



# Primary Success

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## It's the busy season!

November and December are likely the two busiest months of the year. In November all primary teachers are working hard to teach the new skills, and with the younger children we often see what I call the 'November Miracle' - the burst of knowledge and capability that our students show at this time, especially in Grade One.

December is always busy as we struggle with Christmas concerts, art projects, noisy and excited kiddies, report cards and the usual lessons. Then when we leave school we have all our family preparations for the holiday season, too - shopping, baking, cleaning and planning.

Primary teachers are usually tired and stressed at this time of year. Take care of yourself and try to find time each day to revitalize your energies. If you can be happy and relaxed the people around you will be happy, too!

Have a great holiday! Jean



If A equals success, then the formula is:  $A = X + Y + Z$ , X is work. Y is play. Z is keep your mouth shut. - Albert Einstein

**Look for:**



**Tips - the best ideas!**

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# Improving on the Four-Blocks

The Four-Blocks is a framework for teaching literacy. It was developed by Patricia Cunningham, and has been adopted by many teachers, schools and districts across North America. The four blocks - guided reading, self-selected reading, writing, and working with words - are intended to cover all aspects of the reading process. Each block is taught every day for 40 minutes, generally without homogeneous grouping. Having the four blocks of time is a good idea! It ensures that teachers spend enough time on the different aspects of literacy.

In the Four-Blocks format the guided reading block is usually taught whole-class using multiple copies of trade books or non-sequential basal readers. There is a review of a previously read book. Then key vocabulary is discussed and a new book is read together and then individually. This can be improved in two ways. First, the instruction would be much more effective if it could be targeted to the different ability levels that are present in every grade one or two class. Some of the students will be reading far ahead of the chosen book level, and some lower or learning disabled kiddies will be reading far below this book level. While there are strategies that can help make this block somewhat multi-level - it still does not fit the needs of the high or low students. This may not do active harm to the high children, but does do harm to the children who know that they are not really coping with the lesson. Also, with a whole-class grouping it is impossible to hear each child read every day - a necessity in early reading.

Secondly, it is my opinion that teaching early reading skills through trade books does not provide the repetition and sequence that two-thirds of the students need. Even though the books are leveled - there isn't enough sequence and review of vocabulary and skills. Without the sequence and review many students will not do as well as they should. Teaching through trade books is suitable after students become fluent readers in grade two and three as it helps to increase comprehension, but in the early part of the reading process does not produce readers as soon or as thoroughly as sequential learning does.

Here's what you can do to optimize your guided reading block in grade one or with grade two students who are not yet fluent. Increase the time to be able to teach three homogeneous reading groups. You will likely need one hour for this block. Use this time to teach sequential sight word lessons to each group at their instructional levels and listen to each student read orally. Use the old sight word basals that are sequential or a program such as the Successful Sight Reading program. These can be interesting lessons with good teaching, and every child will feel and be successful.

The working with words block has a word wall component where five words are taught and practiced each week and the word wall is familiarized, and a making words component where letters and sounds are manipulated to make a variety of words. Both of these are valuable exercises that improve spelling and phonics use.

The word wall time is excellent. Once a word is on the word wall it must be spelled correctly in everything the students do. This insistence on accuracy and word wall usage is a very good thing. The problem with this block arises in the making words section unless every child knows all the letter sounds and how to blend them to encode and take words apart to decode. Some children will pick this up with ease and some students in grade one may take a good part or all of this year to gain these skills. Teaching all the sounds and the blending skills is a pre-requisite to the making words exercises. Phonics, as sight reading, should be specifically taught with sequential lessons. There are a number of programs that can be used.... Open Court and Reading Mastery (Distar) or Successful Phonics are all good sequential phonics programs. Once all the students know their sounds and can blend well, the making words component is useful.

Things to Ponder ....



The self-selected reading block puts time and importance to things we do anyway! This is time for teacher read-alouds and independent student reading. Because the guided reading block should be increased by 20 minutes, the students can spend 20 minutes when not being instructed in the guided reading groups doing silent reading on books chosen at their independent reading level. The teacher read-aloud can be done later in the day.

The fourth block is writing. The Four-Blocks program likes this to be done as the 'writing process' - with a modeled lesson by the teacher and then the class writing period, while the teacher has conferences with four or five students. The mini-lesson by the teacher at the beginning of the period is a great idea! Keep it short and on a subject that the students should watch for in the writing time. But the 'writing process' is not a suitable way to teach writing in the early grades. There is only follow-up perhaps once a week in the conferences, and bad habits are being formed when there is no correction of errors. Too often there is quantity of writing without quality. Children who have spelling problems are learning bad habits.

It is my opinion that students should have their writing marked and they should do all corrections in that writing period on four days each week. Young children need immediate feedback. Talking to them on Thursday about work done on Monday is a useless exercise! Many children are also not able to continue a story well on another day, as they usually forget their thought processes. Finish a short writing assignment, mark it, have it corrected and completed each day - and your students will become better writers! Let them do 'free' writing on the fifth day with no correction. This is your assessment, to see what they are learning through the rest of the days.

So there you have the 160 minutes of literacy instruction with the Four-Blocks - only better. There are some really good components to the original Four-Block format - the problems arise when all the students' needs are not being met. Find ways to put in the minutes so they are the most beneficial to your children. If you teach Grade Three - try the blocks as set out by the books or the information on this format on-line, but with Grade One and Two there are holes in the program through which some of your students will fall.

## Literacy Jobs

Instead of centres where the students go to another part of the classroom to do 'work', have a series of jobs for them to do at their desks or tables. If you are teaching reading groups at this time, the jobs must be simple, absorbing and self-directed. You want the rest of the class to be profitably busy and quiet.

### Grade One

1. Word Wall Work - Have the students put this week's word wall words into alphabetical order or.... make the words with tiles or.... make the words with play dough or ..... print the words and make word shapes.
2. Poem Time - Have an envelope with a poem cut into lines or words (this has been previously taught). Put the lines or words into the correct order and print it.
3. Silent read books that have been previously taught and are at the students' independent reading level.
4. Do a printing exercise (insist on correct formation and spacing).

### Grade Two

1. Word Wall Work - Put all the words under one specific letter into alphabetical order.... or, using this week's words, make fractions with the consonants and vowels or..... find words with a certain number of syllables or ..... make acrostics with a specific number of words or..... make sentences using only word wall words.
2. Do silent reading with a book of choice - at the student's independent reading level.
3. Wonderful Words - Collect words from trade books. Collect words with specific suffixes, interesting adjectives, synonyms for over-used words like 'said', etc.
4. Print an exercise that has some purpose - a cloze exercise, answering questions, etc.



# Asperger Syndrome

Asperger syndrome is considered a disorder at the higher functioning end of autism. It presents as severe and sustained impairment in social interaction and the development of restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities. This disturbance causes significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Most children with Aspergers will have average or above average intelligence, and this often masks the disorder. Teachers will sometimes expect more than these children can produce.

## Some indicators of Aspergers syndrome are:

- The child carries on one-sided, long-winded conversations, without noticing if the listener is listening or trying to change the subject. These almost always are about him/herself or about a single interest.
- The child displays unusual nonverbal communication, such as lack of eye contact, few facial expressions, or awkward body postures and odd gestures.
- He/she shows an intense obsession with one or two specific, narrow subjects, such as patterns, schedules, certain music or spiders.
- The child has a strong preference for routines and avoidance of change.
- The child appears to not understand, empathize with, or be sensitive to others' feelings.
- He/She has difficulty 'reading' other people or understanding humour.
- There may be a lack of 'common sense'.
- The child may speak in a voice that is monotonous, rigid or unusually fast. The conversations may sound scripted, robotic or repetitive.
- He/She may move clumsily, with poor coordination, and have odd posture or walk rigidly.
- There may be a problem with reading, math or writing skills but the child may have average or above verbal and understanding skills.

## Teachers need to take into account:

- Children with AS have difficulty generalizing concepts from one situation to another.
- These children do not learn incidentally because of the lack of generalization and must be directly taught the concepts.
- They take things literally.
- They have difficulties with group activities including play and games.
- They may have reactions to over-stimulation in situations where other children do not have problems.
- These children have difficulty sequencing tasks, especially if told to do a series of things in a specific order.

## Some suggestions for the classroom teacher:

- Provide a set daily routine and a very clear simple structure for the daily happenings. Make sure the child knows the day's program at the start of each day and can reference it in words or pictures.
- Provide warning of any impending change of routine or activity. Have substitute teachers in as little as possible as this is the biggest change in routine. Changes may trigger anxiety.
- Keep the classroom as quiet and peaceful as possible. Sudden sensory changes may cause over-stimulation. Remove as many distractions as possible when the child is doing a task involving concentration. Sometimes an individual work area helps. Some children may find colourful wall decorations or noise very difficult to cope with.
- Use clear and unambiguous language. Avoid humour or irony,



or phrases like 'my feet are killing me' or 'it's raining cats and dogs', which will cause confusion.

- Speak to the child individually at all times - the child may not realize that an instruction given to the whole class also includes him/her.

- Have the child repeat instructions and check for understanding.

- Use visual presentations whenever possible.

- Set behavioural expectations and always follow through.

- Do not take rude or aggressive behaviour personally.

- Teach the child what 'finished' means when a job or activity

ends.

- Specifically teach social rules and skills, such as manners, taking turns and personal space.

- Link the work to the child's interests whenever possible.

- Some AS children work better on the computer.

- Protect the child from teasing at play times, and give the other children some awareness of his/her particular needs.

- Allow the child to avoid certain activities (such as sports and games) which he/she may not understand or like. Give support in open-ended and group tasks.

Sometimes behaviours that might be seen as simple naughtiness or non-compliance may have a range of other meanings for the child with Asperger syndrome. The child may be indicating the need for help or attention or the need to escape from stressful situations.

Every child responds to positive feedback from the teacher, but any learner with AS is especially in need of some tangible measure of success. These children are not likely to have high self-esteem, and respond well to deserved recognition for work done well or appropriate behaviour. Stars or stickers on a chart can be useful, with a prize for a certain number collected.



## Colour Blindness

Colour blindness does not mean that the child sees in black and white as this is a rare condition. But children with colour deficiencies may have problems in one colour range - green or red being the most common. 5 to 8% of boys have some colour deficiency, so this is not uncommon. Perhaps 2% of children (usually boys) have a more severe deficiency - they may see dark colours in the red spectrum as blacks or dark gray.

Examples of how the condition can cause problems at school.

1. Errors can be made on worksheet pages with coloured pictures or diagrams.

2. Some pages in basals or trade books are written with coloured print on coloured background - blue on purple, for example.

3. Teachers sometimes think that young children do not know their colours when they mix up colours with a similar intensity.

How can teachers help if a child has a colour deficiency?

1. Label a picture with words or symbols when the response requires colour recognition.

2. Label crayons, coloured pencils, and pens with the name of the color.

3. Use white chalk, not coloured chalk, on the board to maximize contrast. Avoid yellow, orange, or light tan chalk on green chalkboards.

4. Photocopy parts of textbooks or any instructional materials printed with coloured ink. Black print on red or green paper may not be seen by some students. It may appear as black on black.

5. Assist colour deficient students when assignments require colour recognition. For example - colour coding different countries on a world map.

6. Teach colour deficient students the colour of common objects. Knowing what colour things are can help them in their daily tasks. Example: when asked to colour a picture, they will know to use the crayon 'labeled' green for the grass, blue for the sky, and light tan for faces.

# Spelling



It is good to get our children to focus on the words. Do spelling and math in the same exercise! This is great for Grade Two and Grade Three students:

Write the word: The number of vowels x the number of consonants = \_\_\_\_ + the total number of letters = \_\_\_\_ - (minus) the number of syllables = the total

This can be changed to suit your students... for example, an easier one might be:

The number of consonants in the word - (minus) the number of vowels + the number of letters in the word = \_\_\_\_

Write out the alphabet and give each letter a numerical value - a = 1, b = 2, c = 3, etc. Add up the value of all your spelling words. Which word is worth the most? Guess first! Were you right? Then number the letters with z = 1, y = 2, etc. What is the highest scoring word you can find in your reading? Can you find a word that equals 50? 100?

The following strategy helps the student focus on the pronunciation of a word before seeing its spelling.

*First, feel what your mouth is doing as you say the word. Example 'sight'.*

- Say** the word. sight Say the syllables if there are more than one.
- Stretch** the word. /sss-iii-t-t-t/ Work by syllables if necessary. If a sound can't be stretched, stutter it.
- Split up** the sounds. Work by syllables if necessary. First sound? /s/ Next sound? long i Last sound? /t/
- Count** the sounds. 3
- Draw blanks.** \_ \_ \_ The blanks stand for the sounds. Put slashes between syllables if necessary.

*Next, learn the spelling.*

- Record** the spelling sound by sound. On the first blank, write [letters] s \_ \_ On next blank, write [letters] s igh \_ On last blank, write [letters] s igh t
- Study** the spelling. Ask, what does [pattern] say? What does *igh* say? Only ask about tricky parts.
- Write** the word. *sight*

## Spelling Fun!

### Heads Up, Spell Up

This is played like *Heads up, Seven up*: 7 students are 'it'. They lightly tap one student each. Tapped students have to correctly spell a spelling word before they can guess who tapped them.

### Silly Sentences

Choose between 6-10 spelling words each week. Underline the letters from the spelling words. The first letter in word is first word in sentence, and so on. Examples: Spelling word - *brook* Sentence: Bobby ran over old kettles. Spelling word - *hates* Sentence: Harry and Ted eat sardines.

### Glow-in-the-Dark Spelling

Students write their spelling words on white paper using glow in the dark materials. Then, hang up the words and have the students enjoy reading them in the dark!

### Learn about Your Province

Give each student a list of cities and towns in your province or a simple map with the places marked. Have the children write a spelling word from their study list and then find a city or town that begins with the same letter. It gives them a chance to practice the words and also learn the names of other communities. It helps many children to learn the relative locations and distances of places in their province.

### Shaving Cream Spelling

This is a great way for the students to review their spelling words and clean their desks. You give each student a 'blob' of shaving cream. They then spread it on their desk. The teacher will give the students one spelling word at a time while the students use their finger to write the word in shaving cream. After they are finished they erase the word and the teacher gives them the next word.

Have the students write their words on graph paper. This works for any level of spelling. They have to write each sound in a box. Here are some examples:

b o a t      s h i p      b a t h

This is a good way for the children to really focus on the sounds in the words.

Shaped words: Write words letter by letter in a pyramid, square, rectangle or circular shape.

Disappearing words: happy happ\_ hap \_\_ ha \_\_\_ h \_\_\_\_\_

Reappearing words: \_\_\_\_\_ k \_\_\_\_\_ ki \_\_\_\_\_ kit \_\_\_\_ kitt \_\_ kitte \_ kitten

Write the words 3 different ways: they could choose from: printed, cursive, crayon, marker, coloured pencil, squiggly lines, puffed letters, upside down, or one of their own.

Coloured vowels and consonants: Write words twice. Once with vowels one colour and the consonants another colour.

Picture words: Draw a picture, write all your spelling words somewhere in the picture. Make a frame for your picture by writing the spelling words around the outside of the picture. See if someone can find all the spelling words.

Word search: Use graph paper. Write all the spelling words then fill in all the extra squares with other letters. The words can be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal as long as they are spelled from left to right or top to bottom.

ABC book: Use scrap paper and fold it in half, and in half again. Open and cut on fold lines. Should make 4 pages. On each page in the middle print the word in a very dark color. Under the word write the word in a sentence. Above the word draw a picture of what is happening in your sentence. Must use 3 or more colors and no white showing. With a dark color draw a frame around the picture. Do this for each word. Make more pages as needed. Put pages in abc order. Make a cover page with your name on it. Staple the left edge to make a book.

Write word 3 times: Good old basic drill practice. Write words 3 times each. Your choice of print or cursive.

Make acrostics out of the word. See the example of 'there' at the side of the page:

Once Upon a Time: Write a story using all the words on the list.

Write ten sentences using two different words from your spelling list in each sentence.

Words without vowels: Write the spelling words, but place a line where each vowel should go. L\_k\_ th\_s.

Words without consonants: do the opposite by writing vowels only \_i\_e \_i\_.

Cut out words: This one is a bit time consuming! Keep a box of magazines on hand and have the children find spelling words or cut out individual letters to make the words and glue them to a piece of drawing paper.

ABC Words: Write the words in alphabetical order.

Dictionary scavenger hunt Look up the words in the dictionary and write down the page number and/or definition.

Use the dictionary and/or thesaurus. Look for synonyms, antonyms and homonyms where appropriate.

a
a p
a p p
a p p l
a p p l e

the
hairy
elephant
raced
eagerly



# Kindergarten Literacy Centres

*There are many ways of using centres in the Kindergarten classroom. Some teachers allow the students to choose where they want to go and others have the students rotate through the centres so everyone gets a turn on each. All agree that the children must stay at the one centre for a certain length of time and must produce some 'work' at that centre.*

*Centres need to be taught. Add them gradually, teaching the proper procedures at each - the expected behaviour, the use of the materials, the expected outcomes, etc. Then, each student must clean up and put back all the materials at the centre when the time is up, and this needs specific training.*

## Word Centre

Alphabet magnet or felt letters or letter tiles - build names, sight words from cards or the word wall.

## Alphabet Centre

Have alphabet books in the centre and the students put tile or magnetic letters in alphabetical order - they can use the books if they want to or if they do not know the sequence.

## Nursery Rhyme Centre

Have a pocket chart with the nursery rhyme and envelopes with the poem cut into the words. Put the words in the correct order. Have books of nursery rhymes in the centre.

## Sound Match

Match the letters with a picture. Use a set of cards that have the letter on the back of the picture so the children can self-correct. There are beginning sound match cards you can purchase.

## Puzzle Centre

Have wooden puzzles with the alphabet to put together. Other puzzles can be in the centre - words or names can be cut apart into puzzle shapes.

## Overhead Centre

Practice printing letters on transparencies - after the correct formation has been taught.

## Poem Centre

After teaching a poem, cut a copy apart into lines, phrases or words - depending on the level of the students. Put the poem back together in a pocket chart. Have a copy of the poem so it can be checked. Have large copies of all the poems taught so far and pointers and the students can read the poems to each other as if they are a teacher.

## Read the Room

Have a box of interesting dollar store magic items - funny glasses, magic wands, masks, finger puppets, binoculars, magnifying glasses, etc., to help them read the words.

## Write the Room

Provide clip boards, paper and attached pencils. The children go around the room and write any words that they are able to read. Fancy pencils or glitter pens make this more interesting!

## Playdough

Provide playdough or plasticine. Have a rolling pin and alphabet cookie cutters. Words that are being taught can be on cards for the students to make.

They could also form words by making small rolls with the hands and then making letters with these.





### **Big Book Centre**

After you have taught big books, leave them in a centre with a pointer for the students to read.

### **Real Reading Centre**

After you have taught simple books and the students can read them or have memorized them, put them in a real reading centre. A few comfy cushions and a cozy corner make this a popular centre.

### **Letter Match**

Match upper and lower case letters. Alphabet books can be in this centre, too.

### **Computer Centre**

Have suitable educational software that is simple to use.

### **The Reading Centre**

The children can read emergent readers, teacher-made books and class-made books.

### **Story Telling Centre**

After a fairy tale or other familiar story is told in class, provide flannel characters and story items for re-telling. Creative story telling can be done with a variety of characters. A puppet theatre can also be used for creative story telling.

### **Rhyme Matching**

Have pictures of rhyming words that are to be matched - cat/bat, wig/pig, etc.

### **Making Words**

Make words with tiles, stamps, letters cut from newspapers or magazines, beads, etc. Words can be copied from sight word cards or words from poems, etc.

### **Making Alphabet Books**

Have letter and picture stamps and little books made up.

### **Making Sentences**

Have word cards and the students can glue them to make a sentence.

### **The Writing Centre**

Provide interesting writing tools and paper and let the students write letters, words and sentences if they can.

### **Library Centre**

Here the students are free to explore books that are above their reading level but interest them. The books can be fiction or non-fiction. If you are doing a theme this is the place where the associated books can be found and explored.

### **Sequencing**

Have sets of 4 pictures of activities or happenings that are in sequence. The student must put the pictures in order and then tell the story to another child.

### **Blending**

This is a good exercise for later in the year. Have cards with a short vowel that the students put in the middle, and then consonant cards that they pick out of a box to put in front and after the vowel. See if they can make any sensible words!



# Reading

## Oral Reading Responses

<i>Be encouraging:</i>	'I can see you are really looking carefully at the words today.'
<i>Demonstrate strategies:</i>	'When I get stuck on a word I can sound it out or read on and re-read.'
<i>Stretch the response:</i>	'Tell me more about that...'
<i>Add information:</i>	'A _____ is a very unusual bird. These birds can...'
<i>Extend vocabulary:</i>	'A word that rhymes with _____ is _____.'
<i>Extend student responses:</i>	'What do you think will happen next?'
<i>Review story structure:</i>	'What happened first...and next...and last?'
<i>Make the student prove it:</i>	'Find the words that show that...'
<i>Model smooth fluent reading:</i>	'Today let's try shadow reading so you can feel the flow of the words.'
<i>Reflect:</i>	'What part of the story did you like? What words were tricky to read?'

- Encourage the child to read the story more than once.
- Introduce the child to shadow reading (reading with the child at the same time).
- Ask questions related to the story.
- Ask the child to tell the story in his own words. (Starting with what happened first, what happened next, and what happened last)
- Try reading it to the child first to get him/her familiarized with the story, then have it read to you.

## Skeleton Response

Talk about a skeleton - the bones that hold a creature together.... What are the 'bones' that hold this story together?

This story is about \_\_\_\_\_. *Character(s) in a setting - e.g. This story is about a little boy named John who lived on an island.*

There was a problem! \_\_\_\_\_

It got even worse when \_\_\_\_\_. (if problem gets worse)

Finally, the problem was solved when \_\_\_\_\_.

## Reading Response Journals

Reading response journals are exercise books where students respond to literature by recording their thoughts, feelings, reactions, and questions about the book they are reading.

It helps, especially in the beginning of the use of these, to provide an outline to show what sort of response is required.

## Grade Three Responses

Pick one response after reading a book or story.

1. Write a letter to a story character.
2. Pretend you are a story character and do a daily journal for him/her.
3. Write: Why I would like to spend a day with \_\_\_\_\_ (one of the story characters) *or* in \_\_\_\_\_ (the story setting).
4. Name five objects used in the story and tell how they were used.

### Extra Responses:

- Find six interesting adjectives and tell what they were describing.
- Look up five tricky words in the dictionary and write the meaning that was meant in the story.
- Find four synonyms for 'said' in the story.
- Find three compound words.
- Find two contractions and write the two words that makes up each contraction.
- Write a sentence that gives you a mental picture.



# Grade One Reading Strategies

## Before Reading

- Read the title and predict what the book will be about.
- Is there a picture on the cover? Talk about the person and/or scene.
- Who is the author?
- Complete the sentence... 'I think this book will be fun to read because.....'  
*Note: Some teachers like to do a 'picture walk' through the book. Sometimes this may be suitable, but it can ruin the suspense of eagerly turning the page to see what comes next.*
- Show the group a list of unfamiliar vocabulary words, and teach the words showing the phonics and discussing meaning if necessary. Teach the words individually, in phrases and in sentences.

## During Reading

- Think about what the words are saying.
- Visualize - the words can make pictures in your mind - just like the pictures in a movie.
- Ask yourself questions. What will happen next? Where are they going? Why did that happen?
- Look for the new words that the teacher showed before you began to read.
- Look at the pictures on the page.
- If there are words that you have difficulty reading, say all the sounds through the word and try to blend them. Look at the beginning, middle and ending sounds.
- If you read a sentence or a paragraph that doesn't make sense, re-read it until it comes clear.
- Make connections - Is this like another story? Have I seen something like this? Have you felt the same way as the character is feeling? Did something like this happen to you? Does it make you think of some thing else?

## After Reading

- I liked / didn't like the story because.....
- It was funny when .....
- It was scary / sad / etc. when .....
- Was there a problem in the story? What was the problem?
- How was the problem solved?
- How did the story end?

This is a good site for Grade Three Reading Workshop:

[http://www.steach4fun.com/Reading\\_Workshop.html](http://www.steach4fun.com/Reading_Workshop.html)

## Reading for Fun in Grade One!

"My Grade Ones just love their Grade Six buddies! We meet once a week and do a project, but part of the time is shared reading - the buddy reads to the Grade One child and then he/she reads to the big buddy. I gave the Grade Six kids a lesson where I showed them how to help their buddies with reading."

"I have my kiddies read to a stuffed animal. We call them 'Book Buddies'. The kids love it. I let them read to their buddies, sometimes in pairs. I also used it as a reward for good behaviour. It is fun to see the children talking to the stuffies as if they can really listen to the story."

"I have a reading area beside my class library. There is a big couch and lots of soft cushions and corners where the kids can sit and read. I spent some time at the beginning of the year training the kids to use this area properly - to read quietly, to use the cushions to sit on (not play with), etc."



# Reading Lesson Strategies

## The Read-Aloud

The teacher read-aloud is a very important part of reading instruction. Chosen books should be good literature and in your students' instructional listening vocabulary. This means that the story should not be too easy - the students understand all words and the story line is too simple; or too difficult - the vocabulary used is beyond your students and the concepts are too difficult. The story should extend the children's vocabulary with some words that are not in common use, but they should be able to understand these words in context or through the pictures.

Read-alouds should model proper pace, expression, and comprehension. Not everyone is good at reading aloud! You can build motivation for the children to read this and other books independently - you are showing that reading is great fun.

In the early grades mix picture books with books where there are few pictures so the students learn to visualize the story and the characters for themselves. They need to make this transition into 'chapter' books.

## Shared Reading

Shared reading is very similar to the read-aloud. The teacher reads the story to the student, but in shared reading the student reads part of the story. The book must be shared - in clear sight of both the teacher and the child. Big books are often used for this. Shared reading can be done with a book that is familiar to the student or one that has a pattern and the child is able to continue the reading easily. Sometimes the child just reads a few words of rhyme or repetition, and sometimes more.

In older grades shared reading may be done for pleasure - two people take turns reading a story, or to increase the interest. It can remove some of the stress of oral reading for lower students.

## Guided Reading

Guided reading lessons can be one-to-one teacher-student, or the teacher can have a group of students. Because the students are doing the reading, the book should be at the students' instructional reading level - 90-95% accuracy of vocabulary knowledge. In a guided reading lesson the students read the text silently or softly while the teacher shows strategies to help them become independent readers.

The guided reading lesson usually goes through these steps: Show the book and read the title. Do a picture preview. Have the student look at the pictures and talk about the people or scenes. Do the students have any experiences that connect with these? Talk about any vocabulary that may cause difficulties during reading. Put these in phrases and sentences. Then the students begin to read. Assist the students with the reading vocabulary or give suggestions for decoding. When the reading is completed, discuss the story and have the students tell you what they have read or learned.

## Fluency Reading

Fluency reading is usually done orally. We want our students to phrase the words correctly and use proper pace, pronunciation and expression. Without this, much of the comprehension may be lost, so this is a very important skill to learn. Fluency may be improved by the teacher modeling a passage and having the student re-read it, by choral reading, readers' theatre, taped reading, buddy reading, etc. - but perhaps the best strategy for this is oral reading every day and having lots of practice.

## Independent Reading

Books for independent reading should be self-selected for the individual student's interest. The book should be at an appropriate independent reading level.



# Word Walls

“I have been introducing the 5 words a week that I use from the Primary Success spelling program. I put each word from the list on a tag card. One thing that I do that works well for me is to put the ‘easy’, phonetically spelled words on green tag (I introduce these as the ‘easy’ ones. The ones that are ‘red’ words in the spelling program are put on red tag and we call these our ‘doozies’. Words that can be tricky (not going along with the rules or not quite phonetic) are on yellow tag - ‘be cautious’.

‘Colour’ words are on pink and names of children in the class are on a different colour. The colour of the tag is one clue we use when we play ‘guess my word’ with the word wall. It can also be a clue when the student wants a word and I can tell them what colour to look for on the Word Wall. I save these words each year clipping them into my Spelling book. To make it easy to sort at the end of the year I put the number of the lesson on the back of the tag card.”

*Pam*

“I prefer to have my word wall along the side of the room because it is then the most visible from all points of the room. The words are not so high up that they are difficult to see, nor so low down that they could be blocked by furniture, children working in front, etc. I would not recommend having children remove words from a magnetic word wall because it's very important to keep that resource available to all children at all times, and that the positioning of the words not change from when they are added through until the end of the year. This helps children know that if **then** was the second word under the ‘T’ column last week, it will be this week, too. If you want to have copies of the word wall words available at the bottom of the wall in library pockets, or on cards on a ring, or in individual word wall folders at their desks, these are all workable options.”

“I introduce anywhere between 5-10 words a week with my Grade Ones. At the beginning of the year I start with five and gradually increase them according to the ability of my kids. I have each word written on coloured paper and it is then cut out in the shape of the word. These are taped to the board at the beginning of the week.

On Monday I introduce the words. We say, spell, clap and spell each word. We also use them orally in sentences. On Tuesday and Wednesday we say, spell, clap and spell and then write the word. On Thursday I just say the word and they look for it and decide which word it is and then write it on their paper. Friday they write their words on index cards. These go in their file boxes and are taken home at the end of each week to be practiced at home. The words from the board are then put on the word wall. From that point on they MUST be spelled correctly in their writing.

Also during the morning message each day we circle any word wall words that are in the letter. We circle and clap and spell each one we find.

If you have *Phonics They Use* by Patricia Cunningham, you will find these and many more activities. The clapping and spelling resulted in my kids knowing their words (both reading them and spelling them) better than any class I've ever had before.”

*Paula*

## Printing

“I know I'm a traditionalist Grade One teacher! When the kiddies come to me from Kindergarten having never used lined paper it makes my job a lot harder. I think using free form paper is fine if you give them practice with the lined paper, too. I firmly believe it helps not only in proper letter formation, but those students I have that have had a more solid background in using lined paper have better visual discrimination and better text awareness when they go to read. They pick up on the mechanics of reading a book better when their eyes have been trained to look at letters in a straight line and proportioned correctly in relation to each other.”



“For the first couple of months in Grade One we practice making letters correctly. For each, I say, ‘Where do we start?’ and the class says in unison, ‘At the top!’, pointing up with the arm and hand. After we do this over and over - it is rare that I find students printing from the bottom up.....”

# Class Management

“Here is a great little tip that took me about 20 years to figure out. I always need some kind of list to keep track of who owes me what work, and I was always writing who owed me things on a list or on the board or something. It was taking too much time and effort. I made a simple class list on the computer (ABC by first name - I find it easier that way). I could fit several on a paper. I cut them into strips and use them to monitor who turned in work, homework, slips, etc. I put the assignment name on the top. Now I can just tape this to the white board and kids know (and so do I) if someone owes me an assignment. This is particularly important if you have multiple assignments going on all the time.

The kids clamor to be in charge of my list now. I assign written spelling homework and someone is always asking to be in charge of collecting and checking off - they just scratch off the name when work is turned in. Whoever collects it follows up and basically nags the offending child until the work is done.”

“I made a cute ‘Helpers’ poster. I cut pockets off of old blue jeans. I bought the red bandana fabric, cut it into squares to make individual ‘handkerchiefs’ and used the file folder stickers (they’re rather long and narrow) on which to write their name. Stick those to the squares of fabric and put the hankies in the pockets.”

“Here is a collection of rewards that don't cost money or give a sugar high!”

Sit at the teacher's desk.

Get first pick of recess equipment.

Get a fun worksheet.

Play a computer game.

Be the zookeeper and take care of the animals.

Have lunch with your favourite person.

Have the teacher phone parents to tell them what a great kid you are.

Draw on the chalkboard.

Be first in line.

Do only half an assignment.

Choose any class job for the week.

Choose the music for lunch.

Do all the class jobs for the day.

Use the couch or beanbag chair for the day.



Use the pencil sharpener any time.

Stay in at recess to play a game with a friend.

Write in ink for the day.

Use the teacher's chair.

Take a class game home for the night.

Move your desk to a chosen location.

Keep a stuffed animal on your desk.

Be leader of a class game.

Extra center time or extra recess.

Read to a younger child.

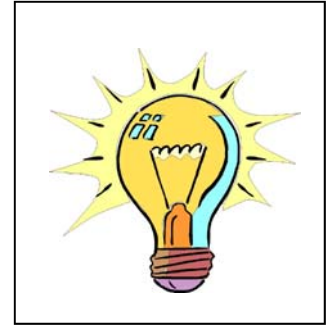
“I was absent last Friday and returned yesterday. As I entered my room I noticed a piece of chart paper on the blackboard. At the top was **Why Does Mrs. Smith Teach?** Beneath that were all of the reasons the kids came up with to answer the question. It is hilarious! The one I liked most was - Who else would she play with? Apparently, the kids told me, the principal came in and asked them the question. It turns out that last week was one of the education awareness weeks and so the principal went around dismissing each teacher for a few minutes while she took the class for a ‘quick lesson’. None of the teachers were aware of what this lesson might have been. Needless to say, this piece of paper will be one of my treasures for years to come!”

“I like to keep my desk in the back of the room, then when or if I get a chance to sit at it, I can observe the students working. Because my computer is also in my classroom, I have both desks side by side. This works well in my classroom as I have cupboard space along one wall and so I have a number of shelves behind my desk for my things.”

“We have a game we play when we walk in the halls. We try to pass by classrooms without the class inside noticing. The kids always feel proud when we pass by a classroom without the door being closed because of noise. It helps keep feet quiet too!”



# More Management Ideas



“I give out clean desk awards occasionally. The kids don't know when it will happen so it keeps them on their toes. They are excited when they come in to see a big bright star on their desk.”

“We have planners at our school. This year I gave each child a ziplock - the kind with the slide to close it - to keep their planner, notices, home reading etc. in. It works well because at a glance, I can see what they might be missing. Parents love it because things come home neat and in one piece.”

“I have one long table in my classroom near my desk. On this table I have a number of baskets, filing shelves, etc. This is where all student work is kept. The students know to put all their completed work on the table as soon as it is done. This way I always have their work handy to look at, mark, etc.”

“All the crayons, pencils, erasers, scissors, rulers, etc., are community property. When they need something it is handed out or they can come to get one out of the box. This really helps the desk mess, as none of those things are supposed to be in the desks at any time. Also, there are no arguments about who owns a certain thing, or problems with borrowing, or being without because something is lost. I wouldn't do it another way!”

“One of the hardest transition times for my class has been entering the room after recess. In Grade One I like to have them work in their Journals following the morning recess. It settles them right down and gives me a chance to deal with any problems that arise during recess.

When I taught older grades (and later in Grade One), I had a math word problem on the chalkboard or overhead and the class had to copy down the problem and then answer it in their exercise book. They had both printing (handwriting) practice and math at the same time.”

“I have my students do a lot of their work in interlined exercise books. When their work is done, they hand it in with the book open to today's work so I don't have to go looking in order to mark.”

“At the end of each indoor section of the day, I get the children's attention and tell them that it's time to clean up. Every scrap has to be picked up, every pencil or crayon that has fallen, etc. Nothing can be on the floor. The first group of 4 children that has a clean area and is standing quietly behind their chairs with their indoor shoes on their desks and their hands on their heads is the first group that can quietly leave the room to go out for recess. Clean up is done in about 30 seconds. Everyone helps and I don't have kids saying 'It's not my paper' because cleanup is a group thing.”

“I want to have as many students using the computer as possible. What I have to keep reminding myself to do, is to follow the advice of a colleague. Occasionally, all students are absent, right? Well, inevitably they will all miss something that we teach. I have learned not to worry about my students being in on every single thing. So, what I try to do is have a student on the computer as much as possible all day long! For example, this morning I had one student doing a journal entry on one computer even though the rest of the class was doing Calendar Time. On the other computer I had another student reviewing a beginning level of using coins on Franklin Learns Math. With only two computers in my room the kids would rarely get a turn if I only used activity time.”



“I save lids from milk and drinks like Sunny Delight. When I run out of glue sticks, I can put some Elmers in a cap and give the kids a Q-Tip. It saves a big mess!”

# Math Ideas

## Zero the Hero

### The Zero Song

*(This Old Man)*

This old number,  
It means none.  
It is even less than one,  
With a z-e-r-o, z-e-r-o.....  
That spells nothing but zero!

### Zero the Hero

*(Sung to Zip-do-dah)*

Zero the hero today's your day.  
Zero the hero come out and play.  
Zero the hero today's your day.  
Zero the hero, hip hip hurray!!

### Zero the Hero

*(Sung to Frere Jacques)*

Zero the Hero, Zero the Hero,  
We love you. We love you.  
Though you may be nothing,  
We really think you're something.  
Yes, we do. Yes, we do.

<http://www.mrsmcgowan.com/math/zerotheherodays.htm>

This site gives you special things to do on the zero days.

## Race for 100

*"This game is simple, but it strengthens student understanding of place value and trading. I question students a lot and have them count often (before and after trading). Materials: place value boards with a column for ones, tens, and hundreds; die; base 10 blocks*

Students roll one die. They take the number of one cubes indicated on the die. When they can trade for a tens rod they do so. The game continues until one student trades up to 100. That student is the winner.

*Variations:* Play the game backwards. This will provide a foundation for subtraction with regrouping. Use Place Value boards with a thousands column to play 'Race to 1000'. Make the connection between money and place value. Call the game 'Race for A Dollar' (or ten dollars, etc.)

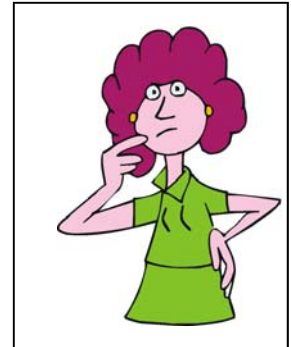
## Math Ability in the Early Years

I have watched the development of my two grandchildren. They come to my home every day after school and I help with homework and watch their growth and interest in learning. These two have taught me a lot about the difference in math understanding.

The boy, now in Grade Four, did not do mental math as a pre-schooler or in Kindergarten. It took him until early Grade One to do one-to-one counting with accuracy. He did not visualize math patterns so it took him a long time to learn to count on, rather than counting objects from the beginning each time when adding (conservation of number). He did not see number relationships, and it was Grade Three before he could really understand that he could add  $7 + 8$  by thinking of  $7 + 7$  and 1 more and that  $4 \times 6$  is the same as  $2 \times 6 = 12$  twice. This is improving, but there are still gaps as there will always be when kids come to understanding later than usual.

The girl understands number relationships naturally. At four years old she could answer simple adding and subtraction problems orally. Now, in October in Grade One, she asked Grandma to write out math questions for her to do. The addition to 10 seemed easy, so I tried  $7 + 5$ . Twelve, she immediately said..... so I asked her how she knew that. Easy! she said...  $5 + 5$  is 10 and then 2 more... 11, 12. In class she is drawing simple patterns of  $2 + 3$  and  $4 + 2$  as teachers do in early Grade One to count out the answers - something she could visualize and do orally at four.

So you will have kids like these in every class. Some will not really need to be taught math, just shown the different procedures and the rest comes naturally. Some will need concentrated exercises to improve the way they see number patterns and relationships. An occasional student will never understand these and will have to memorize the answers in order to cope at all. It is too bad that teachers don't have more time to do math so grouping could be used to give kids the skills at their level of understanding. Just as in reading, our students come with a huge difference in math knowledge and comprehension.





## Tally Marks

“I have been working on tally marks this week in various forms. Today we did this poem. I even had them copy it in a poem book and illustrate it. Then I wrote a list of numbers on the board for them to copy and write the tally marks.”

1, 2, 3, 4, cross the 5 for one more.

Keep doing this and you will see

How easy counting things can be!



## Fact Families

“I introduce Fact Families as 3 numbers that are like family members. No one else (no other number) can be in the family. I draw a big 2 story house on board. In the attic I write the 3 numbers (such as 3, 5, 2). Together we think of the two addition sentences and two subtraction sentences that can be made with these numbers. We role play and practice with several number families. Kids write addition facts in two upper windows and subtraction facts in two lower windows. After a few days of practice, kids make their own house from paper and markers. They work in partners and then ‘present’ their houses. These make a great bulletin board display by adding a road and setting the houses along the road and called it Fact Family Street.”

“I do houses, too. I cut out a basic house, which is glued to a piece of 12 x 18 inch white or light blue construction paper. Then each child gets a boy and a girl pattern cut from the Ellison machine. Each child is assigned a family. They write and correct the number sentences that go with it. (This will be glued onto the back of the paper.) If the family is 3, 7, 10, this name of the family is on the roof. Then using 2 different colours of the little circle dot stickers they put these on the boy and the girl. (They're supposed to be buttons.) The boy might have 7 buttons and the girl 3 buttons or vice versa. Then I put a dot of velcro on the back of the boy and the girl and the corresponding pieces inside the house. To demonstrate: The boy can walk in first, then the girl and the number sentence would be  $7+3=10$ . The girl could walk in first and the sentence would be  $3+7=10$ . Both could be in the house and the girl leaves first,  $10-3=7$  etc.”

“I use paper dominoes that I enlarge and laminate. I hold up a domino and ask the kids to give me 2 addition and 2 subtraction sentences about it.”

“We use triangles. On the points of the triangle write the digits in the fact family: ex. 2, 3, 5. On the triangle, have the child write the 2 addition and 2 subtraction facts for that family. You could duplicate tons of triangles, with lines for the facts.”

## Problem Solving

There are certain key words used in problem solving that help determine what operation a student can use to solve the problem.

Addition – sum, all, together, total, in all, altogether

Subtraction – difference, left, less than, fewer than, greater than, more than, how many more?

If children have difficulty with problem solving, it often helps to make the question personal using the children’s names.

The problem-solving method consists of four basic steps:

- 1. Look carefully at the problem.** What does it tell you? What information does it give you? What facts do you have? What is it asking you to find out?
- 2. Choose a strategy.** Will the answer be larger or smaller than the numbers in the facts? Can you visualize the problem? Can you estimate the answer? What do you think you will do to find the answer?
- 3. Do the math.** Use the strategy you chose and work the problem.
- 4. Look back.** Re-read the question. Did you answer the question that was asked? Does your answer seem reasonable? Can you put the answer into a sentence?

# Math Games

“We have been practicing double facts with a ‘hot potato’ type game. We sit in a circle and pass a ball. Students repeat a double fact (we go in order-  $1+1=2$ ,  $2+2=4$  etc.) when the music turns off, the person with the ball is out and sits in the middle of the circle until the next person out takes his/her place.”

“I have a beach ball game I play with the children whenever we have a few minutes to ‘kill’. I simply throw the beach ball and say a math equation and the catcher says the answer and throws the ball back. I also do this ‘counting by .....’ - each child giving a number in the series as they catch the ball.”

“I played ‘Around the World’ with my students almost daily and it really helped them to learn the facts. You start with one student standing behind another student's chair and you call out a math problem. The first student to answer moves to the next student and you do the same. ( If the student standing doesn't answer first, he then sits in that chair and the student who answers moves on) They enjoy competing against each other and ending up in different seats. We do two or three rounds a day to start math class.”

“This game is used to practice addition facts. You need two sets of cards with one digit numbers , one number on each card. Three kids are needed to play. Two kids each pick a card from the pack and without looking at it, hold it on his/her forehead so that the third child can see both numbers. He gives the answer and the other two have to tell what number is hidden on his/her own forehead. Here is how it goes. Jan picks a card with a 6 on it. She holds it on her forehead (without looking at it) so that Bob can see the 6. Bob picks a card with 7 on it. He holds the card on his forehead (without looking at it) so that Jan can see the 7. Sally adds the two numbers together and says 13. Jan looks at the 7 on Bob's forehead and figures out her number must be 6. Bob figures out that his number must be 7 by looking on the number on Jan's forehead.”

“I have a ‘math fact a day’ calendar that I use to get the kids to learn their facts. I think it helps them. Each day is a fact and the turn around fact ( $8 + 5 = 13$ ,  $5 + 8 = 13$ , and  $13 - 8 = 5$  and  $13 - 5 = 8$ ).”

This can be a solitaire game. Take the face cards out of the deck. Take out one card from the deck and don't look at it. Then turn over 8 cards face up. Cover the combinations of 10 – like 2 and 8 or 3 and 7 with fresh cards from the pack. Ace is a one. If you get stuck just make more piles until you get a 10 combination. When all cards are used pick up the piles that are combinations of 10 and you should have one pile left. The number missing to make ten is the hidden card - if all the combinations were correct.

“My students love this game! It's called ‘Addition Top It’. You need a deck of cards – a regular deck is fine, but remove the face cards. Have the children play in pairs. They are to deal out all of the cards in the deck evenly between themselves. Each child then places his pile face down. Together, they say, ‘1,2,3, Top It!’ and then flip one card over (one card each). The first person to say the correct sum of the two cards wins both cards. For example, if the two cards that have been flipped up are 5 and 9, the first person to say 14 wins both cards. Place winning cards face up next to your pile of face down cards. Continue until all cards are used, then count your ‘face up’ pile to see who won the most cards.

You can also play ‘Subtraction Top It’ (play the same way but subtract the cards, rather than add them), or for earlier in the year an easier ‘Top It’ where whoever flips the card with the higher number wins both cards. These games can get noisy, but the kids love them and it's a great way for them to practice their facts!”



## Call Rudolph

Eight little reindeer pulling Santa's sled  
One fell down and bumped his head.  
The elves called Santa and Santa said,  
“Can seven little reindeer pull my sled?”  
*Count down the same way until  
you get to one little reindeer...*  
One little reindeer pulling Santa's sled,  
He fell down and bumped his head.  
The elves called Santa and Santa said,  
“Call Rudolph!”

# Flat Stanley

Flat Stanley is the title character of a 1964 children's book by Jeff Brown.

Stanley is flattened when a bulletin board falls on him. Now he can slide under closed doors and can be a kite for his younger brother. But the best part of being flat is that Stanley can now make journeys by being mailed in an envelope.

For many years teachers have been using Flat Stanley as a letter writing project. Children write letters to other classes or to family friends around the world. Stanley goes in the letter with a journal and the recipients are asked to treat the figure as a visiting guest and add to his journal, then return them both after a period of time. Many people who receive Stanley take him to see the sights of the area where they live and often take pictures of Stanley visiting there or send postcards of the sights. Then he and the journal are mailed back to the classroom. The children may find it fun to plot Flat Stanley's travels on maps and share the contents of the journal. Often, a Flat Stanley returns with photos or postcards from his visit.

Some teachers send Flat Stanleys that are not coloured. The person who receives him 'dresses' him appropriately. When he comes back to the classroom he could be wearing warm clothes after being in the north, a cowboy or an ethnic outfit. A questionnaire could go with him so that you can get directed information back - the climate, important facts about the place, how far away it is, etc.

Some children like to send their flat 'selves', so instead of Stanley, Flat Katie and Flat Michael, etc., can go on this trip. This would be a good idea for a class swap of flattened children, so that each student has a replica of another child to write to - it makes it more personal.

Since e-mail and digital photography have become the norm, this is also an excellent way to send Stanley to interesting places - and often the replies are back sooner. You can attach a photo of him that the recipient can print off.

## Music

Even if you can't carry a tune in a paper bag, music needs to be taught in the classroom. Kids love to sing, and songs can be taught by singing along with favourite CDs. In Kindergarten and Grade One, teach the simple nursery songs, gradually adding more difficult songs. Many children today do not know those wonderful songs that are part of our culture..... Alouette, I've Been Working on the Railroad, Old Macdonald, etc. For a list of songs and the music, go to: <http://www.theteachersguide.com/ChildrensSongs.htm> Sing along here, too! Some are suitable for Grade Two kids.

Here is a site where you can play modern children's music: <http://freekidsmusic.com/>

And this is another site where you can find the lyrics and some of the music.

<http://www.kididdles.com/lyrics/allsongs.html>

For pictures of musical instruments (and other great sets of pictures):

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/earlyyears/resources/illustrations/index.asp>

"You can combine music with a unit on sound. There are lots of great activities in the science books on sound. Talk to the kids about the different types of musical instruments. All of them vibrate in some way to make the sound. The percussion instruments vibrate by hitting them (like a drum). The string instruments vibrate when you rub the bow over the strings or pluck them. Blowing in hollow tubes of various lengths gives them some ideas of how the woodwinds work.

We did The Magic Flute one year - I wrote out a lot of the words on charts and we read them and talked about them and then listened to the music. Then we made the characters using feathers and other things - they were a lot of fun. I found a flautist who came in and played some songs for us and told us how the flute works.

This was the year I let the kids play classical music on tapes on private headphones. They could borrow the tapes and listen while they wrote or did math, etc. Everyone wanted their turn at the tapes. Parents were rather amazed to see their rugged grade two boy sitting listening to Mozart and Beethoven."



# P.E.

“Spend time talking about personal space. This is useful in P.E. as we do not want the kids bumping into each other. Pretend that you are in a bubble, and you don’t want anyone to pop it.”

“This is a good opening activity to practice having a personal space. The children are in scattered formation facing the teacher. The teacher says in loud voice, ‘I see.’ The children answer in chorus, ‘What do you see?’ The teacher responds, ‘I see everyone hopping on one foot.’ Children do this, being careful not to let anyone into their space until the teacher again says, ‘I see....’ The children stop and answer, “‘What do you see?’” The teacher responds with a new challenge - gross motor skills, bend and stretch, animal movements, and/or twisting actions.”

“Ask the children to find a safe self-space in the gym. Beanbags have been scattered throughout the gym prior to their arrival. Remind them not to touch the beanbags. To begin the activity ask the students to begin walking throughout the general space at a signal. They are to avoid the beanbags as they are moving. When the music stops, the teacher will call out a body part (e.g. elbow, tummy, back). The students are then to touch that body part on **five** different beanbags as quickly and as safely as possible. The last one they touch will be their ‘home.’ They are to sit by that beanbag, and wait for the next signal to start and the game will be repeated.”

“It is wonderful to train our students how we can give a compliment and positive feedback to our classmates. Brainstorm and write on a chart all the encouraging things they can say to one another. Some examples could be: Good job, I like the way you..., You are good at..., Way to go on..., Nice job when you..., That was fantastic when..., Super, Excellent, Superb, Great, etc. This can be used at other times of the day – not just the gym time!”

“This is a co-operative version of musical chairs. Most children have seen the movie ‘Monsters, Inc.’ If not, explain to them that today they are going to be ‘monsters’” hiding in ‘closets’ Scatter the hoops about on the floor, leaving enough space between the hoops for the children to move freely. At the signal they will be ‘monsters’ wandering about looking for a closet to jump into. The students may perform any type of locomotive skill during this activity. (Hopping, skipping and jumping work well.) At another signal, they must jump into a ‘closet’ (hoop) and give their very best monster growl. (They love doing this!) Once they have completed this, take away 2 or 3 of the hoops and repeat the activity, until there are only about 2 hoops left. You’ll be amazed at how many children can stand in one of these hoops!”

## Teachers, too!

Teachers are on their feet all day but often don’t get enough exercise. Do aerobics as part of your P.E. program. Have all your students follow you as you do aerobics to jazzy music. This is fun, and you will get some needed exercise, too! Or..... do an exercise sequence when you first enter the gym with your students. Do bending and stretching exercises with the whole body. You will feel refreshed as you go back to class.

[http://www.gameskidsplay.net/games/other\\_games/hopscotch.htm](http://www.gameskidsplay.net/games/other_games/hopscotch.htm)

[http://www.gameskidsplay.net/jump\\_rope\\_rhymes/index.htm](http://www.gameskidsplay.net/jump_rope_rhymes/index.htm)

Remember ‘Heads Up - Seven Up? Seven students are chosen to stand in front of the class. They say, “Heads down, thumbs up!” The rest of the children put their heads down on the desk and stick up a thumb. The seven kids each touch one thumb, and the thumb is pulled in when touched. When the seven have finished, they go back to the front of the class and say, “Heads up, seven up!” and the seven people who were touched stand up. Taking turns, each of these has three guesses to find the person who touched him/her. If the person guesses correctly he/she changes places with the toucher.



# Remembrance Day

Last March I was in Belgium, and part of the tour was a stop at the medical field station where Dr. John McCrae worked. This was just a series of concrete bunkers build into the side of a small ridge beside a canal - dark and damp inside. Near this bunker was a small cemetery and several large cenotaphs with information about the man who wrote this famous poem. Canadians are still revered in Belgium for the fighting in the First World War. Everywhere we went through the battlefields of World War I there were our Canadian flags and our poppies on the crosses of Canadian soldiers killed almost 90 years ago.



This is a copy of his actual writing in stone.

## In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.  
We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, tho poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

*Lieut.-Col. John McCrae*



John McCrae was born November 30, 1872 in Guelph, Ontario.

When he was young, McCrae had a keen interest in both writing and the military. He began writing poetry while still a student at college.

In the years leading up to World War I, McCrae lived in Montreal and pursued a successful career in medicine. When Canada declared war on Germany in 1914, 41-year-old McCrae was among the 45,000 Canadians who joined the war effort within the first three weeks. McCrae felt it was his duty to help his country during these troubled times.

John attended to the health of many wounded soldiers in the trenches.

The **day** before he wrote 'In Flanders Fields', one of John's closest friends was killed and buried in a grave decorated with only a simple wooden cross. Wild poppies were already blooming between the crosses that marked the graves of those who were killed in battle.

Unable to help his friend or other fallen soldiers, John McCrae gave them a voice through 'In Flanders Field'. John McCrae died of pneumonia and meningitis on January 28, 1918.

Before he died, McCrae had the satisfaction of knowing that his poem had been a success.

The poem's popularity helped Canada and several other countries adopt the poppy as the Flower of Remembrance.

# Report Cards

Most teachers hate doing them - but they are necessary! There are a few things you can do to make the report cards more informative to your parents and easier to write.

First, put yourself in the parents' shoes, if you can. Parents really dislike the oblique concern about their child, or do not understand it at all. If you put comments such as, "Mary is learning to cooperate with her classmates" when you are trying to say that she is really not cooperating at all and is socially dysfunctional, the comment will likely be misunderstood. Damning with faint praise does not work - the parents will either think she is cooperating adequately or not understand what you are trying to say at all.

If you have any concerns about a child's progress or behaviour, this should be discussed in a parent/teacher conference before the report card. There should never be any nasty surprises on the report, simply a synopsis of what has already been discussed. Good surprises are, of course, allowed.....

If a child is having problems, this should not be smoothed over either in the parent/teacher conference or on the report card - but it can be stated in a way that gives an indication of your concern and assistance. If a student is having difficulty in phonics - say so, but also say what you have already done to help the child and what you plan to do in the next term to help the child succeed. For example, "Joe is having some difficulty learning to blend sounds to form words. I have worked one-on-one with him to improve this and will continue to work with him and try new strategies in the next term to help him succeed." The parents want to know that the child's problems are being addressed, not ignored.

Try to keep the report card comments short! Some schools expect a full page of typing on the computer and the teachers 'cut and paste' comments. This is completely unnecessary, a huge amount of work and it ends up being generic rather than directed completely towards the one child. If you are doing your job, the parents will be informed frequently about what you are doing and how the child is progressing, and lengthy report card comments are a waste of time. If a child is doing well - one or two sentences per subject tells all the parent wants to know. If the child is not doing well, the parents should be completely informed previously through conferences so a long comment is superfluous.

Get rid of as much of the educational double-talk as possible! To quote: *This "ed-speak" phenomenon is so prevalent, it should be considered an occupational hazard..... consider the following hazards of a parent-teacher discussion of reading. Reading is the most important subject in school. Teachers engage their students in "phonemic awareness", "decoding", "systematic, explicit phonics" and "word attack skills." How can parents make sense of this festival of buzzwords?* These things are common usage to us, but are a different language to most parents. If you want to discuss these things, spend time 'decoding' the buzzwords first.

Concerns should be shared with the parents as early as possible. They should be told if their child is having problems in the first couple of months in Grade One. It is much easier to tell them later that things have improved and the problems have lessened than it is to suddenly tell the parents in May that the child is far below the reading level that is expected. Always get your concerns out in the open!

How can we make report cards easier to write? Most teachers have a computer for their own use in the classroom. If you collect marks and put them on a spreadsheet every week and if you regularly collect anecdotal notes about your children and pop them into a computer file, report cards are very much easier to write. Taking 15 minutes each week to add to these files and keep up to date with these will make a huge difference to your report card writing, especially if your reports are done on the computer. You will have all the information at your fingertips - literally. One way is to have a file for each student and headings in that file for each subject - and then the comments can just be typed in quickly.

Be very careful about spelling and grammar in your comments. Many parents read them with an imaginary red pen, so it is important to have them perfectly done. If your Principal does not pre-read them (most do), have a co-worker read them over for typos and other errors.

Keep your comments simple and accurate! Remember, praise is the best reward - always honestly say at least one great thing about the child in each report card.

<http://www.sciencegeek.net/lingo.html>

## Things to Ponder



# Report Card Ideas

## Speaking

- speaks clearly
- has difficulty using (pronouns, verbs) correctly
- enjoys participation in conversation and discussion
- expresses ideas clearly
- has a good oral vocabulary
- takes turns talking
- speaks with confidence to the group

## Listening

- can follow directions
- enjoys listening to poetry
- enjoys listening to stories
- listens carefully
- evaluates what he hears

## Phonics

- is able to distinguish sounds in words
- is able to use \_\_\_\_\_ consonant and vowel sounds
- confuses the sounds \_\_\_ and \_\_\_
- is able to blend short words using the vowel(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- is learning to attack words independently
- uses the phonics skills to attack new words

## Reading

- reading is (smooth, jerky, hesitant, rapid, irregular, fluent)
- comprehends what he reads
- can read to follow directions
- can now recognize \_\_\_\_\_ sight words
- reads for pleasure
- needs lots of repetition in order to retain reading vocabulary
- is still confusing words which look alike
- is beginning to read words in groups (phrases)
- reading is becoming (not yet becoming) automatic
- enjoys discussing the stories

## Writing

- uses punctuation correctly
- is able to place periods and question marks correctly
- uses colourful words
- uses (complex, simple) sentences
- is now able to write a complete sentence independently
- participates in group story telling (composition)
- can write an original story of \_\_\_ sentences
- puts words in the appropriate order
- is able to read his sentences back
- shows self confidence in writing
- can compose several related sentences

## Spelling

- is building a good spelling vocabulary
- enjoys learning to spell new words
- is able to learn to spell words easily
- sometimes reverses letters in a word
- has difficulty remembering the spelling of non-phonetic words



## Printing

- often reverses letters, such as \_\_, \_\_, etc.
- has good (poor) fine-motor skills
- is able to print on the lines
- spaces letters and words correctly
- some printing is excellent but is often untidy in daily assignments
- enjoys doing neat careful work

## Math

- can work with numbers to \_\_\_ with understanding
- understands the signs +, -, = and uses them to make number statements
- understands and uses basic facts of addition and subtraction to \_\_\_\_\_
- reverses some numbers
- understands place value to \_\_\_\_\_
- can use manipulatives to add and subtract
- can use manipulatives to show place value to \_\_\_\_\_
- understands money (pennies, dimes, nickels)
- relies heavily on counting objects when adding
- knows the basic shapes
- can count to \_\_\_\_\_
- is able to create graphs using simple data
- understands several methods of graphing
- is beginning to memorize the number facts

## General Remarks

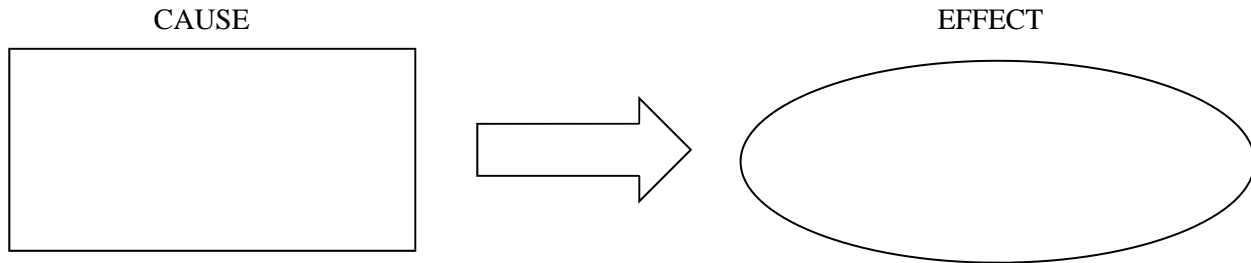
- is friendly and cooperative
- cooperates well
- helps others
- has a sense of humour
- has a good attitude towards school
- is working well in all subjects
- lacks independence, is gaining independence
- is too easily distracted
- is self-reliant, needs to become more self-reliant
- is an attentive student
- all work is neatly and accurately done
- is a polite conscientious pupil
- works too slowly
- does not complete assignments in the allotted time.
- seems unable to finish required work
- does colourful and interesting art work
- is especially good at \_\_\_\_\_
- should be encouraged to \_\_\_\_\_
- needs frequent encouragement
- is maturing
- is learning to concentrate
- is gaining self-confidence
- takes pride in work well done
- is eager to learn
- often seems tired at school
- shows initiative; thinks things through for himself

# Teaching Cause and Effect

## Day One

"I put sentences on sentence strips broken into 2 parts - cause and effect. We worked as a class to put the cause first and the logical effect second. For example - 'You studied for your test so you got scored 100!' 'You threw a ball in the house and you broke a lamp.' 'It started to rain so I put on my coat.' Then I introduced the words cause/effect to the class and they put those same sentence strips into columns - which were the causes and which were the effects. I gave some cause sentence parts and the students gave me possible endings: I ate a lot of candy..... I was very tired ..... I didn't water the plant..... I finished reading the book..... etc.

The boy ate so much candy that he felt sick.



## Day Two

I introduced the book *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* and had a circular flow chart with felt glued onto the squares ready on the easel (with arrows ready to put from one to the next). I have the story components on felt board pieces and as I told the story we put them into the flow chart and discussed the causes and effects, and how each effect then turned into the cause for the next thing! It was really neat!

## Day Three

We re-read an old story - *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* and we mapped the cause/effect on a chart. For example: the cause .....  $\implies$  ..... the effect.

## Day Four

I put the students into cooperative groups as I read the story *If You Give a Moose a Muffin*. They had pictures at their tables and they had to predict the order based on the previous story. Then as I read it they fixed it and glued them into a small version of the flow chart. After the story they shared the flow charts.

## Day Five

This was an individual task similar to Day Four but on their own. The groups had the pictures for *If You Give a Pig a Pancake* and they tried to sequence them. Then we reviewed logical sequencing and finally read the story to see if they were correct.

## Day Six

I gave out new sentence strip parts, half with causes and the other half with suitable effects and let the students match them and write them out.

## Day Seven

The students began to write cause and effect stories of their own, beginning with *If You Give a.....* They mapped it first to see if they could make a circle story. Some students had problems, and we all worked together to see if we could help to make the circle.

The stories were great fun! Once they were completed we put them into book form and published them. We also played Chutes and Ladders and talked about cause and effect.



# Integrating Christmas Ideas

## Christmas Writing

Do your own version of the '12 days of Christmas'. This is a good exercise to teach rhythm in poetry, as the words that fill in need to fit the beat of the music.

Read *Imogene's Antlers* by David Small and then have the kids write about the day they woke up with a red nose as a spin off. Give the students a big red dot sticker to use in their illustrations.

What does Santa do in his time off? Does he go on holiday? What would he do on vacation?

"I use the fronts of used Christmas / holiday cards as story starters. The kids glue the card to the top of their writing paper and then write a story about the scene."

"I use the book format of *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown to write stories. Here are some another teacher has done...."

<http://www.mrsmcgowan.com/projects/christmas2006/index.htm>

## Read and Write the Room

"We brainstorm a large list of Christmas words and I teach them to the children. Then I put the words on paper candy canes and tack them around the classroom. A centre job is to walk around the room and read and write these words. I give the students a clipboard and a paper with a candy cane theme for them to use to write the words.

This is a favourite centre, and the students are always trying to collect more Christmas words to add to the collection."



## The Gingerbread Boy

We make this book every Christmas in my class. I tie it into the five senses science unit. We do one page each day and then the pages are put together later to make a book.

### The Gingerbread Boy and the Five Senses

Page 1 says: **I can see the gingerbread boy.** I give out a copied gingerbread boy outline and the children decorate it with pencil crayons, cut it out and glue it about the words.

Page 2 says: **I can hear the gingerbread boy.** The students decorate another gingerbread boy. I tie tiny bells to loops of dental floss, put one around each boy's neck and then the students glue it on the page.

Page 3: **I can feel the gingerbread boy.** I have pre-cut brown felt gingerbread boys and the students decorate them with felt pens and glue them on.

Page 4: **I can taste the gingerbread boy.** Show the children how to use a paper punch to 'bite' off a part of a paper gingerbread boy. Make the punches close together so it looks like a bite.

Page 5: **I can smell the gingerbread boy.** I cut out gingerbread boys from sandpaper. Yarn is tied (and hot-glued) around a cinnamon stick and this goes around the boy's neck when it is glued on the page. Then the child rubs the cinnamon stick on the sandpaper when he reads that page. Scratch & sniff!

## Christmas Consonants!

My kids each get a sentence with these first letters left out - then they draw consonants out of a tub to complete the words. This is very silly!

We \_ish you a \_erry Christmas 3 times, and a \_appy new year.

# Christmas Ideas

## At the North Pole

If I went to the North Pole, I might see...  
If I went to the North Pole, I might hear...  
If I went to the North Pole, I might touch...  
If I went to the North Pole, I might smell...  
If I went to the North Pole, I might taste...



I can see one white beard.  
I can see two blue eyes.  
I can see one red hat.  
I can see one red suit.  
I can see one black belt.  
I can see two black boots.  
I can see Santa!

“I make large elves! I use coloured digital pictures of the students’ faces. They cut them out and add red paper hats with fur and tall pointy ears. They are very cute!”

“Last year I made large pinwheel poinsettias. We cut the square red paper diagonally almost to the middle and brought the points into the centre and glued them. We added yellow bits for the centres and put jagged leaves behind them. They made a wonderful display!”

Make huge decorations for the hall! Finger paint large papers with bright rich colours. Let dry, and cut out very large circles for Christmas balls. Then decorate them with glitter pens. These are very effective.”

## Hands and Foot Reindeer

Take off your shoe and trace it on brown paper. Cut it out - this is the face. Put it on the table, toe down. Glue two wiggly eyes (or paper ones) about where the arch of the foot is located, a smile just above the toe and a red nose just above the smile. Trace two hands with the fingers apart from brown paper (the kids can trace two left hands and turn one over to get a left and right. Cut two ear shapes. Glue these on the top of each side of the reindeer’s head. The hands are the antlers, of course. Glue them behind the ears, with the thumbs pointing down on either side.

## Countdown to Christmas

“On the first of December I give each student a sheet with Santa’s face. We colour the red hat and his features. I put these up along the chalk rail. Each day we glue a cotton ball onto Santa’s beard and say the following poem.”

How many days until Christmas?  
The days are fun to count.  
We’ll add a cotton ball each day  
‘Til there’s just the right amount.  
When Santa’s beard is solid white,  
Hooray! Tonight’s the night!



## Ice-cream Cone Ornaments

Buy regular size Christmas balls. Hot glue these sitting in pointed waffle cones, with the hanger at the top. Then the students use an eyedropper and dribble white paint at the top so it runs down the ball. The paint needs to be quite thick - do some tests..... If the balls are a bright deep colour like a rich blue or scarlet, the white paint looks great. If you have white Christmas balls you could try dribbling different colours - dark brown for chocolate, red for strawberry.

To make them last longer and not be so delicate (or rot before the next Christmas), spray the cones with clear acrylic.

I have a card ‘tree’, and we hang these on to do the paint dribbling and to let them dry.

# Christmas Concerts

First, here is some common-sense advice from someone who had done dozens of these!

1. Many schools do whole school plays and singing. I have to say that usually parents are happier when each class does a piece separately. They know when their child is coming on, and can see their child perform without large crowds of students. This way each class is given its time to shine. There is always a lot of variety this way, so the parents don't get bored.
2. Keep it short! This is easier for you and the chance of it going smoothly is increased. Keep the whole concert between 40 minutes and one hour, if possible. Try to have the least possible time between 'acts', too.
3. Keep it simple, especially with the younger children.
4. Cute is good! If you can have the parents laughing or wiping tears from their eyes that is a success.
5. Do what your class (and you) are good at. If you sing a lot with your class, sing in the concert. If you do poetry and choral speech, do that. If you dance in PE, that is an option. Doing something that you don't usually do makes it much more difficult.
6. Plays are difficult. The audience will be filled with noisy pre-schoolers and the rustle of adults, and primary voices are rarely strong enough to be heard. Plays take a huge amount of practice and are rarely very successful.
7. Keep costumes and props simple.
8. If your children are singing, it is really important to put them in the right order. For example, you will likely have 3 to 5 kids who can really carry a tune and are able to sing out clearly and reasonably loudly. Put these children together so their voices come together. They will carry the rest of the class! Apart they wouldn't feel this power and their voices would be lost.
9. Practice with your kids until they can do it in their sleep. Practice coming on stage, where they should stand and how they get off the stage. They should be able to do it without your prodding in the real concert.

Familiar songs are good for the younger classes. Sing Jingle Bells, Up On the Housetop, Frosty the Snowman, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, etc. Have the students wear elf hats, their pajamas, or reindeer headbands. If your students are not strong singers, play a tape of the song and let the kids sing along.

Try Raffi's 'Looks Like Santa' or the song 'Must Be Santa' - wear Santa hats and maybe beards, too!

**Reindeer Pokey** (*Tune: Hokey Pokey*) *Wear brown and a reindeer headband. Wear bell bands on the wrists.*

You put your antlers in. You put your antlers out,  
You put your antlers in and you shake them all about.  
You do the Reindeer Pokey and you turn yourself around.  
That's what it's all about!

Then ... You put  
your front hooves (hands).....  
your brown tail ( turn and do a booty shake!)  
your body in... ( jump forward)

Do the ABC's of Christmas, each child holding up a picture or letter in turn with everyone saying the words.

<http://www.alphabet-soup.net/chris/abcchrist.html>

<http://home.att.net/~scorh5/ChristmasABC.html>

<http://www.santas.net/theabcsofchristmas.htm>

This is a religious one....

A more secular version.....

This version has 4 line verses for each.

**Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer**

<http://pjkondrat.blogspot.com/2004/12/kindergarten-christmas-program.html>

Look at these great headbands, complete with red noses!

**S-A-N-T-A** (*Tune: Old McDonald*)

Who laughs this way, HO HO HO, S-A-N-T-A,  
Who drives the sleigh through sleet and snow, S-A-N-T-A,  
His hair is white, his suit is red,  
He wears a red hat on his head.  
Who brings fun for girls and boys, S-A-N-T-A



# Christmas Gifts

## Class Gift Exchange

There are a couple of ways to handle this that are better than the old drawing names exchange!

1. Have every child bring a book to give to the classroom. Wrap them, hand them out randomly and open in the circle. Everyone is getting all the presents! Have several in case a student can't bring one or forgets.
2. Have the children each make a bag or stocking, and each student brings enough tiny gifts for every other child - dollar store pencils, wrapped candy, etc. Everyone will get the same - oodles of tiny presents!

"I give my students this gift every year. I go to Home Depot and buy a sheet of white shower board. I have them cut it into 12" x 15" pieces. Then I bind the edges with brightly coloured electrical tape. I buy washable markers and include one in each gift. The kids love them!"

## Gifts for Parents

- Try to give something meaningful - a photo of the child, handprints or appropriate art work are always appreciated!
- Make tree ornaments with a picture of the child and grade and year. These can be done with a frame made with baker's clay or popsicle sticks, or the child's photo can be glued to a clay Christmas cut-out - a bell or a candle, etc.
- Cover a babyfood jar with complimentary shades of tissue paper. Paint the surface with a glue and water mix and layer the tissue paper. Put a votive candle inside.
- Handprints in plaster-of-paris or printed with paint are always a welcome gift, especially in Kindergarten.
- "I got small picture frames (2 per pack) at the dollar store. I want to frame my student's original artwork in them for a holiday gift for families. I will have the children draw a picture of their families for the frame - or they could do a self-portrait."

## Clay Ornaments

- 4 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 1 1/4 - 1 1/2 cup water

Mix together and knead until smooth. Add food colouring if desired. Three dimensional figures can be made or you can use a rolling pin and cookie cutters to make shapes. Bake at 300 degrees until set and golden (1/2 hr to 1 hr). For a more golden appearance, paint with a beaten egg when it is almost done baking and looks dry. Don't use egg on coloured dough. For coloured dough, paint with shellac or lacquer after baking.

Use a drinking straw to make a hole for hanging, before baking, of course.

## Cinnamon Ornaments

Use cinnamon, applesauce and glue to make ornaments.

- 1 1/2 cups ground cinnamon (it can be purchased cheaply in bulk at Costco or Walmart)
- 1 cup applesauce
- 1/4 cup white school glue

Roll it out like cookie dough and use cookie cutters to make shapes. They need to dry thoroughly, usually about 48 hours. You can also use a toothpick to write words or the year on the top. They smell lovely!

This is a cute snowman!

[http://www.make-stuff.com/recycling/bottle\\_snowman.html](http://www.make-stuff.com/recycling/bottle_snowman.html)



# Websites

This is a good resource for simple Readers' Theatre Scripts. There are some for Christmas, too.

<http://www.txteacher.net/lisd/literacy/readerstheater.html>

[http://intranet.cr.k12.ia.us/ActionResearch/Tutorials/data\\_folders/data\\_folder\\_index.html](http://intranet.cr.k12.ia.us/ActionResearch/Tutorials/data_folders/data_folder_index.html)

Interesting! Have the students keep track of their own data and progress.

This is an interesting article on decorating classrooms - or over-decorating them....

<http://www.journal.naeyc.org:80/btj/200405/walls.asp>

And, on bulletin boards - here is a really good idea:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/public/227.cfm>

<http://www.kidzone.ws/water/>

This is a good site to use for the water cycle.

## Christmas sites

This is super! Print off a tall tree for your bulletin board!

[http://www.hp.ca/portal/hho/holiday/tree\\_printout.php?jumpid=ng-nov06-project-ht](http://www.hp.ca/portal/hho/holiday/tree_printout.php?jumpid=ng-nov06-project-ht)

This is an advent calendar where you click on each date for traditions of Christmas around the world.

<http://www.share-christmas.com:80/kids/countdown/>

Make life-sized elves!

<http://www.kllynch2000.com/Christmaselves.html>

<http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/christmas/poems-rhymes/index.html>

This is great! Prowl through these links - there are a few that could be used for Christmas concerts, too!

[http://www.fvsd.ab.ca/stm/christmas\\_sites.htm](http://www.fvsd.ab.ca/stm/christmas_sites.htm)

Cathy in Ft. Vermilion, AB had lots of great links on her school site.

<http://www.canteach.ca/elementary/songspoems.html>

Find lots of Christmas poems on Iram's site (Iram is a BC teacher).

## Literacy bags

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

This is a company, but the website has lots of good ideas.

<http://www.mrsdryzal.com/literacybags.html>

There is a list of bags to make....

<http://www.kinderpond.com/discoverypacks.html>

This site is great - it gives lots of ideas of things to put in the bags.



# Odds and Ends

“I bought an inexpensive file box and labeled a hanging legal size file and folder for each child. It is placed on a table by the door. I teach the kids how to file things in their own folder. Then when I correct their work, they file it themselves in their take home file. All newsletters, calendars, school notices I can file. So even if a child is absent, I know that they will receive all notices. Missed work can also get filed and parents know to complete it and send it back the next day. In center time, the kids file any small art work or crafts in their file. At the end of the day the file contents are placed in a take-home envelope and put in the backpacks.”

“One of the little things I do involves choosing sides for games. I have a cup with blue and red tongue depressors. After putting in a stick for each child playing, each child chooses a stick without looking and that decides whose team they are on (the red team or the blue team). It is quick and eliminates one child being the last chosen.”

“I have had a hard time with my students returning things to school. I learned something this summer in one of my classes that has made a big difference. We have a Responsibility Book. When students forget homework, our stuffed animal that makes home visits, things needed for projects, etc., he/she must put his/her name in the Responsibility Book along with the date and the reason why their name is there. The teacher I learned this from taught Grade Three and she did it for a month at a time. I think that is a bit too long for my Grade Ones, so right now we do it for a week at a time. If at the end of the week, any students who have not had to put their names in the book receive a prize. As the year progresses the length of time will increase and the rewards will become intangible - extra recess, extra computer time, homework holidays, etc. So far it has worked very well in my room. They really try hard not to get their name in the book.”

“I have found that when I am in the computer lab and want my students attention, it can very difficult because they want to continue using the mouse. The answer is simple - I have them sit on their hands. This tip also works well in the classroom when you want 100% attention quickly.”

“I keep my word wall words in an expandable file folder in alphabetical order. They are very easy to find this way!”

“I take photos of the children modeling behaviours that I expect - kids with hands up, kids holding hands (for working cooperatively), sitting with hands folded, sitting ‘criss-cross applesauce’, lining up perfectly, etc. I put these pictures in stars. Then whenever I want to remind students of behaviours say “Reach for the stars!” to remind them of how to behave.”

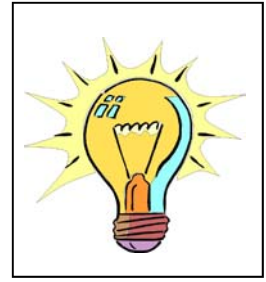
“When you need perfect quiet in the classroom - a test, silent reading, etc., we play ‘The Quiet Game’. The first person to talk loses - including me.”

“I am a primary parent as well as a teacher. As a teacher I know how important the money raising activities are for the school - my school sells popcorn, Christmas wrap, etc., at this time of year. It is work for the teachers collecting and keeping track of the sales - time that could be better spent other ways - but the cause is good as the money helps the school in many ways - it provides extra computers, books and gym equipment that are not supplied well in our school budget.

But as a parent I find it very annoying. I am a very busy person, and to take my kids out selling things is not my idea of fun or a wise use of my precious time. I think parents should be given the option of donating on a one-time basis to the school fund. I would rather give \$50.00 once than the dribbles of giving, buying things I don't need or irritating my neighbours when I arrive at their doors to sell. I think, if given the choice, most parents would agree!”



# More Odds and Ends



“I have a ‘Focus Wall’. It is a bulletin board where important things we are working on are all in one place. Our first comprehension strategy is Schema, so I put that up with big letters, and the making connections poster from [www.readinglady.com](http://www.readinglady.com). I do it in conjunction with an author study on Kevin Henkes, so I put the names of his books that we will be using. I also put the words ‘character’, ‘setting’, ‘problem’, ‘solution’ up, as we are working on these. I put up a small pocket chart for the weekly word wall/spelling words and a large pocket chart for my daily literacy objectives (as in our district we must post them daily). These are all things I would normally have somewhere in my room, but I put them all together on one board and it is a Focus Wall.”

To put felt up on a chalk board so you will have a felt board for a word wall, put the double-sided carpet tape around the edges and at intervals vertically and horizontally. Roll the felt up tightly. With help, put the felt up sticking the top edge first and then gradually smoothing it down - stretching as you go. Cut off any excess later. When done, put up items by putting the sticky Velcro pieces on the backs of the pieces.

“I went to an in-service where there was talk about children who have psychological problems. It was said that if there is a lot of stuff on the walls the children are distracted and unable to fully focus. Their thought is that only two colours should be used throughout the room and they should be blues, greens, or very pale yellow depending on the age group. They also say that all decorations should be curriculum based and not just placed for decoration.

After changing to this way of thinking I must say I have far less discipline problems than I have had in the past and the kids seem to be calmer. I know this upsets some people but before I tried it I was one who had tons of stuff all over pertaining to my theme. I did not think I could do away with a theme and all the decorations but since giving it up I am not going back. It is a lot less work for me as well as lot less expensive, and a calmer room with children who are able to concentrate better is a very good thing!”

## Staff Gift Exchange

“We have a staff party where we bring gifts, but we bring what would be considered a tacky gift. Sometimes it is something that a student brought for you or something silly. Everyone wraps their packages so beautifully. We can each in turn take one off the table or take one belonging to someone else, and it goes around until everyone has a gift without knowing what it is. We often end up in a ‘fight’ to get the one that is the biggest or best wrapped. It is lots of fun. At the end we open them and see what we have ‘won’.”

“This is another staff gift exchange: everyone brings a gift and places it on a table or other central spot. Each participant draws a number....#1 gets to choose a gift first and must open it and let all see. #2 goes next, may take #1's gift or one from the pile. (If #1's gift is taken s/he must go back to the pile, s/he cannot re-take the original gift.).....#3 goes next and may take 1's or 2's or one from the pile....etc...”



## Gifts for Volunteers

“I always make something (fancy cookies or candies), wrap them in holiday wrap or fancy saran wrap, tie with pretty ribbons, and give them to lots of people....principals, secretaries, custodians, team members, etc. It doesn't cost very much (except my time) and everyone loves them.

For my parent volunteers it depends on how often they volunteer. The ones who maybe come on field trips or help out every now and then get the same bag of candy plus a nice card thanking them. For volunteers who come every week I give them the candy or cookies but I try to get something else to go with it- sometimes a Starbucks card, sometimes a small plant, depends on how much money I have and what their interests are. We don't have many volunteers at my school so I really do appreciate those who come regularly and want to give them something to reflect my appreciation.”

## A Teacher's Survival Kit

- Matches:** For those days when you feel you need to light a fire under your students.  
**Wiggly eye:** For when you wish you had eyes in the back of your head.  
**Battery:** Like the Energizer Bunny, so you keep going and going and going...  
**A Puzzle Piece:** To remind you that you don't have to do it alone...we all need to work together to make things whole.  
**Animal crackers:** Eat these when you think you're working in a zoo.  
**Snickers:** To remind you to laugh.  
**Clothespin:** To remind you to hang in there!  
**Penny:** You are a priceless part of \_\_\_\_\_ (school name)  
**Pencil:** To remind you to list your blessings every day.  
**Tea Bag:** To remind you to take time to relax daily and go over that list of blessings.  
**Snowflake:** When all else fails, pray for a snow day.



## Quotes

Most educators have bought into the myth that academic learning does not require discipline - that the best learning is easy and fun. They do not realize that it is fluent performance that is fun. The process of learning, of changing performance, is most often stressful and painful.

Remember the Golden Rule. And remember it's your turn.

The really nice thing about not planning is that failure comes as a complete surprise, and is not preceded by periods of stress, worry or depression.

Education is a funny thing. At eighteen we knew all the answers - 40 years later even the questions confuse us.

The only things in the middle of the road are yellow stripes and dead porcupines.

School teachers are not fully appreciated by parents until it rains all day Saturday.

.....I used to be indecisive, but now I'm not so sure.....

Dear Colleagues,

Have a great holiday and a rest  
after the hectic month of December! You  
deserve a holiday so have a good one....  
Pamper yourself!

Jean



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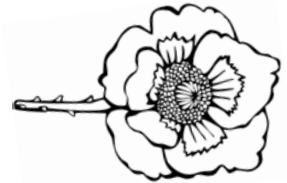
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# November News

\_\_\_\_\_ 's Class



## Academic Highlights

### Reading

### Phonics / Making Words

### Writing

### Math

### Science / Themes

### Other

## Upcoming Events

## Homework

## Reminders

## Special Students





# December News

\_\_\_\_\_ 's Class



## Academic Highlights

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### Other

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# Reading Log for \_\_\_\_\_



Read 20 minutes each night. Write the title of the book you read next to the day's date.  
At the end of the month turn in your log for a new bookmark.

Date:

1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____
6.	_____
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29.	_____
30.	_____
31.	_____

You did it! Turn in your log to the teacher.

