themselves to a single philosophy, and stake their reputations on that one method. Teachers who are advocates of sequential explicit phonics or literature-based methods often close their minds to the advantages of other methods. For years teachers taught sight word basals, of the ‘Run, Spot, run’ type. Most kids learned to read! Then these basals were criticized as old-fashioned and not suitable for children. Some teachers use only explicit phonics. Phonics works well for most children and most kids learn to read. Phonics programs are often vilified as boring and non-creative. Now many teachers are using a literature-based approach. Most children are learning to read. Teachers vilify this by saying it does not target the needs of slower learners.

Anyone, teaching any method, can teach the top children in the class to read well. But..... and here is the catch each of the above reading methods will leave some of the lower children behind. Teaching ‘most’ of the children to read is not good enough. The sight word basals left out the lower kids who were auditory learners. Pure explicit phonics leaves out the lower children who are visual learners. Literature-based programs leave out both, and this gap is usually filled with Reading Recovery, an expensive and (arguably) over-rated program. As each method becomes popular, the previous ones are considered dead horses, to be left behind without a thought. The baby – gone with the bathwater.

Sight word programs, explicit phonics programs and literature-based teaching all have benefits. Sight word programs give the slower children who are visual learners the repetition of the sight words that they need and improve fluency. Explicit phonics targets the children who are auditory learners and gives all children necessary decoding skills. Literature-based programs give students the introduction to wonderful books and helps to teach reading comprehension.

Teachers who favour literature-based programs often feel that they also teach phonics and sight words, but it is impossible to give the lower children enough of what they need when done in a single lesson.

The P.S.L. System

Primary Success is working to perfect a system where the learning needs of every child in the class will be targeted. We call it the Primary Success Learning System, and the P is also for Phonics, the S for Sight Word Reading and the L for Literature. With these three separate strands taught every day, teachers will find that the children will be better readers. The teacher will be able to see the strengths of each child and teach to those strengths. The skills taught in the phonics and sight words strands will come together in the literature session and all the children will be reading sooner and with greater skill.

If you have been teaching only one of these methods, teaching three different reading strands each day may seem like a difficult task! We like to schedule phonics for 30 minutes immediately after the calendar time in the morning, teaching the whole class. The sight word strand is then taught until recess. The sight word strand may need grouping, depending on the children’s abilities. The literature strand will include teacher read-alouds, a guided reading lesson and independent reading. This is usually taught for the first hour in the afternoon.

Teachers who begin to use this system will use the ‘Successful Phonics’ and the ‘Sight Reading – Start Right’ programs for the first two strands. Both of these are comprehensive programs and are easy to teach. The literature strand gives the teacher autonomy to choose books that are suitable for the class and teach them in his/her own way.

Teaching Writing

Writing is a much more difficult skill than reading. In order for a child to print a sentence, he must go through the following steps: he must decide on his topic, he must understand what a sentence is and form the sentence in his mind. He must think of the sequence of words and know what word comes next. He must think about the spelling of each word in turn – the phonetic sounds, or where the word may be found. He must be able to print the letters legibly (this is a difficult task in itself), putting the letters in correct sequence and spacing the words. He must review his sentence as the words are printed. He must be able to read the words that he has printed – to himself or to another person.

Many small children find this a formidable task. Some of your students may be ready to do this early in Grade One, but most of your students will not have the skills necessary and will be very frustrated if they are asked to write too early. There are prerequisites to writing, and giving the children time to gain these will make the writing process much smoother.

That does not mean that you do not teach writing! Every day the teacher should model the writing process, going through the steps and vocalizing the writing process. Each day discuss topics, sentences, using interesting language, capital letters and punctuation. Talk about the sequence of words. Discuss the spelling of the words and the strategies for spelling that can be used. Teach the children to print fluently and neatly on lines, and give them lots of printing practice. By the time they are ready to write, they will be reading simple material, will be able to spell a number of words accurately or phonetically, or find them on the word wall. When the children have the prerequisite skills they will be anxious to write and because they understand the process you will find that their writing is much more fluent and interesting.

Guided Reading – in the Beginning

We can hope that all the children come into the Grade One classroom in September knowing all the concepts of print and being ready to jump into reading. Many Kindergarten teachers try to give guided reading lessons with Big Books and poems and have many children in the class at Level 4. You cannot, however, assume that all the children will have the concepts of print. Here are some ideas from teachers:

“I begin the year doing a lot of shared reading in the first two months. I use a lot of big books. We do choral reading and echo reading. The children point to the words as they read. As most of these books will be memorized, I have them find certain basic words that are repeated. We discuss the pictures and the stories and do picture-walks before reading.”

“I use a lot of poetry in the early months. I try to find poems with vocabulary I want the children to learn. We read the poem together and in partners. Another copy of the poem is cut apart into lines, and the children reassemble it in the chart holder. Then the poem may be cut into words and reassembled and read. Poetry allows the children to begin partner reading on a simple level, with all children succeeding.

All of this is multilevel because some children are still learning the concepts about print but others can read the text on their own. Of course, much phonemic awareness is interjected as well as phonic instruction. I find that the first 6 weeks has the reading and word block overlapping one another.”

“In the beginning of the year we discuss how all of the children can read (even though they think they can't), why it's important to read, and what types of environmental print they see around their neighbourhood. Each child brings in a label or sign that is familiar and that he can 'read'. Then we all share them. The children are amazed to be told that they are reading these.”



Bulletin Boards

We're All Here!

"I teach in an old school that is two story and has rows of windows. I took a photo of our school and then copied the shape onto white paper so that it was large enough to just about fill a bulletin board. I cut out the windows and the school and tacked it on a yellow background. The first day I took digital photos of the children (head shots) on a plain background. I cut out the pictures to fit the windows and popped the children's pictures into the windows. I titled it "We're All Here!". It was wonderful!"

Watch Us Shine

"I made a huge sun in the upper left corner of the bulletin board. Then I took thick yellow yarn from the sun to the names and pictures of the children."



We Go Together

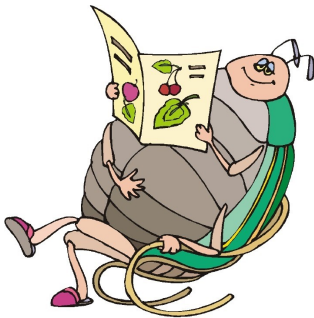
This can stay up all year long. Make a quilt on your bulletin board. Staple up different coloured squares to make a rectangle, with enough squares for your students (4 x 5, 5 x 5, etc.) The squares can be made of paper or fabric sewn together. (Fabric is good if you sew – it doesn't show staple marks and it doesn't fade easily. It can be used year after year.....) Print a name at the top of each square. Now different projects can be put in the squares. For the first project, have the children make their faces using paper plates with yarn for hair. For autumn the children can do a leaf project, for Hallowe'en it can be changed to drawings of the children in costume, etc. The quilt background stays up and the squares can be changed often by stapling art or work projects.

Names, Names

"I cut out the letters of each of their names in many different colours. I give them the letters and they arrange them vertically any way they want and glue them together. Some kids go straight down, some like to kind of zig-zag it and some have come up with really funky ways! One child tried to do his horizontally but it took up too much room - it hit the name next to his - so now I make them all glue them up and down. I laminate them, punch a hole in the top letter and hang them up. (I have fishing line dangling permanently with a paperclip attached to the bottom.) The room looks so good with them up there! I do this and leave them up all year unless I take them down to hang something seasonal temporarily."

Popping Up in Grade One

This one is easy to make. Cut out popcorn shapes from white tag and add the students' names and/or photos.



Catch the Reading Bug!

Have the title on the board, and on the first day have the children draw and colour bugs with their names on clearly. Or have a Volkswagen bug and the faces of the children looking out the windows.

We Are Stars!

Make a large apple tree and put up the children's pictures and names on apples. Then one day in the first week, give each child an apple and cut the apples through the center to see the star. They can dip the apple cut in red paint and then make prints. Put the prints around the border of the apple tree.

Year Long Themes

There are advantages to having a year-long theme. Your bulletin boards can be adapted through the year, and if your theme has broad connotations it can be expanded to encompass your different subjects. Many schools have year-long themes, too.

The Crayon Box

- Use large crayons as decoration. There are also the large plastic crayons that you can hang from the ceiling.

- Make a bulletin board – ‘Primary Colours’ - each child's picture on a balloon shape of red, blue, or yellow.

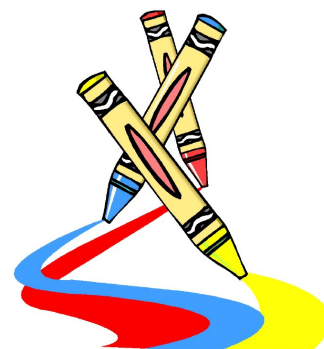
- For an art centre - ‘Colour My World’ with children’s art projects.

- For a reading centre – ‘Read Under the Rainbow’.

This can be expanded to the seasonal colours: orange and black for Hallowe’en, red and green for Christmas, etc., and for themes:

- The Deep Blue Ocean

- Green Thumbs for a plant theme, etc.



Go on a Safari

“We decorate the entire school, halls, library, cafeteria, and classrooms with the designated theme. This year our theme was a Safari theme! We called it ‘The Hunt for Knowledge’. It was a fun to have animal prints, jungle plants, etc. There are animal print fabrics and wrapping paper. Big animals can decorate the halls. The older classes learn about Africa, have penpals from Africa and read stories that fit the theme.”



Changes

‘Changes’ is a very broad theme. In the beginning of the year it can be the change to a new grade. It can be changes in seasons, people, animals and plants. It can be changes in matter. It can be learning and expanding knowledge.

Dinosaurs

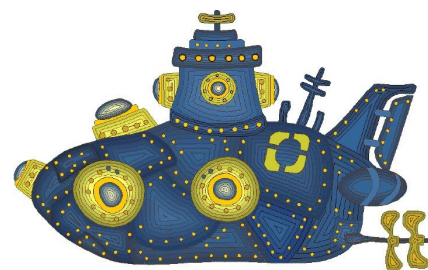
‘Dinosaurs’ can give you lots of ideas for bulletin boards and relating themes. “This is Big!” with a brontosaurus type of plant-eater, an alphabet of dinosaurs, a bulletin board with a child’s name on each dino pattern, learn about the eras, ‘Soaring’ or ‘Flying High’ with the pteranodon, etc.

Flying to New Heights

This can encompass space, aircraft, birds, hot-air balloons (colourful for a bulletin board) - as well as personal growth in learning and working together.

Under the Sea

Learn about the oceans and the creatures that inhabit them. Bulletin boards can have seaweed and fish, a ‘yellow submarine’, creatures that live at the bottom of the sea (crabs, shelled animals, starfish, etc.), class stars can be starfish, etc. With ‘Nemo’ out this year, this would be a great theme. Try “Catch a Good Book” or “The Catch of the Day”.



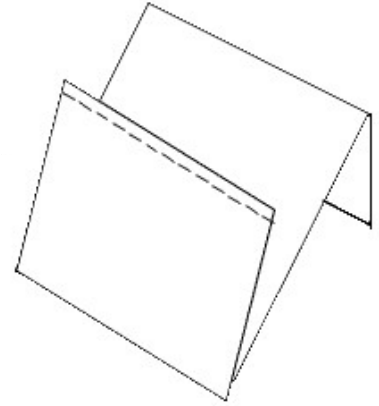
Handling Supplies

Chair pockets

Teachers who have chairs and tables often find the children's personal supplies difficult to handle. One idea is to sew chair pockets. Chair pockets can be made in a variety of ways – they are a length of fabric folded as shown and the edges are sewn and turned (or they can be surged). The top pocket goes over the top of the chair back and the bottom pocket hangs behind for supplies.

You can use heavy cotton or denim, and someone suggested parachute fabric. The pockets can be colour coded to match your group or table colours. If your fabric has a right and 'wrong' side, the pocket can be cut in three pieces and sewn so the 'right' sides show outwards. Cut the fabric wider than the chair back for seam allowances, and decide what supplies will be in the pocket so the size will be appropriate. Cut and sew one pocket first, to make sure you have it right! Hem the horizontal edges. Wash them when they begin to look soiled. (It might be a very good idea to wash the fabric before cutting and sewing, as it may shrink.)

If you plan on using them only one year, the children's names can be put on them with fabric paint or the children can decorate them. If you want to use them year after year, keep them bare.



"I am also adding clear vinyl pockets to the outside of the pocket (3x10) so I can put name plates in there for each child and change them for the coming year or if the child moves, etc."

"Last year I made chair pockets and I loved them. My theme was bees so I used fabric paint and painted bees on the back of each chair pocket."

Supply Holders

"I use different holders for different items. All the supplies are community property. I use cans for pencils (we call them pencil cylinders to teach the shape early). There is one for sharp pencils and one for dull ones. I use large plastic crayon boxes for crayons - one for every four children. I use boxes for coloured pencils, another type for markers and toothbrush holders for scissors. Everything is stored in its own place."

"The tables in my classroom have trays that slide in underneath for each child. Each child has a plastic pencil box and keeps his/her own crayons in it. Each table has a tote with a handle and they keep their supplies for their table in it. I buy a huge jar of glue and the children have the smallest glue bottles. I fill them as needed. Some years the scissors and rulers can stay in the totes on the tables and some years the children can't seem to have them there without misuse. I do like the community sharing since it teaches so much!"

"I collect their markers to use just on specific projects. Those I keep in a box for each table of four. Each child puts his/her markers in a labelled ziplock bag, the four bags from the table go into the box that I keep on a side cupboard and when I want them to use markers, I just have to pass out 6 boxes instead of 24 bags."

"I do not let the children use the pencil sharpener. I have two pencil cans near the sharpener. One is labelled 'Ready' and the other 'Broken'. I sharpen all of the pencils in the broken can at the end of the day and they move to the ready can. Then during the day as pencils break, they get placed in the broken can and they take another pencil from the ready can. The rule is they must place a pencil in the broken can in order to take one from the ready can. This assures there are not ten broken pencils in someone's pencil box! Of course you have to sharpen more than the amount of students that you have."

Word Wall

Here are some guidelines for your word wall.

- The word wall must be interactive.
- It is a teaching tool, not a decoration.
- The teacher must 'teach' the word wall, not just 'have' it.
- You will use high frequency words, that are used the most often in writing and reading.

As this is the most important use of space in the classroom, choose a large enough space. A word wall has the letters of the alphabet at the top, and words are placed under the letter with which they begin.

- Make sure the words are printed large enough for every child to read. Put some words up, and then go to the other side of the classroom and see if you can read them.

- Make the tag on which the words are printed a contrast to the bulletin board background. The words usually are printed on a light colour and the background darker – e.g. yellow tag for the words on a dark green or blue background. Pastel word cards on a white wall are also suitable.

- Some teachers cut around the word shape and some print the words on a rectangle. The jury is still out deciding which is best.....

- Print the words clearly in the form you would like the children to print. If possible, do them on the computer in a bold primary font. In Grade One you may want to print the words on lines to show letter sizes.

- We would like the words to last without looking 'dog-eared', but generally it is not a good idea to laminate them. Often there is light reflection, and the children can't read the words from their seats.

- The words are usually removable. If it is possible to move the words around, then a child can take a word to his desk, the words can be changed to alphabetical order as they are added to the list, etc. If you have a magnetic chalk- or white-board, then put a strip of magnetic tape (available in a large roll at craft stores) on the back of each word. Another idea is to put a strip of velcro vertically below each letter heading and have each word with a strip of the opposite velcro on the back. Get the velcro that has adhesive on the back. Put the soft fluffy side on the bulletin board and the looped side on the back of the words.

- A word wall is only useful if it is taught every day and if the teacher refers to it constantly. The children must spell the words on the word wall correctly in all their work.

- Starting the word wall with your students' names helps add interest and motivation.

- Most teachers add five words each week. These can be sight reading words or spelling words – they must be high frequency words.

- Every day schedule a time to chant, cheer and clap these words. Teach the new words and review the words already on the wall. Teaching the word wall words should be a multi-sensory activity.



Literacy Centres

“Here are a list of centres that are suitable for early in the year. You will likely find that 15 minutes is a good rotation time. Put the students into flexible groups to go to the centres.

I use these three rules:

Use a whisper voice. Co-operate with others at your centre. Do your job at the centre.

In each centre there are specific tasks to do. The children must know exactly what is expected and the sequence of the tasks. Model your expectations.

Reading Centre - The children will have books at their reading level in a tub. They know what tub is suitable for their reading level. This corner is set up for comfort and the children like to sit on big pillows or in the rocking chair.

Listening Centre – I have stories on tape. The children are taught to use the tape recorder and to follow the tape in books that accompany the tapes. If time permits, the children can illustrate the story.

Computer Centre – Choose computer programs that are easy to use and teach simple skills in an interesting way. Depending on whether your kids used computers in Kindergarten – they may need practice using the mouse. Interactive books on disc such as “Grandma and Me” (an oldie but goodie) will improve mouse skills and teach computer use.

Read the Room – Give the children tours in the first week to read signs, poems and other classroom print. Have a collection of glasses (without the lenses), magic wands, binoculars, pointers, etc., and the children go around the room in partners pointing to a word and reading it to the partner.

Write the Room– The children in the group each have a clipboard, inter-lined paper and a pencil. They go around the classroom printing any word that they can read.

ABC Centre – Have cookie sheets and magnetic letters (lower case). The children can make their names, word wall words and other words that they can spell. This can be changed to alphabet stamps and stamp pads with paper.

Flash Card Centre – Make packs of words that the children have been taught in sight reading or in phonics. Make sure that one child in the group is able to check to make sure the answers are correct.

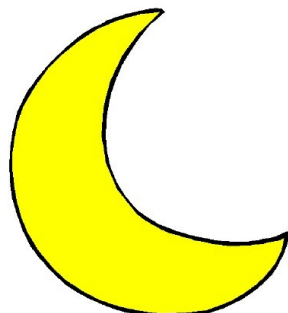
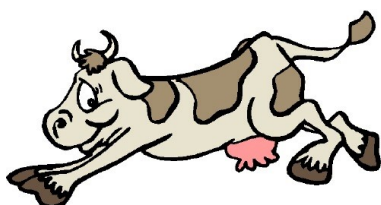
Poem Centre – After poems have been taught in guided reading, cut them apart and have the children reassemble them in a pocket chart. This can also be done by cutting apart a page with the poem and cutting and pasting it back in the correct order. Depending on the levels, this can be done by line or word.

Big Book Centre – The children read familiar big books together. They can use a pointer and ask one another questions as a teacher would.

Rainbow Spelling – Post the week's word wall words on a half sheet of chart paper, and the students write them 3 times each with coloured markers or coloured pencils.”



Nursery Rhymes



Many nursery rhymes come from English history. The meaning of the jingles have become obscure and descriptions of the origins differ. Some are violent or sad, such as “Ring Around a Rosie” which refers to the plague. ‘Baa, Baa, Black Sheep’ is about paying high taxes to the king. Whatever the meaning, children love them for the rhythm and rhymes.

“There is a super dooper list at enchantedlearning.com. Go to the nursery rhymes section. I downloaded it and use it weekly to plan my lessons.”

“Every Friday is Nursery Rhyme time in my grade one classroom as Friday’s guided reading lesson. We do this during our guided reading block of four blocks. It’s easier material that focuses on rhyming and my kids loved it. I was surprised by how few of them knew some of the nursery rhymes. I think that their favourite was Old Mother Hubbard.”

“I do a unit on Nursery Rhymes at the beginning of the year. We study a variety of Nursery Rhymes – some that are familiar and some that are not well known. I make charts and the children like ‘reading’ them. They help to develop concepts of print, especially for the lower kids. I like

to laminate the charts as I can then write on them with washable marker to show rhyming words, vocabulary words and the rhymes. After the children are familiar with a chart I put it into a centre for extra practice. One year I typed them out on a page and put them in a book that the kids could read during SSR.”

“I found a number of Nursery Rhyme books in the library, and the children were delighted to find the ones we have studied and other ones they know. Sometimes there are differences in the words, and we talk about these.”

“We put one up each day for the first couple of weeks. I cut it into line strips and put it into the pocket chart. They put it back together, find certain words that are repeated, sing them, act them out, find rhymes, read it to a partner and use them as puzzles. They are good to use for ‘Read the Room’. I give each child a word on a card, and they see if they can get into the right order. We also guess the missing word and practice sequencing the lines and words.”

“Did you know that virtually every nursery rhyme can be sung to the tune of *Skip to My Lou*? For the shorter rhymes with just four stanzas, you end up singing the tune twice. It works really well for every one of the rhymes that I use.”



This site gives you nursery rhymes to download – printed out for you in page form.

http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/wil/rimes_and_rhymes.htm

The Enchanted Learning site has them with rebus symbols and print-outs to give to your class.

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Rhymes.html>

Are You Ready?

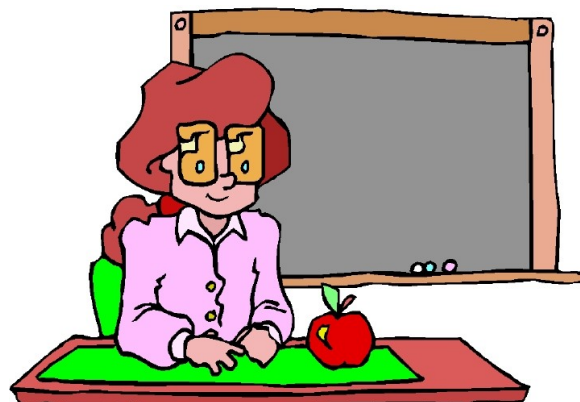
Photocopy the following list of things to get ready before school begins.

<u>Check List</u>	Notes
1. Organize the classroom furniture.	_____
2. Decorate the classroom.	_____
Calendar bulletin board	_____
Alphabet and numbers	_____
Other bulletin boards	_____
Word wall	_____
3. Name tags – on desks, coat place, cubbies	_____
4. Letters to parents/children	_____
Supply lists	_____
5. Organize supplies	_____
Teacher’s supplies	_____
Students’ supplies, pencils sharpened, etc.	_____
Paper – variety	_____
6. Computer files (or binder pages) for marks and anecdotal remarks.	_____
7. Review curriculum outcomes	_____
8. One week’s preparation:	_____
daily plans	_____
worksheets	_____
flashcards	_____
word wall words	_____
games, breaks, songs, poems	_____
books for read-alouds	_____
9. Know procedures and routines	_____

Before School Begins

Be prepared! Here are a few things to think about before the first day of school.

1. Where do your students spend their time before school? If they come directly to your classroom, what will they do until the bell rings? How do you want them to enter the classroom?
2. Where will your students line up after recess and lunch? Will you have one line or two? Do you have several ways of having them line up – e.g. alphabetical order, by colours, etc.
3. How will you get the children's attention? Say something special, turn the lights on and off, ring a bell, raise your hand or use other hand signal, etc.
4. Will you have student helpers – and if you do, how will you choose them?
5. Do you have homework policies? What is your procedure going to be for collecting and recording homework? If you have a home reading program, how will you keep track of books?
6. What is your policy about excusing children to go to the restroom during instructional time? Do you have bathroom rules prepared? You may want to find a male adult to take your boys (female adult for girls.....) on the first day to discuss the rules.
7. Have you planned your first week of school? Plan more than you think you will need, as the children will either do far more than you think they will do – or far less.
8. What type of behaviour reinforcement/positive discipline plan are you going to use? It is best not to use a chart or colour code system if you don't have to, but the system you hope to use should be planned.
9. What other class rules and procedures are you going to have? Write them down before the first day of school, and spend time the first day explaining them to your students. Realistically, you'll have to go over class rules and procedures every day for at least a week, to help your students learn your expectations. It helps to model these expectations. You can have the children give you the 'rules' - they will give you dozens of small rules, and then you can bring them down to a few broad rules – the ones you have planned!
10. What type of letter will you send home with students the first day of school? The letter can introduce yourself and outline your goals for the year, and explain your rules, procedures, and behaviour management plan.
11. What will you do about students who consistently don't complete their work?
12. What are your policies for allowing children out of their seat during worktime? Will most of your work be assigned seatwork, or will your students spend most of their time out of their seats, doing individual and group learning activities?
13. What is your plan for making sure that students who are absent are able to catch up their work? You can pop any work from a day into a file for the absentees if you feel that they must do everything done in class.
14. Do you have cubbies or mailboxes for your students?
15. Where do you want your students to keep their jackets, boots, shoes, backpacks, and lunchboxes?
16. What will your rule be about interrupting you when you are working with a student or a group? Some teachers wear something special around their necks or wrists to show that they must not be interrupted – unless the interruption is extremely serious.
17. What will your procedures be for parents who wish to talk to you?
18. How will you handle aides in the classroom or parent volunteers?
19. If you get a special child, how will he/she fit into your classroom and procedures?
20. What are your procedures for fire drills, etc.? Be sure to go over these the first morning, and take your students on a walking tour of the school, showing them where they meet and line up during a fire drill, if they aren't with you when the fire bell goes.

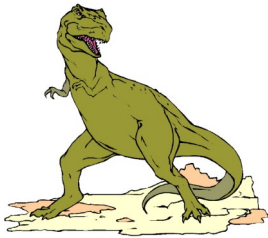


Math

Countasaurus

This is good practice for rote counting. You could have a dinosaur stuffie or a plastic t-Rex to the talking:

Teacher: I'm a countasaurus. I'll tell you what to count.
 I'll give you a number. You give me the amount.
 I like to eat numbers, I like them large and small;
 In all the ways that you will hear. I like to eat them all!
 I'm very hungry. Feed me 10 claps. (the children clap and count to 10 in unison)
 I'm STILL hungry! Feed me 20 pats! (The children pat their knees and count to 20)
 I'm VERY, VERY HUNGRY! Feed me 15 toe touches!



Use different numbers and different activities such as stomps, waves, head touches, etc.

One-To-One Correspondence

Sometimes we assume that all our children can do this – and then find that a few children are really having problems with manipulatives.

Every morning have one child count the boys, the girls, and the children at school today – have him go around the circle touching each person as he counts, and remembering himself, of course.

Take egg cartons, and print a number in each pocket with a felt pen – 0 to 10 in mixed order and with each egg carton different than the others. The children can go in pairs. One child puts the correct number of beans in each pocket, and the other child takes them out as a check.

Do estimation jars, and have children count the objects. Watch the counting to make sure it is accurate.

If a child is having difficulty, have him drop rocks into a can. The sound adds another modality to the exercise.

Have the children tell one another what they are doing as they count with one-to-one correspondence.

Beginning Addition and Subtraction

Before beginning addition and subtraction, the children must be able to count forward and backward (to 10) beginning at any number. Say, “Count on from 5.” The child does not say the 5 – he begins at 6 and counts 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Or say, “Count down from 8.” The child does not say the 8 – he begins at 7 and counts 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0.

Do this on a large floor number line. If you say “Count on from 5”, the child goes to the 5 and stands on it but does not say that number, then walks forward in the squares saying 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. If you say, “Count down from 8” the child stands on the 8 but does not say it – he begins at 7 and counts 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0. Once the children are comfortable with this and do it correctly on the floor number line, give them individual number lines for their desks and practice this.

When they begin to add, they use this skill. For example, if they are adding $4 + 3 = \underline{\quad}$ they stand on the 4 but do not say it. Now they take 3 steps – 5, 6, 7.

The reason this practice is valuable is that we don't want the children to count from 1 each time. This is teaching 'conservation of number'. We know we have the first number, so we don't have to count it out. If the children practice this conservation and it is taught and practiced early in the addition and subtraction process, it will improve understanding and the children will find the work much easier.

“Here is an autumn pattern exercise. We made a big tree on the bulletin board. Then each student had a 'branch' and they were given a bunch of leaf patterns and were able to colour them and create different patterns--some were basic, ABAB, and others were really complicated. They came out great and we have a big colourful pattern tree in the room.”

Assessment

During the first two or three days of school, sit with each child (the others are drawing, looking at books, using math manipulatives or doing puzzles, etc.) and test them on the following items. It helps if you have an aide or parent volunteer to answer questions and help the other class members. Don't give the assessment to the aide if it is possible to do it yourself – you will learn a lot about the child by the way the child attacks the different parts of the assessment.

1. Can they read the alphabet, upper and lower case? (not in alphabetical order) *Use a sheet with the upper and lower case letters. Have an identical sheet and circle errors and make notes of the substitutions.*
2. Do they know the sounds the letters make? *Use the lower case part of the same sheet.*
3. Can they read numbers from 1 to 10 and higher? *Use a sheet that has the numbers in random order.*
4. How high can they count, by rote?
5. How high can they count objects? *Use 2 bowls and 100 teddy bear or other interesting counters, and have them count as they move them from one bowl to the other. Stop them at the first serious error, such as leaving numbers out, missing the one-to-one correspondence, etc.*
6. Do they know the names of all the colours? *Use a sheet with colour circles, and ask them to say the colour names as you point to them. Watch for children who are colour-blind – they will mix colours that are the same intensity, or specific colours.*
7. Do they know their shapes? *Ask them to name the square, circle, triangle and rectangle.*
8. Do they know their first and last name, address, phone number, and birthday? *This is oral.*
10. Can they read any sight words? *(Use a sheet with 18 or 20 easy words like 'the, it, he, was, like, can').*
11. Hand the child a picture book with one sentence on each page and easy words, and ask him to read it. Hand it to the child upside down, so that you can see what he know about concepts about print. If he CAN read it, give him progressively harder books to find out at what level he is reading. Ask him where we begin to read, and what direction we will read. If he cannot read it, read a page to the child and ask him to read it back, having him pointing to each word as he repeats it – to see if he understands the concept of separate words.

Give your lower kids the Marie Clay Observational Survey (Reading Recovery) beginning the second week, to give you a better feeling for where they are.

It is helpful to ask the child a few questions. The answers will give you some insight.

Does someone read stories to you at home?

What is reading?

Can you read?

What is your favourite book?



Thanksgiving

“How about stressing the ‘thankful’ part? There’s a wonderful picture book called *I Am Thankful For* (by Janie Schmidt) and it’s so simple that I copy the format and the children make their own books. You could send thank-you notes to the people in the school who do things for the class....the custodian, the secretary, etc. (You cover some curriculum in B.C. if you do this because Grade Ones need to know the roles of people within a school). We also looked at cranberries and made cranberry jelly. The kids could take a small baby food jar of it home to share at their Thanksgiving table.”

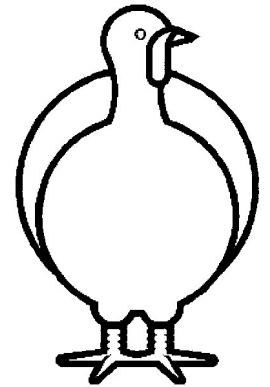
Barb

Bulletin Boards

You can make a large brown paper ball for a turkey’s body, a neck and head with wattles – or enlarge this turkey on the photocopier. Ask the children to each bring in a man’s tie, the more colourful the better. Staple the ties in a fan pattern for the tail, the largest end outwards, and then staple the turkey body on top. This is a very effective board!

Some titles for bulletin boards before Thanksgiving using turkeys: ‘Strut On In’, ‘Stuffed With.....’.

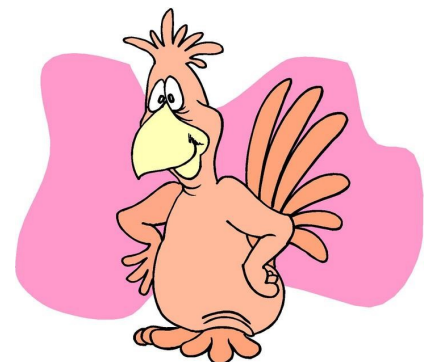
Each child can cut a turkey body and then the class can go out and collect autumn leaves, especially ones that are long and narrow, and glue the leaves on for a colourful tail.



This isn't just a turkey
As anyone can see
I made it with my hand
Which is a part of me
It comes with lots of love
Especially to say
I hope you have a very
Happy Thanksgiving Day!

Have the children trace their hands – the fingers together for the body and tail and the thumb widespread for the neck. Add a head and legs and you have a turkey!

“My favourite writing activity for Thanksgiving is our turkey recipes. I do a lesson on using ordinal numbers for steps and then they write their recipe, using ‘first’, ‘second’, ‘third’, etc. The word map prior to writing includes temperature and time so I get ‘cook at 40 degrees for 6 minutes and then add gravy’ as an example. I bind them together into a class recipe book and the parents always love them!”



Poems and Pies

Invite all your parents and friends for a special hour! Teach your children some poems (‘Albuquerque Turkey’ could be one choice) for autumn, Thanksgiving or Hallowe’en, and ask parents to bring pies if they can. It could also be pizza..... The children can perform in groups, individually and/or as a class, and then everyone can have pie and juice. Teachers who have done this rave about the reception it gets – the parents love it and it isn’t a lot of work. Try it!

The Albuquerque Turkey can be changed to the name of your town, if you wish. You can also brainstorm favourite foods to substitute in the last line.

<p>Albuquerque Turkey <i>(sung to the tune of "Clementine")</i> Albuquerque is a turkey And he's feathered and he's fine And he wobbles and he gobbles and he's absolutely mine. He's the best pet that you can get.. Better than a dog or cat. He's my Albuquerque turkey And I'm awfully proud of that.</p>	<p>He once told me , very frankly he preferred to be my pet, not the main course at my dinner, and I told him not to fret. And my Albuquerque turkey is so happy in his bed, 'Cause for our Thanksgiving dinner... We had egg foo yong instead.</p>
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Do a project for Thanksgiving using coffee filters. Fold the filter in half, then in half again. The children take markers and colour pie-shaped stripes from the point to the outer edge in bright colours (not black or brown). Colour heavily and brightly. Next, dip the folded filter into a shallow pan of water. Leave it in about 5 seconds. Unfold the filter and lay it on newspaper to dry. It will dry quite quickly. Cut one quarter of the filter away. The filter makes the tail, so the missing quarter is downwards and centered.

Make the body, head and legs out of brown paper and attach them to the filter which makes the feathers. When hung in the window the tails are like suncatchers.



"I do a Thanksgiving quilt. Each child gets a square with a border around it and a design. On a couple of the rectangles he prints things he is thankful for. The rest of the pattern is coloured brightly. When the squares are put together it is attractive!"

Sharing

"I've controlled sharing by not allowing any toys. I've encouraged parents to let their children bring arts and crafts that they did at home, items from nature, or things that are related to our theme. Each child is assigned a specific day that they are allowed to bring things (five groups of kids). Since not everyone brings or has some news to share, this has made sharing time manageable. We do it everyday after calendar. Each child stands up and begins with "Boys and girls...". I've taught them to wait for good audience manners and how to speak so that the audience will listen to you (volume, expression, etc.). After the child is finished sharing, they ask "Are there any questions or comments?" They then get to choose two people who are waiting nicely with their hands up. Sharing time is a great time to practice public speaking, audience manners, and the difference between questions and comments. I love it! It's great to see the kids transfer these skills to other times in their lives."

Iram

"Have the object start with a certain letter or sound. They had to tell us three things about it and the kids could ask 3 questions - this we worked on! Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?"

Classroom Management

Bathroom Rules

“Instead of an interruption of “I have to go to the bathroom!” I show the children how to raise their hands with their fingers crossed in the sign for restroom. All I do is look their way and nod to them.”

“My children are allowed to get up and go to the bathroom at any time during the day. The only time they need to ask is when I am teaching a lesson. If they raise their hand, all I say is, “Is it an emergency?” If they shake their head, or say yes, all I have to do is say, “Go.” My lesson is not interrupted, and there are no accidents. I also have a sign up sheet by the door so we know if someone is in the bathroom. I am also able to see if anyone is abusing the privilege. I’ve never had anyone in there more than 3 times a day.”

“I have a ‘bathroom bear’! A child who is going to the washroom must get the bear and put it on his/her chair, and replace it when he/she returns. I can easily see who is in the washroom, and obviously only one person can be out of the classroom at a time.”

Clean Desks!

“Every morning I draw a name stick and we inspect that student's desk. If it is neat and there are no loose papers the student gets to have a little Beanie Baby type animal all day. In the beginning I used four animals so everyone got chosen every week. Now most have the clean desk habit learned and I can go with less reinforcement.”



Cathy's Tips

“Since the students all arrive at different times I like to have some sort of activity page, their journal, even a colouring page from time to time on their desk for when they arrive. They know they are to simply work on what is on their desk. This takes about a month to really become effective. Later in the year I often have them start with silent reading first thing in the morning.

Because our daylight really shortens early in the fall I do my calendar and weather after our first recess. So once the bell rings in the morning we start on our work. As far as transitions go, I use a 5 count most often and the rule is without running to be ready to work at the end of the 5 count. I think transitions will work well when you are consistent with how you handle them.

We use desks in our school and sometimes they are a pain so I have a large table that is near my desk. On that table I have baskets, stacking shelves, etc., and all workbooks, worksheets, journals, etc., are stored on this table. This way I rarely have to worry about a student wasting time looking for their books. And if I want to grab marking to take home, I just take it off the shelves.

I think it is important to have set things to do following each recess – it is better if those set things do not change. I do calendar and weather every day after the first recess so my students learn quickly to come in and sit on the rug ready to go. After lunch recess I have another set activity and same for last recess.

For my filing system, I use hanging files as I find they are much easier to move around in a filing system. I have 3 main drawers. In the top drawer I have all my holiday files. In the middle drawer all my subject area files – math, reading, social studies, etc., and in the bottom drawer all my themes (Nursery Rhymes, Fairy Tales, plants and animals), etc. I am not great at re-filing right away so I keep a tray under my computer desk where I throw any masters of work I took out of files to copy. I try to re-file at least once a month to keep the pile down.

I keep some of my larger themes, especially themes like my five senses unit, Christmas, etc., in plastic tubs and keep all the equipment, experiments, samples, books, etc., in one or two tubs so it is easy for me to locate when I want to start preparing for that unit.”

Puzzles

“Here's a puzzle management tip I learned from a colleague. Put each puzzle into a ziplock freezer bag putting a letter onto the back of each piece (one puzzle has the same letter on each piece), cut the picture off the front and put it in the bag too. When you find loose pieces on the floor, you can find the puzzle with the matching letter and put it together.”

Loreen's Tips

The children sit at tables (6 children per table/five tables).

Each table has a number (1-5) and a colour.

Each table has a corresponding 'box' filled with all the necessary tools (tin of pencils, tin of fibre-tipped marking pens, rulers, erasers, small boxes of crayons, scissors, glue).

Each child at each table has a turn to be the 'table helper'. The table helper rotates clockwise (so the person on your left will be tomorrow's table helper). Table helpers fetch the table tool boxes when asked to do so and put the boxes away when they are not being used. Table helpers pass out and collect papers and books. They supervise cleanup of their table and surrounding area and remind table members when it is 'quiet time'.

Table helpers are responsible for reporting to me at the beginning of the day. I'll say, "Table Helpers, anything to report?" If they have something to tell me they will raise their hands and give me their 'report' when I call them. Reports include the names of anyone at their table who is absent or anyone who has a birthday at their table that day.

I dismiss children for their break by calling one table at a time. At the beginning of the year I just call their table number. I employ other methods throughout the year, for instance, now I am calling out, 'Two plus two' and table four is dismissed. Or I can dismiss them by colours, either spelling the word or saying the name of something that is that colour, e.g., BANANAS! (and the yellow table goes).

'Quiet Time' is the time when we come into the classroom after break. No one is supposed to use their voice. Everyone goes directly to his/her seat and waits for the story of the day. I teach the children some basic sign language signs throughout the year, and they are allowed to use these 'words'. Table helpers supervise the quiet at their own table (but only with sign language!).

Since papers and books are collected by table, I can identify papers of students who have forgotten to write their names on their paper.

With five tables and five days in the week, each table has their own 'super challenge' day. On Mondays, for instance, the individuals at Table One are invited to take the 'super challenge', which could be to read the Word Wall or to complete several math sums before the egg-timer rings.

I like this system because everyone has an opportunity to be a table helper often (every sixth day) and it builds great leadership skills!

Loreen is a teacher in Zululand, South Africa

More About Chair Pockets.....

“I have tables and each child has a cubbie. I made chair pockets about three years ago when I taught Kindergarten and am still using them. I used heavy cotton duck fabric in strong primary colours (I made four in each of 4 colours – each table is colour coded). Each child has a work folder that they keep in their chair pocket. The work folder has such things as work in progress, reading response journals, working with words booklets, etc. Each Friday, they go through their work folders to take home anything that is complete. I love my chair pockets! I have requested desks for next year, but even if I get them, I will still use my chair pockets.”

“Here's how I made 'back of the chair pocket folders': I took a length of stretch fabric and folded the ends to the center so that the ends were about 3 inches away from each other. Then I serged (or sewed) the 2 sides closed. Now you turn one half inside out and put it over the chair and the other half is the pouch. Voila! You just have to measure your chairs for the pouch width and measure how long of a pocket you'd like.”

Barb

Autumn

We Went Walking

"We went on a simple nature walk around the school and looked for signs of fall. When we came back we wrote,

I went walking.

I saw a _____.

It had to be a sign of fall. Then they illustrated it. The cover was *We Went Walking* and some children decorated the cover for me with fall leaves."

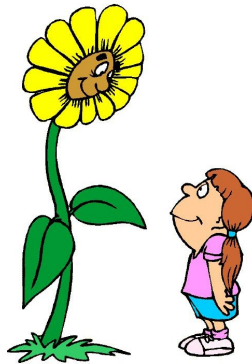


Sunflowers

"Here's an easy sunflower idea

.....

Sunflower children
Nod to the sun.
Summer is over,
Fall has begun.



Cut out brown circles and white circles that are slightly smaller.

On the white circles get each of your students to draw a picture of their face.

Glue this in the middle of the brown circle.

Cut out petals from yellow paper and glue on the back of the brown circle.

Cut out a stem and some leaves from green paper and glue on.

Then glue real sunflower seeds (with shells of course) on the brown circle, all around the white circle face.

If you want to hang them, you could also get the children to cut out two white circles instead of one, and on the back of the sunflower draw the back of their heads."

"I make sunflowers by having the children trace their hands 3 or 4 times and cut them out. Arrange the hands in a circle. Trace and cut out a brown circle for the flower centre. Add a tall green stem and leaves."

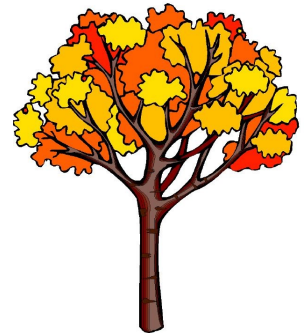
Fall Trees

- Draw trees with brown crayon (darkly) on pale blue or gray construction paper. Cut 1 inch or 3 cm. squares of yellow and orange tissue paper. Fold the small square over the flat end of a pencil or pencil crayon, and, holding it on the pencil end, dip it lightly into a puddle of liquid glue. Place it on the tree branches for coloured leaves. The more the child puts on, the better the tree will look!"

- Draw and colour a tree trunk and branches. Press the finger tip to a red stamp pad and make fingerprint 'leaves' on the tree.

- Make a large tree on the bulletin board. Then have the children cut across apples to show the star. Dip the cut apple into red paint and make prints on white paper. Cut out the apple shapes and glue them to the tree.

- Trace the child's arm to just below the elbow and hand to form a tree trunk and the fingers will be the branches. Paint or colour it brown. Sponge paint orange and yellow leaves on the trees.



Family Projects

This is an interesting idea! A project is sent home each month for the family to do. As they are fun, parents enjoy them and the completed results make great books or bulletin boards. Each month instructions are sent home and background supplies. Add a date that you need the project back.

September – A child's 'All About Me' page for a book. Send home the page and ideas that could be used to complete the page – photos, information, family, pets, likes and dislikes, favourite things, etc. If you plan on putting these into a book, you would not want items that are too 'bumpy', but this would be fine if you are planning a bulletin board.

October – a turkey in disguise. The Thanksgiving turkey does not want to be recognized! Here are some remarks from teachers:



“We use a tracer of a turkey that will fit a 12 x 18 piece of paper. I used the brown shopping bags and attached the note to the outside. We brainstormed many different possibilities.”

From a letter to parents: “The turkey can be decorated in any way you and your child would like. Be creative with anything you have around the house - seeds, fabric, paint, feathers, crayon, cotton balls, noodles, cereal, glitter, bows, jewellery etc. Turkeys can be turned into characters such as princesses,

hockey players, ballerinas, spacemen, Harry Potter, etc. Let your imagination be your guide!”

A bulletin board title: Our Gallery of Gobblers!

You could also do a pumpkin for Hallowe'en.

November – a book, or a page showing November weather.....

December – A Christmas stocking, a ball to hang on the tree or a gingerbread man

January – snowman or a page about winter

February – heart or an individual Valentine box

March – shamrock or March weather picture

April – Easter eggs or a page about spring

May -- flower

June – sun or a beach picture



You can also use ideas from themes you are doing, from books you have read or special events such as the Olympics. This is fun for the families to do together, they make wonderful bulletin boards and great conversation pieces!

Behaviour Management

“As far as promoting self-esteem in my classroom, I have fortunately convinced the children that there are no bad people, just bad choices. They are aware that they have every opportunity to make choices and can correct choices as the day progresses. They know that it is a bad behaviour and that it has nothing to do with the person.”

Tattling

“We spend quite a bit of time talking about what is permissible tattling and what isn't.

- If you were not involved then you shouldn't be tattling or talking about it.
- If it is something you should be able to work out - you shouldn't tattle.
- If someone is hurting you physically or verbally - calling you names, threatening to hurt you, punching you, etc., you SHOULD tattle.”

Positive Suggestions

“I went to a WONDERFUL conference on ‘Succeeding with Difficult Children’ (of which I have 13 this year!). It was put on by Gary Benton. If anyone ever gets a chance to go to a conference put on by this man, I would highly recommend it! Anyway, here are some of the ideas that I liked:

· **Positive Post** – You choose one child a day and have that person sit in the middle of the circle. You go around the circle and ask each child to come up with a compliment for that child. You write it on a post-it note and hand it to the child. They read it and stick it to the child that is sitting in the middle. By the end, everyone has paid the person a complement and the child in the middle is literally covered in good feelings. Later that child can put his/her post-its on a piece of paper and you can photocopy them and send it home as a reminder of how great they are in others' eyes.

On Task Pictures – At the start of the year you explain what it looks like to be sitting at your desk, concentrating on the work at hand. Have the children pretend to do just that and take a picture of them. Laminate the picture and tape it to the top of their desks. Now, whenever the child struggles to stay on task you just have to walk by and tap their picture as a reminder of what they should be doing.

Back Rubs – Many of us have schools that play music over the speakers for the first couple of minutes of the day and TOUCH is a wonderful stress reducer, so he suggested starting the day sitting in a circle with each child facing the back of the person in front of them. Throughout the music their sole job is to gently rub the back of the person in front of them. I can imagine that I would have to teach how to be gentle, but once done, it would be a neat way to start the day.

My personal favourite....**A TATTLE BUG**....make a paper mache bug and put it on the wall with the sign ‘class tattle bug’. Whenever a child has a tattle to tell they can go tell the tattle bug. I need one of those this year!”

Barb

Kindness Box

“I have the students each decorate a small box with stickers and each week we put something new in the box. I start with the wrinkled heart to kick it off and each child puts in a small heart of their own to remind them not to put a wrinkle in any one's heart. The next week we gather together and I give them something else to add: an eye-ball to keep an eye out for each other, a Hershey's hug to let them know they can have a hug whenever they want one, etc. I add something different each week. Each week we review what is already in the box and talk about its meaning. I let the box go home with them during the winter break. By then they have internalized what it means to work together as a team and our class community is pretty well established.”

Parent Involvement

The 'Class Parent'

Many teachers have a 'Class Mom'. This parent is a volunteer who will call other parents when this is necessary. She will find other volunteers for field trips or special occasions. She can be given a list if there will be a class party and she will phone other parents to help and rotate helpers on each occasion. It saves the teacher a lot of work!

Parents in the classroom

"Our parents HAVE to attend a class for all school volunteers where they are instructed in the use of copy machines, laminators, etc., as well as privacy issues."

"I have parents come in to help, using their special skills. This year I had a parent volunteer to make bread with my students, and we had a 'bread day'. Literature about bread was read, measurement lessons were experienced when mixing the bread dough as well as science when learning about the yeast. I have a grandmother that comes once a week and reads with each child in my class. I have parents who go with my class to a elderly day care center. We visit them once a month, and some of them visit and read to us monthly."

"I have a meeting at the beginning of the year, letting the parents know my expectations. The confidentiality issue is number one. I won't discuss another child's progress with them (they'll often try to ask things like "So what's with ___? I heard...") and they need to let me know if they can't make it, etc.

*I've had parents come in every morning for a set time to listen to students read in the hallway (following the home reading program).

*I've had a parent come in once a month, pull the students with a birthday that month and bake a cake with them, which was shared with the entire class to celebrate all the birthdays that month.

*I've asked parents to take over the organization of the Scholastic book orders.

*I've also given parents the option of taking home colouring to do (big books), cutting out laminated work, and miscellaneous craft preparation. Some parents would rather do that kind of stuff at home, than sit in the room and do it (works for me!)...also parents that work will offer to do this type of stuff, knowing it's one way they can still help out.

*I've had parents come in during silent reading time to repair books (I keep a basket for books needing repairs, and the students know to just pop books in if pages come out or get ripped). Also, to take a small group of about 3 students at a time to a corner of the room and read a story to them, continuing until either silent reading is over, or they've read the book to every student."

Martha

Newsletters

"I designed my newsletter using Word, but any word processing program would do. I set it up with a banner at the top and two columns. I sent it home weekly and always included the spelling and vocabulary words for the current week and the next. I would mention the objectives we would be working on that week and any important events that were coming up. I also tried to include suggestions to parents for helping their child study, work on words, develop math skills, etc. I also had some sort of positive quotation. The weekly newsletters were something all of my parents commented on and appreciated so I always felt it was worth the effort. Once you set one up it's a simple matter to just reuse the same format so you don't have to reinvent the wheel every week." *Bonnie*



Hallowe'en

Hallowe'en Pictures

Have the children lie on a table with their heads hanging down off the edge. Take a digital picture of their upside-down face. Once on the computer, crop the pictures and turn them around so that it looks as if their hair is standing on end. It makes a super picture for Halloween! Make a frame for it from black paper and add the date.

“My students make a magnet picture frame to put on the refrigerator. Last year at Halloween time we took Polaroid pictures of them in their costumes and made frames in a station.”

Hallowe'en Day

“We will have a costume party, trick or treating and bobbing for apples along with the haunted house and games in the afternoon. This week we will do a pumpkin activity where we predict the size of seeds in ratio to the size of the pumpkin and other math activities, and then we will carve them.”

“Our school does a ‘Wacky Day’ on Halloween. The children don’t wear costumes, but they can wear their clothes inside out, backwards, with different coloured socks or shoes, funny hair styles, etc. It is a lot of fun and the kids do not even mind not wearing costumes.”

“We are having a Halloween party. We make masks earlier in the week. We're carving pumpkins and counting the number of seeds which we've estimated and graphing the results. We're also having a grossology touch station with worms (spaghetti), eyeballs (peeled grapes), etc. We play ‘pin the stalk on the pumpkin’. There is a visit from the ‘Great Pumpkin’ with goody bags, and some dancing and treats.”

“This year my class will make jello jigglers with the molds found with jello at the store. We will also decorate ghost and pumpkin cookies.”

Hallowe'en Art

Make spider hats. All you need is a black band and eight accordion fold legs. Just add the features!

Have parents or volunteers trace each child’s body on butcher paper. Then they can each decorate themselves in a Hallowe'en costume.

“We stuff little lunch bags with paper, tie the end shut. Then we paint the bag orange and make a green construction paper stem, cutting like a spiral. This is our pumpkin patch. We learn a pumpkin poem that we glue on the back. We have added corn stalks.

Hallowe'en Activities

Have a chart of Hallowe'en words – with pictures if necessary. Then the children print the following, adding their choice of Hallowe'en words.

There's a _____ under my bed,
 There's a _____ in the tree.
 There's a _____ in the closet,
 But they don't scare me!

Make pumpkin bingo cards. Draw and photocopy a blank card on a pumpkin shape. Print a sheet with a variety of word wall words and/or Hallowe'en words. The children can cut out words they know and glue them into the squares on the pumpkin at random. You call words and the children cover them with candy corn.”



October Celebrations

“Our grade ones have a Fall Festival the last hour of the day on October 31st. Each class is responsible for a game booth and the kids rotate through the games during that time. The booths include cookie decorating, face painting, musical chairs to win a cupcake, basketball throw, and pumpkin toss. Everyone wins a prize or piece of candy and each class supplies what it needs for their booth. Only students are invited to attend and they leave their costumes at home. The kids have great fun. The parents run the booths and the teachers get a chance to mingle and have fun with the kids.”



“I stopped doing any activities about Hallowe’en when I had children who couldn’t participate due to religious beliefs. It caused so many problems sending them elsewhere in the school that I decided to skip over it all together in following years. I now do bats, owls, and spiders throughout the month of October which I integrate into guided reading, shared reading, read-alouds, and writing as well. The kids always love all the non-fiction and never even ask why we don’t read any Halloween stories or do any activities. I love this unit and the excitement level it produces in the classroom. It’s a great learning experience.”

“One year a local grocery store donated small pumpkins for my class. Then we had the children bring in vegetables – carrots, celery, mushrooms, red, yellow and green peppers, cucumbers, etc. Then the moms helped by slicing the vegetable (if necessary) and using wooden skewers to attach the vegetables to the pumpkins to decorate them. For example, cucumbers make great ears or eyes with another small vegetable being the eyeball. The children had great fun! We put the pumpkins on display for that night and next day. Then the children took the pumpkins home on Friday. Prior to decorating the pumpkins, the students estimated the circumference of their pumpkins and measured them. They set them in order of size, weight and height. One pumpkin was used to estimate the number of seeds inside, and then it was cut open to count them. The pumpkin seeds were roasted in a toaster oven.”

“If your class is unable to go to a pumpkin farm, there are websites on the internet that show pumpkin farms. You can take a virtual trip. It may not be the same, but it is interesting, too.”

“My school did storybook character day. Some kids liked it better than Hallowe’en because it wasn’t scary. The first year is the hardest to get going. We found that if we read some books and talked about how you could make a simple costume that really helped. We also pointed out that it was often easier to be a character that was a person (e.g. Mike Mulligan) than a character that was an animal (e.g. Arthur). We had them bring the book to school for the day.”

“At my school, we have a Harvest Festival. From 9:00 to 11:30, the children travel as a whole class, to 4 different teachers, then back to their own teachers. There are 5 different activities in which they will participate. For example, in one room they will make a scarecrow, as a class, to decorate the halls. In my room they will learn about the life cycle of a pumpkin – I love the project that I’m doing with them. You cut out a pumpkin shape book so that all of the pages are connected – like paper dolls. On the cover you write ‘The Life of a Pumpkin’. On the first page, the child colours soil and then glues on a pumpkin seed. Then he draws a green vine through all of the pages, coming out of the seed. On the next page, he glues on a 2 x 2 inch piece of yellow tissue paper to represent the pumpkin flower. Next page...he sponge paints a small green circle. Last page...he sponge paints a larger orange circle. After lunch, I do centres. Other teachers do Harvest Bingo, graphing Dem Bones, doing a pumpkin seed toss where they have to get a seed into a pumpkin, and others.”



Home Reading



After the skills have been taught, reading practice is all-important. Children will not be good hockey players, dancers, or musicians unless they do a great amount of practice, and reading is no different. We try to give children lots of practice in the classroom, and any practice at home is great. This being said, there are many families where this is difficult – families who don't speak English, where the parent has no patience or understanding of the reading process and makes the child feel badly about his reading progress, etc. In the latter case, it may be better if the child does not read at home – unless the teacher can change the attitudes through training.

It is important that the books the child takes home are at his independent reading level. It is preferable that a book has been read in class first, so the home reading is a review. The child can take home books for the parent to read aloud to him, but it must be clear that the child is not expected to read them.

Try to keep your home reading program as simple as possible to organize. Here are some ideas from teachers:

“Parents sign a paper at the beginning of the school year saying that they accept responsibility for the care of the books checked out from me. If the book is damaged, destroyed or lost, I charge them \$5. If a child loses more than one of my books, I will no longer allow him/her to check out books from the classroom.

I keep a 5 x 8 file card for each child listing the book they have checked out from my classroom collection. I write the title and level of the book on their card and have students file the cards when they collect the book, slip it into a large ziploc bag and place it in their backpack. On Wednesday mornings, I look through the cards to see who has not checked out a book that week. A verbal reminder is given, the card is turned sideways in the box so that it sticks up until that book is returned. If they keep a book more than a week, a note printed on fluorescent paper is sent home and parents are reminded of the \$5 charge for lost, damaged or destroyed books. I seldom lose books.”

“I have the children sign a 3 x 5 card and write the date, their name, and the title on it, then they put it in a card file box. When they return the book they take their card out of the box. They can not check out a second one until the first is returned.”

“I glued 24 library pockets onto a piece of poster board. After laminating, I slit the pockets open. I put each child's name on a pocket. When the kids check out my books, I can easily see at a glance who has or has not returned their books.”

Irlen Syndrome

“I have a student who was just recently diagnosed with Irlen Syndrome. He has Scitopia, which means he has a hard time reading black ink on white paper with the lighting in the classroom. We are getting him tested and ‘prescribed’ coloured overlays which cut down distortion.

Here's a short article on Irlen Syndrome. Very interesting....”

<http://www.pamelasims.com/arthyc/arthycisitaread.htm>

Do coloured overlays help students with dyslexia? I read somewhere that yellow, gold or other coloured overlays did make a difference – the letters didn't move about as they do on a white page. Or..... photocopying pages onto gold or other coloured paper? These things are worth a try!

Websites

As this is the first newsletter of the year and there are new subscribers – here are a few favourites:

Children’s sites: <http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/Tower/1217/grade1.html>

<http://www.teachingheart.net/>
Lots of great ideas!

<http://www.tooter4kids.com/>

<http://www.marcias-lesson-links.com>

This list gives you the 100 most frequently used words.
<http://www.aas.ru/Academics/counselor/teach/freqwds.html>

<http://www.mrsmcgowan.com/1stgrade/autumn.html>
Great autumn and Hallowe’ en ideas!

From a teacher: “I recently purchased one of Dr. Jean's products and was so excited about it I decided to check out her website. To say the least, I was simply overwhelmed with all of the ideas and activities and chants and cheers! It has given me a great boost (and LOTS of fantastic ideas!). If you've never looked at her site, do so NOW. It's awesome!”

<http://www.drjean.org/index.html>

<http://www.lindaslearninglinks.com/literacyctr.htm>
Good ideas for literacy centres with pictures.

<http://blackdog.net/holiday/halloween/tictactoe/index.html>
For your kids – play Hallowe’ en tic-tac-toe.

<http://www.countrygraphics.com/jcklntnrgame.html>
Build a jack o’lantern – drag and drop..... This is a good exercise to practice using the mouse and is fun for kids.

Take a virtual trip to a pumpkin patch!
<http://www.eskimo.com/~mcalpin/pumkin.html>
http://www.pumpkin-patch.com/pumpkin_finding.html

This site has links to many other sites related to teacher portfolios including examples created by teachers including online portfolios. It is a great site to spend some time exploring if you're wanting to create a portfolio.

<http://www.geocities.com/ginnyks/portfolios.html>

“I had to put together a portfolio at the end of my university program. This year, we got a new principal who made everyone put one together. She wanted us to have a resume, a philosophy statement, our yearly plan - scope and sequence, letters of recommendation, my evaluations, and any notes from parents praising us, etc. Other people have told me to put in a lesson plan, pictures of me working with my students, samples of work produced and my discipline plan in writing.”



Odds and Ends

A good gift for a new teacher! Give with a pack of M&Ms.

Teacher Vitamins:

Prescribed for: _____
To help you get through the new school year.

To temporarily calm your craving for chocolate, eat the BROWN one.
At first sign of 'Meeting Overload' eat the RED one.
The ORANGE one minimizes 'Mental Block' during long range planning.
The GREEN one calms your frustrations while dealing with stress!
If you feel a 'Lesson Plan Headache' coming on, eat the YELLOW one.
The BLUE one reduces Bulletin Board fatigue.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE:

Take one tablet as needed to reduce fatigue commonly associated with Back to School Syndrome. If all symptoms occur at the same time, eat the whole bag.

Although scientific evidence is inconclusive, this product is thought to be habit-forming, resulting in severe addiction. In the event you find yourself experiencing tremor-like symptoms upon attempting to discontinue use, call the hot line listed below immediately.

1-800-CHOCOLATE

Munchers!



Marcia's Sound Muncher



Nancy's Munchers



Munchers can be used to 'eat' word cards that the child reads correctly, sound cards when the child has mastered the sound, math answers, etc.

For lots more 'Munchers', go to: <http://www.marcias-lesson-links.com/Muncher%20Monsters.html>

A Favourite Lesson

“With the kids seated on the floor I start talking about the difference in the things we say that make people feel good or that hurt them. While talking, I am cutting out a big heart. After I have it cut out, I hold it up and tell the kids that each one of us starts out with a heart that is as pretty as this one. I ask the kids to start telling me things that a person might say that might hurt another person's feelings. With each response, I fold the heart (any direction . . . just put a fold in it). Eventually the heart is crumpled in my hands. I tell the children that each time they say something hurtful to someone, they are putting a little wrinkle in that person's heart. We talk about how someone's heart might begin to look like this crumpled heart if people continue to say mean things to them. I then have the kids start to tell me things that they might say to someone to make that person feel good. With each response, I UN-fold one of the creases in the heart. Eventually I have pressed out all of the ‘hurts’except, of course, for the fact that the wrinkles can still be seen, even though the heart is now all the way unfolded. We talk about how we each have those wrinkles in our hearts from things that people have said to us, and how we want to be careful with what we say so as to not add more wrinkles to anyone's heart.”

Marcia

Iram's Life-Savers

- I snip the top corner of all my master copies so I don't ever accidentally hand out my last copy of something. *(Some teachers put a streak of yellow high-liter on the masters.)*

- I keep a list of parents' names and phone numbers by the phone in my classroom as well as a pen and a notepad (I know this is simple, but I learned this one the hard way, writing on skin...)

- I keep an extra pair of kid size jogging pants and a t-shirt. I've had kids fall in mud, throw up on themselves, etc... I just give the clothes to the kids, they change in the bathroom, and their parents wash them at home and return them.

- I put a piece of tape on the floor away from the class sink This is where the kids begin their line to wait to use the sink. This is so they don't crowd around the person who is using it. It encourages them to use it one at a time.

- Keep scissors, glue stick and a felt pen in your mail box in the office. My classroom this year was miles away from the photocopier, and having these supplies close by saved me so much time.

- Do a unit on nutrition right away. I always get my kids disgusted by junk food, so most of them never bring it in their lunches. Even if their parents pack it for them, they are too embarrassed to take it out of their bags! I don't even let them bring juice boxes (most of them are sugar anyway and I hate the sticky mess) and they bring water instead.

- Have a dry erase note board to write down upcoming events. I used to write reminders on paper posters and then throw them away. What a waste...

- Get your kids to make their own lunch/snack mats. They draw a picture on a piece of paper, glue it on a larger piece of tagboard, and get them laminated. This way, your tables/desks don't get dirty.



More tips

This summer Walmart has had beach towels with games such as Snakes and Ladder, Twister and others. These giant games would be great for the classroom!

“Brains need water to work efficiently. My kids have a water bottle on their desks. They soon get used to handling the bottles efficiently – they know that if they are playing with them I immediately take the bottle away for the rest of the day.”

Dear Colleagues,

This has been busy summer, with all my family visiting and new resources in progress. Most of the summer has been spent at my computer, but as my desk looks over the sea it hasn't been too taxing..... I have also been doing work to organize the PSL System, so that it will work efficiently.

I am looking for teachers who would like to try the three strand program. I need feedback and suggestions as people actually do it. If you are interested in piloting the PSL program, I would help out in any way possible and be your associate through e-mail. Contact me if you are interested and we will discuss it further. I would appreciate it very much!

Jean



Laws of Teaching

Disaster will occur when visitors are in the room.
A subject interesting to the teacher will bore students.

The time a teacher takes in explaining is inversely proportional to the information retained by students.

A meeting's length will be directly proportional to the boredom the speaker produces.

The problem child will be a school board member's son.

When the teacher is late, she will meet the principal in the hall.

If the teacher is late and does not meet the principal, she is late to the staff meeting.

New students come from schools that do not teach anything.

Good students move away.

Murphy's Law will go into effect at the beginning of an evaluation.

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To complain
To request ideas on a specific topic

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