



# Primary Success

Issue #1

September — October 2004

## A New Magazine!

This is a new venture! When the Share-K, Share-One and Share-Two newsletters were discontinued, we were flooded with letters of disappointment. Doing three separate magazines every two months was too labour intensive, but the letters we received have spurred us into doing one magazine that hopefully will be interesting to all primary teachers.

We had found the bound versions to be expensive and time consuming to produce for each issue. Sending out the binder will cut down on our work. From the questionnaire in the May/June issues, you seemed to feel that the binder will be acceptable and even make it easier to keep the issues accessible. The binder format will allow us to send more pages, and we plan to include some little books and a few black line masters in every issue.

Through the magazine are 'tips' - simple ideas that teachers love, and 'things to ponder' - interesting, but perhaps controversial thoughts to discuss with your colleagues. These have been included to challenge common procedures and practices and encourage discussion.

We would appreciate your suggestions and comments on this new magazine. Let us know what you would like to see in future issues, and if you find this issue satisfactory. As before, the issues will be full of teachers' ideas so please send us your ideas, too!

Jean and Kelly



### pri-mary:

**First or highest in degree, quality, or importance; principal.  
First in time, order, or sequence.  
Fundamental, basic, or elemental.**

Look for:



Tips -  
the best ideas!

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# Before School Begins

## Setting up the physical classroom:

1. Think where the teacher's desk will go (if you have one). Most teachers prefer it at the back or side of the classroom, with clear room to approach it. Many teachers have bookshelves for curriculum guides, etc., near the desk, and a computer for your use either on the desk or nearby. If you have a computer, consider electrical outlets, cords, etc. Organize things on the top of the desk so it will stay tidy.

2. How will your children be seated? Desks or tables can be placed in groups of 2, 4 or more, or placed individually. Once you have found a seating arrangement that works well, you can place small bits of tape on the carpet or floor under the table legs. This way the students can easily put the tables or desks back in this ideal position accurately. If you have a lino floor, you can make small spots with white-out or other washable marker to show the leg positions.

3. If you have tables in the classroom, make sure they have a distinct purpose. Tables that don't have a specific purpose collect papers and books and impede traffic.

4. All Kindergarten and Grade One classrooms, and most Grade Two and Three rooms have a meeting area. You will likely use this for morning calendar activities. You will either use this same area for group lessons or have another area with either chalk board (or white board) access and a chart paper stand.

5. Plan your library area. Will you be able to display the covers of a number of books to lure students into reading them? Is there a place to sit and read? Are your bookcases adequate and attractive?

6. Consider the traffic - where will the students walk to get to the meeting area? Where will they line up to leave the classroom? Is the path clear to the coat area? How will they walk to get to the class library?

## Decorating your room:

1. You will want a word wall. This must be seen clearly from every desk. If the distance from the desks is great, the words must be made larger. Do not laminate the words as there can be glare, and do not print the words on dark coloured paper.

2. As you decorate your home so that you live in a pleasant space, decorate your classroom pleasantly. You will spend more time there than in your living room, so make sure it is attractive! Do not under-decorate or over-decorate. The decorations should be relevant to the students. Put charts, pictures, alphabet, numbers, etc. up in an orderly way. Plants and/or fresh flowers add a pleasant touch.

## Organizing your teaching 'stuff':

1. Put all books and teachers' materials that you will not be using frequently out of sight.

2. Many teachers fill plastic tubs with the things needed for each month. The ones that are not being used can be kept at your home or in another part of the school if you do not have out of sight storage.

3. Be tidy! Keep the top of your desk free so it can be used for doing your work.

4. If you are susceptible to piles of paper that need to be filed, put a plastic tub under your desk or other inconspicuous place and put the filing into it. Do the filing at least once a month.

## Know your rules and routines:

Make a list of all the rules and routines you will need in your classroom. You will need to know how you are going to handle children moving around the classroom, drinks, restroom visits, passing/collecting papers, lining up, fire drills, computer use, etc. You must have routines and rules for handling supplies, sharpening pencils, using rulers and glue, turning in finished work and many more. Especially in Kindergarten and Grade One these must be taught thoroughly, modeled and practiced. In Grade



*Tip:*

*Number your students alphabetically using the first names (or last name if this is more convenient). Use this number on supplies, coat hooks, personal items, mailboxes, etc.*

*Use the number to file papers quickly and easily—even the students can do it. Use the numbers on your computer, too.*

Off to school  
We go together,  
In September's  
Sunny weather.



Two and Three these expectations must be clear and thoroughly understood. Don't make any rule/routine you are not prepared to enforce or re-teach each and every time it is broken.

### **The First Week**

1. Have your Dayplan Book done thoroughly for the first week or more. Have lots to do — more than you think you will possibly need. Your students will either do far more than you think they will or much less.

2. Do all photocopying, make flashcards, and have everything ready.

### **Name Tags:**

"I laminate my name tags. I have a primary font program on my computer (with lines and an inter-line) and I typed each child's name on their desk nametag. They look much neater this way!"

My name is \_\_\_\_\_,  
I'll be your teacher soon.  
I can't wait to meet you,  
And show you our new room!

There's so much to learn in grade \_\_\_,  
We've lots of great things to do,  
It is going to be a very special year,  
For an awesome child like you!!

Love, \_\_\_\_\_

"I made my own desk tags (we call them license plates!) on the computer and printed them on coloured construction paper. They each had the student's name, a number line and the alphabet. I covered them on both sides with clear contact plastic. Then I put a piece of Velcro tape on the back and the matching piece on the table. That way, the tag stayed put but when the students changed desks they could take the tag with them. The velcro comes off with a little Goo Gone."

"I mail one piece of a 25 piece puzzle to each child on my class list. I buy two identical puzzles in case someone forgets to return the piece. I number the pieces first so we know if any are missing. I send the piece home with this little poem.

On the first day we complete the puzzle. "See how we fit together? One student missing would ruin the picture!", etc. This is the first step to building community in the classroom."

### **Meghan's Ideas (K):**

"I cut up strips of paper and put the kids names on them. Then the first day of school the kids decorate the strip with felts and a sticker and I staple it into a hat. I keep the hats for a few days until I've learned everyone's name.

I have a circle paper necklace that is really easy to make that says 'I survived the first day of Kindergarten' that they get to wear home that day. It could also say 'I survived the first week'. The kids just colour in the little picture and cut out the circle (after I've talked about scissor safety).

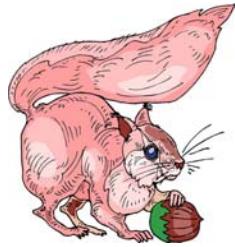
For the first few days, I set up a mini-chalkboard, chalk, a brush and their name tag on the carpet for each child. The children learn that this is the first thing that they do every time they come in to the classroom. Initially, I have them print their name once and then they can draw a picture but eventually we do lots of things on our chalkboards - print our names, letters, numbers, shapes, and directed drawings.



*Tip:*

*You will likely have a label program on your computer. Make up labels with the children's names. Use these on books, supplies, coat-hooks, library cards, - there are so many uses! You can colour the background on the computer or buy coloured labels. Peel-and-stick labels are a big time-saver!*

I like to have a theme of greeting, and something I did that I thought was cool was to have the large bulletin board animals (about 24 + inches long...but most sizes would work) and I would fill up some spaces with them and have word bubbles coming out of their mouth. I would put them like where I put the word wall because otherwise it would be empty. I would put them in places where I wanted to have children's work up as soon as we could create some, and I also wanted the children to be part of where things went in the room. This way it looked cute and inviting, but I had things up that weren't meant to stay. An example was a squirrel carrying a nut...and he said something about he couldn't wait until lunch...or he was glad it was \_\_\_ (whatever time your lunch is) because he was hungry. I had an animal with a book and he said, 'I can't wait until reading time!' or 'I can't wait until I learn to read' ... something appropriate. I had one say something about math, writing, etc.



I copied their pictures from last year off the permanent record folders and put them on whatever my greeting bulletin board was. For example, TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STARS and I had their pictures in the middle of stars. You could put their pictures on bees for 'Busy Bees in Room \_\_\_\_'. I always thought they liked seeing themselves and the people in their class right away.

I sent home a welcoming letter in the later part of summer and told them to bring a special thing on their first day back. I always took pictures on the first day of them with their special thing. We did sharing at the same time we reviewed listening circle-time rules. I would break it up into groups. I let them keep their special thing with them the first day (if it was appropriate), and they knew it was just for the day. It made some of them feel more comfortable coming back to school that first day.

I always had a welcoming pencil on their desks WITH their name on it.

I did the 'Monster Comes to School' story and did follow-up activity about why we need rules."

## The First Days

### Make a Time Capsule:

"I teach Grade Two. On the first day of school we make a time capsule. The students are asked to bring an empty paper towel roll (I have a few extra) or a Pringles can and begin their first day by decorating a piece of construction paper that will cover the roll with their name and a picture. Then they spend the day doing the things that go into the capsule.

They put in a tracing of their hand, a self-portrait and we measure each student and put in the height. This can be in a number or cut a piece of non-stretchable string to show the height. The students fill in a sheet that asks about their favourite book, movie, toy, shoe size, friend, activity, TV show, etc.

Then the items are put into the tube, the ends are sealed and they are put away until the last day of school. It is fun to remind them of their time capsule goals throughout the year. They have such fun on the last day opening them!"

### Make a seating chart:

Buy the smallest pack of sticky notes that you can find. Then make a wall chart that shows your desks or tables, with room for the size of note for each one. When you have the students settled, write a name on each note and stick it into the desk space. These are fast and easy to change and your seating chart will always be up-to-date.

### A name puzzle:

Go to [www.puzzlemaker.com](http://www.puzzlemaker.com), select 'wordsearch' and put in all your students' names. This is a good 'getting to know you' activity for Grade 2 and 3.

*Tip:*



*"At the end of the first week of school I give each child a tiny bag that says, 'You have had a great first week of school - you deserve kisses and hugs!' I put two Hershey Kisses and two Hugs in each little bag. This is always a hit!"*

## The first day in Grade One

"We discuss the school and classroom rules and talk about being safe and being good friends to one another. We go on a tour of the classroom and I read all the charts and poems. (We will do this every day until all the students have memorized the words and the charts and poems can be used for 'read the room'.) We tour the school.

We begin to enforce the routines on the first day, too. They need to be repeated and repeated and practiced until the students do them automatically.

I begin my phonics program on the first day by teaching the letter A. We talk about the letter name and the letter sound. The children practice making the letter - lower and upper case - on the individual white boards. We brainstorm words that begin with the /a/ sound. We do a chart with the words 'I' and 'am', and the children fill in a paper with their names - 'I am \_\_\_\_.' and draw a picture of themselves. We read this over and over, and they touch each word as they read.

I have the children play with the math manipulatives, and I go around and ask each one to count a group of manipulatives. This gives me an idea of who will need help with this.

I read a couple of books, too. This is a full day of things to do, and the students feel that Grade One is serious and that they have done lots of work! I make notes of the things I see - my first idea of their abilities."

### Take digital pictures:

On the first day, take digital pictures of your students. For Kindergarten or Grade One children, print each picture with the student's name below on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. (If you don't have access to a digital camera, you could also take a picture of each child holding his/her name and have the photos ready to share the next day. Glue each picture to a larger sheet of paper.) Bind these together into a book. The kids will love looking through it and learning the names of their classmates.

For Grade Two and Three students, take the photos and have them write several sentences about themselves. You could type these sentences below the photos and print them. Again, bind them into a book that all the students will treasure.



### A school tour



We do this in the morning on the first day of school. I take my class on a tour. I have done this in Kindergarten and in Grade Two, so it adapts to any grade level. In Kindergarten I invited the parents to join us.

We began by visiting the office to meet the secretary and the principal. I took a digital picture of each person. Each person we met said a few words about their job and the children asked questions. Then we went to the library and met the librarian, to the computer lab and met the teacher there. When the students had different teachers for PE or music, we went to meet them.

Then we visited the gym, the playground and even the bathrooms!

During lunch hour I downloaded the pictures, put each onto a simple outline of a school. The older students had a sentence or two with each picture, and the younger ones had a word or two. Then I printed them in black and white. I photocopied them and we made a shape book, with a page for each place we visited.

# Bulletin Boards

## **Something to Ponder .....**

"I have a very different approach to 'walls'. I feel it is the kids' and my room so I only put up what is necessary to begin the year - letters for the word wall (not the words - we build that together), and the calendar. I tell the kids that we will work together to make it our room and the very first day of school we do a small and simple craft that I immediately put up. They are very excited and proud of our room. It feels odd as everyone puts up things - but I feel the kids are young and don't really look at the stuff on the walls until it is their theirs and their friends', not mine. It's like the idea of 'breaking bread' together - cementing a relationship..."

*Janice McCarter*



"I have spent many days in the summers giving up my much needed free-time to decorate the classroom. I used to hang up lots of charts and create all kinds of clever boards. The kids hardly ever used my charts or read the poems. Now I start each year by hanging colourful paper or fabric on my boards and I put up colourful borders. I decorate my door and put nametags on the cubbies. I later fill the bulletin boards with the children's work or with things I have taught."

That being said, if you do create an amazing classroom in any primary grade before school begins, it will be useless to the children unless you spend a great amount of time referring to the charts or poems that you have put up. In Kindergarten and Grade One the charts should be memorized so the children can use them when they 'read the room' and refer to the charts in work times.

**C3  
B4  
ME**

**Smile!** "My door will say, 'Smile, you're in Ms. \_\_\_\_'s class!'. I will put the names on smiley faces."

**The Olympics** These are great for Grade Two or Grade Three classes: Going for the Gold An Olympic Year Carrying the Torch for Learning A Winning Class Do Your Best! Award-winning Students

## **Chicka Chicka .....**

Decorate your classroom from the book 'Chicka Chicka Boom Boom'. Try these sites to see how other teachers made a large palm tree.

<http://www.kinderfriends.com/palmtree.html>

<http://www.mrspohlmeierskinderpage.com/chickachickatree.htm>

**Sunflowers** Put the children's faces (a photo or a drawing) in the center of sunflowers and label with the names. Title it 'Welcome to Our Kinder - Garden', or 'Watch Us Grow', 'A Place To Grow', etc.

## **Empty Boards:**

Put up a very nice title that says 'Invisible Art' and watch people stop and look!  
Make a sign that says 'Under Construction'.

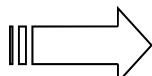
## **And more .....**

Using pencils: 'Pencil us in for a great year!' or 'Welcoming a sharp bunch of students'

Do a 'We're Hoppy you're here' door with frogs..'

Using feet or shoes: 'We're starting off on the right foot' or 'Step into Grade Two'.

The following page may be photocopied and sent home for your parents to complete. Put the completed sheets in the students' files.



# Getting To Know You!



Student's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

The following information will be kept private, and is only to help me to understand your child better.

Does your child speak more than one language? Which ones?

---

Does your child have any medical conditions or allergies that I should be made aware of?

---

What are some of your child's favourite things to do? Does he/she have any hobbies?

---

What are your child's special interests?

---

Does your child enjoy being read to? What are some of your child's favorite books?

---

Write a few adjectives that come to mind that describe your child (include strengths and weaknesses).

---

What are your child's talents?

---

What time does your child go to sleep at night? Is he/she frequently tired by afternoon?

---

Does your child have any siblings? If yes, what are their names, ages, and grades if they go to school?

---

What else would you like me to know about your child? Do you have any concerns?  
(Use the back of the page.)

Thank you! I appreciate your confidence. \_\_\_\_\_

# Teaching Reading Successfully

How should we teach beginning reading? This question has concerned educators for hundreds of years. The written language of the early Greeks was simple and largely phonetic, so they were taught to read by first learning the letter sounds. Until the Middle Ages, written European languages were largely involved in copying texts. With the Reformation and the invention of the printing press, reading became available to the average person. In England, children were taught to read the Bible using letter sounds. The English language has roots in French, Latin, Greek and many other cultures; this adds many challenges to the teaching of reading. A letter or group of letters can have a number of different sounds. By the 19th century there was a push for ‘whole word’ reading to make the reading process easier for small children. Here began the ‘Reading Wars’.



In the early 20th Century the beginning of the ‘top down’ methods could be seen. Children were expected to learn to read through play and exposure to books. Then, after the 1920’s, the schools were teaching the ‘look and say’ method with the ‘Dick and Jane’ readers and other similar texts. By mid-century, it was found that close to 25% of the population was functionally illiterate. Now the reading wars began in earnest!

While most schools were still teaching the whole word methods, a number of serious phonics programs were developed. There was the I.T.A (Initial Teaching Alphabet), in which each phonetic component was a symbol and the resulting written words were barely recognizable. DISTAR and Orton-Gillingham gave intense systematic phonics instruction. In North America, teachers generally taught whatever reading system was available in the texts provided by their schools or districts. These were usually whole word texts with a smattering of phonics, but occasionally gave way to systematic phonetic texts with small amounts of whole word teaching.

In the 1980’s, ‘Whole Language’ became the fashion. More than a reading method – it became a philosophy. It was child-centered rather than directed by the teacher; motivation instead of instruction. Most schools in North America embraced it completely. Phonics and sequential sight word basal readers were destroyed, and new teachers didn’t have the skills to teach these methods even if they felt the need. ‘Whole Language’ was a form of sight reading, but without direct sequence or repetition. Children began by pretending to read and then memorizing pages of simple repetitive text, and it was assumed that they would ‘emerge’ to be readers. Suddenly, an increased number of children with learning disabilities and reading problems appeared, and the Reading Recovery program with specially trained teachers was brought in to close the gap. Teachers began adding phonics instruction into whole language, but the letter sounds were usually taught incidentally rather than systematically and explicitly.

Over the last few years teachers have been improving the instruction, but many are still using the literature methods. This is the stage at which we find ourselves across North America. Many teachers are confused by the conflicting methods and pushed constantly by the winds of change. Who is right? What should we be teaching and how should it be taught?

## **The Answer**

The answer has been there all along! Every method that has been used to teach reading is correct! Every method is correct but not exclusive. Children are different and children learn in many different ways. If only one specific method is taught, there will always be some children who are unsuccessful in learning. Some children will learn to read easily no matter what method is used, but many children have a distinct learning style and will only learn well if taught that method. This is an obvious conclusion, isn’t it? Phonics is the correct way to teach reading, and so is teaching a sight reading vocabulary and so is literature-based instruction.

If you ask primary teachers who teach through literature about their reading programs, they will say that they **do** teach phonics and sight words! All teachers will agree that these are important. But the lower children will not learn either phonics or sight reading skills well (or at all) unless they are taught specifically and sequentially. That is the key! For these children to learn well the phonics and sight words must be taught with a ‘building block’ approach. A single piece of new knowledge must be added to skills that have previously been mastered. When that piece of knowledge or skill has been mastered, only then is a new skill added.

A successful reading program that is effective for **every** child in the class will have these three strands:

### **Systematic Explicit Phonics – the bottom-up approach**

Many children need to be taught a systematic sequential phonics program. Phonics provides the skills needed to decode unfamiliar words and to spell. The letter sounds and the blending of sounds is a necessary part of the reading process, as is the separation of sounds in spelling. Children with visual learning disabilities or visual processing problems especially need this method taught in order to learn to read. Beginning phonetic books should be used as decoding practice, not as ‘literature’.

### **Explicit Sight Word Teaching – the direct approach**

The direct approach is the specific teaching and repetition of sight words in a sequential program. This is especially necessary in the early part of the learning process. Many children require up to 50 repetitions of a word in order to remember it; this is especially necessary for children with auditory problems who find phonics difficult or impossible to learn. Every child needs to memorize the words, because, in order to read with fluency, children need to have an instantaneous recall of all the words. Many of the words in our language cannot be decoded phonetically and these words must be memorized.

### **Literature – the top-down approach**

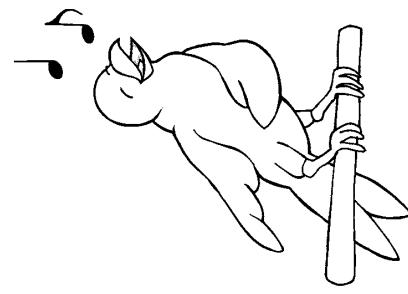
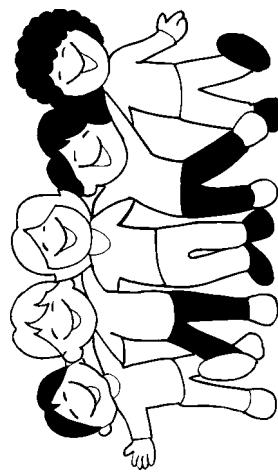
This method has many benefits necessary to the reading process. Children need to appreciate good literature and be exposed to well written trade books. They should be encouraged to read these books independently and discuss them. This method places greater emphasis on comprehension. Children need to read independently every day to practice the skills they have been taught and to listen to good literature being read to them each day. Guided reading lessons teach good reading habits.

Children learn to read in different ways. Many children are able to learn no matter what method is taught, but there are also many children who can only learn through their strongest learning modality. Some children are visual learners, some are auditory and some kinesthetic learners. The sight word and literature strands are the most useful for the visual learners. Auditory learners do best when taught a strong phonics program. Too often, however, we forget the kinesthetic learners, and there are more children who learn this way than is realized. A good reading program should include body movements, forming words by printing and other kinesthetic exercises throughout the three strands.

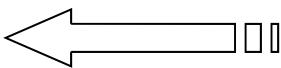
In Grade One and Grade Two the three strands need to be taught separately, but they will begin to overlap and converge as the children begin to read well. The phonics and sight word strands will greatly improve the reading in the literature strand. As each child is learning to read, the teacher can watch to see whether he or she is a visual learner who achieves the reading skills best through sight reading, an auditory learner who achieves the skills best through phonics, or a kinesthetic learner who requires physical action to learn to read. Your students with learning disabilities will especially benefit when you can teach toward their strongest modality. You will find some students who can only learn with one method, and it is interesting and rewarding to see these children bloom when you teach to their strengths.

It isn't easy! Teaching reading IS brain surgery.....

a b c d e f g h i j k l m  
n o p q r s t u v w x y z  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



The preceding page has desk tags that you can photocopy. One has just lines for you to print the child's name, and the other has the alphabet and numbers to 9 with the name. The students can colour the picture (or you can) and then laminate the tag. Attach them to the tables or desk with wide clear tape or stick a strip of Velcro on the back of the tag and another on the desk.



bring in items for each letter to review the alphabet and the sounds. We make a Big Book out of using environmental print items."

"Make a bulletin board of environmental print. Have each letter of the alphabet and the environmental print below. This could be a joint project with several classes participating. We continued to add to it throughout the first weeks of school. We just put labels that the children can read up on the board and the kids loved to use this during the 'read the room' times."

## Teaching Printing

It is important to teach printing correctly. 'Experts' say that it is easier to push the pencil away from you rather than towards you, and this is why so many children print from bottom to top. It seems that the children with poor fine motor skills are more likely to do this. If children learn to print letters this way and use this formation for some time it is difficult to get them to change. It is important because fluent printing is difficult when done incorrectly, and when the letters are made incorrectly it affects legibility as they begin to work more quickly.

Teach the letters individually, and teach the formation by making big letters in the air, on the carpet, on the chalkboard, etc. Ask, 'Where will we begin?' (at the top) every time they begin the letter formation. If you find that some students are reversing letters, give them a verbal cue - 'b is a bat and a ball'.

Our students need to learn to print fluently, as soon as possible. They will not be good writers until the printing becomes almost automatic, as children who struggle with printing will not be concentrating on the writing process and will not produce either quality or quantity until their printing is fairly fluent.



"I make my own space-men with the wide tongue depressors. I now use the coloured wide sticks available at Walmart, Michael's, etc. I draw a smiley face and use wiggly eyes. It's a great idea and so easy to make."

## Environmental Print

This is a great way to introduce reading in Kindergarten and Grade One! Environmental print is the print we see all around us - the print on commercial signs, street signs, labels and products we use everyday, etc. Displaying environmental print in the classroom helps children feel successful 'reading' at an early age. Some examples are: the stop sign at the corner, a sign on a neighborhood gas station or grocery store, the wrapper on a favourite candy bar or snack food, box of a favorite cereal, the label on jar of peanut butter, an 'EXIT' sign, restaurant names, toothpaste, etc.

### Ideas for using environmental print:

"I try to find items or labels for each letter of the alphabet. (A-apple juice, B-Burger King, C-Coca Cola, etc.) I have the children to



bring in items for each letter to review the alphabet and the sounds. We make a Big Book out of using environmental print items."

"I have my kids practice making their letters in a word almost touch, and put a 'finger space' between words."

"We started calling the printing spaces spaghetti and meatballs. Spaghetti spaces are the spacing in between each letter in a word (very thin spaces) and the meatball spaces are the big spaces between each word. We practice this concept during our morning message where we squish the letters in a word together and then, in between words, a student comes up, makes a meatball space (fist) and places it next to the word so the writer knows where to start the new word. This works great!"

# Teaching from K to 3



Teaching **Kindergarten** is exhausting! When you first get these wee ones, they are still pre-schoolers. They will need to be taught everything, from how to sit in a circle to how to use the washrooms. Some will have an attention span of only a couple of minutes, and those who have watched a lot of fast moving TV will be bored and fidgety if there isn't movement or action.

Five year olds are generally good, helpful, and conforming. They need a lot of attention, affection, and praise. Hugs are needed. They may not want to try things that are new. They are very energetic. They may show opposite extremes of behaviour and may become less well-behaved as the school year progresses. They are still learning socially, and may need direction in sharing, politeness and behaviour in social situations.

Kindergarten teachers have a lot of patience and love! The Kindergarten curriculum is changing, and now there is more that the children are expected to know by the end of the year. This means less play and more teacher-directed activities. It is physically draining and Kindergarten teachers should be applauded!

**Grade One** teachers are often dedicated to this special grade! There is a huge reward when you see the progress the children make. They are like little sponges just soaking up everything you put out there for them to learn. They are enjoyable to teach and very funny. They like silly jokes and silly stories. They come to you as Kindergarten children, and it is up to you to transform them into readers and writers. At the beginning of the year you must assume that they know nothing (where were the kindergarten teachers last year?), and any skill you may discover they have is a bonus. You will spend the first month teaching them how to cut, how to use glue bottles, how NOT to sharpen a pencil, and how to tear a page out of the math book - this may take more than an hour. Grade Ones still need hugs, help to find missing books and assistance to do up zippers. Tattling is second nature. Everything is new and exciting and their enthusiasm is contagious.

It is hard work. Grade One teachers learn to put all routines and lessons into simple steps, and repeat everything over and over. Attention spans are still short and lessons must change direction every ten or fifteen minutes or you lose them. Silence rarely happens - a six year old is murmuring even when quiet, and twenty six year old students produce a hum that is difficult to extinguish. You will never have time in class to think about what you are going to do next, and inexperienced Grade One teachers find this difficult.

After saying all that, Grade One is the most rewarding grade. What they know at the end of the year - you have taught them! You need lots of patience, a good sense of humour, a big bag of tricks for getting and keeping their attention and lots of energy. Even then, you will be drained at the end of the day.

**Grade Two** teachers will receive children who are still Grade Ones. Some will not know how to read, so you wonder what the Grade One teacher was doing. You must be able to teach beginning readers beside the good readers in your class. Many will not know the basics, so much of Grade Two is spent teaching Grade One skills again. Grade Two children are chatty, helpful, fun, whiny, tattletales, teacher worshipers, non-readers, chapter book readers, non-writers, story book writers.... You'll get a bit of everything! Grade Two is a transitional year and a wonderful age. They are somewhat independent but mostly still very innocent. They are cooperative and eager to please. They are old enough to understand jokes.

You will take these little Grade One people who come to you at the end of the year and turn them into Grade Threes! By the end of the year they are much more mature and capable. Grade Two is fun to teach!

**Grade Three** children are changing. They can work on their own, and the teachers can have time each day to think ahead while the children are working. Grade Threes are sometimes young children. They will still listen raptly to a picture book and do crafts with pleasure. But now you can see changes - sometimes boys and girls will hold hands and you must make a rule that there cannot be violence in their written stories. There may be bullies in your group, and this may cause hurt and upset in the class. Grade Threes love to write long stories and read the simple chapter books. They will work independently and love to learn difficult math procedures.

Most Grade Three children are very sweet. They are still primary kids, but by the end of the year you will see the independence and maturity grow. You will love this grade!

# Self-Selected Reading

The Self-Selected reading time is an important part of the reading program. It gives the students an opportunity to practice reading at their appropriate level and introduces them to a wide variety of books.

The self-selected reading time can have three parts:

## **Something to ponder ...**

If a student is not actually reading in SSR - pretending or looking at pictures - is the time being well spent?

Should these students be reading aloud to someone instead?



## **Read-Aloud**

You select books to read to the class and read for at least 15 minutes. Choose books with wide interest. If it doesn't interrupt the flow of the reading, stop occasionally and ask questions about what they have heard and ask for predictions about what will happen next. Read a wide variety of books, both fiction and non-fiction.

## **Independent Reading**

The children choose a book from a book box or a selection of materials at their independent reading level. Especially in the early grades, children will not read if they don't have a 95% recognition of the vocabulary and it is important that the material is chosen carefully. Your lower students, especially, will not read unless the material is easy and familiar - and as they need all the reading practice possible, make sure they are reading suitable material.

The better readers may be reading chapter books and will want to continue next time, so provide bookmarks for them to use.

Be realistic about the length of time your students can read and stay on task.

While the students are reading independently, the teacher brings one student at a time to a quiet place and listens to him/her read. During this conference, the child reads orally and the teacher can ask a few questions. You can complete a running record at this time. Sometimes the children feel more comfortable if you tape record the reading, and do the running record at a later time. Check the fluency, decoding strategies and the comprehension.

## **Sharing**

The group comes together to share the books they have read. Discuss a special book that the children may want to read another time. You could draw one or two names and have those students share the books they have just read.

## **Acronyms**

Here are some acronyms for the reading time. If you are doing a theme or have a classroom theme, make up your own acronym to suit!

BEAR - Be Excited About Reading

DEAR - Drop Everything and Read

WEB - Wonderfully Exciting Books

OTTER - Our Time To Enjoy Reading

GRAB - Go Read a Book

RABBIT - Read a Book Because It's There

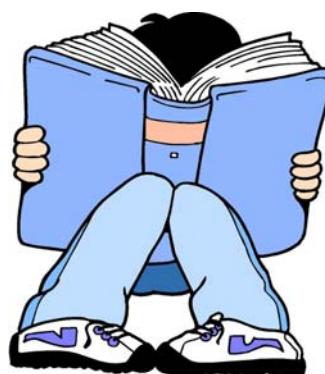
RIOT - Reading Is Our Thing

RIP - Read In Peace

ZYLAR - Zip Your Lips And Read

SSR - Silent Sustained Reading

USSR - Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading



# Literacy Centres

What do the students do while you teach small groups? Having literacy centres is one possible answer. Some teachers find centres difficult to manage. It is difficult to know what each student has accomplished at a centre and without supervision some students will not produce work of value. Centres can be noisy at a time when you need quiet to teach a group lesson. That being said, the teachers who model and practice the expectations at each centre before letting the children use it can find centres valuable.



"I introduce centres one at a time. This way each child knows the expectations I have about the purpose of the centre, and I teach them how to use the materials. In the beginning I limit the amount of centre materials. For example, at the writing centre I begin with only paper, pencils and wax crayons. Markers, fancy paper, etc., are added one at a time at a later date. I give the students a few exercises that they all must do first and then they can choose a centre activity. Some days I just do centres if I feel my slow workers are not getting enough choice time."

"One of my favourite Grade One centres is a simple matching game. I have the digital pictures of the students, print them onto tag and laminate them, and I have a name card for every student. They match the pictures to the name cards. It's a favourite - they still pull it out at the end of the year, but then they see how quickly they can do it."

The following centers can be modified for your grade level.

## Reading Centres:

Library: Students choose books from the classroom library or leveled book boxes.

Big Books: Students choose big book stories to read - ones you have previously taught. Have them build the story using sentence strips or words.

Poetry: Using the poems you have previously taught, the students read poetry charts or collections in a book.

Partner Reading: Students choose a book at their reading level to read with a partner.

Reading the Room: Students may choose a pointer, glasses, wand, etc., and read the walls of the classroom.

They may read the calendar, poems, word wall, charts and other print that may be in the classroom.

Theme Library: As you do each new theme, season, science unit, have a bookshelf in the room that is full of related books.

Tape-a-Story: Students can tape themselves reading.

Magazine Centre: Students choose magazines to look through and read.

Pocket Chart: Students may use letter cards, word cards, and sentence. Build poems and stories.

## Writing Centres:



The Writing Centre: Have an assortment of writing tools and interesting paper.

Writing the Room: Students use paper on a clipboard and copy words or sentences they can read from around the classroom.

Dry Erase Boards: Students use dry erase board to practice writing letters, names and words from around the classroom.

Stamp-a-story: Students use stamps/stickers to write rebus sentences.

Write a Book: Have book forms with lines and spaces for pictures.

Word Processing: Use the computer to write a story.

Chalkboards: Use the chalkboards to practice writing letters, names and words.

Journal writing: Students write on a specific topic or write on a topic of their own choice.  
Post Office: Students write letters to their friends and family and put in a mailbox.

### **Alphabet Centres:**

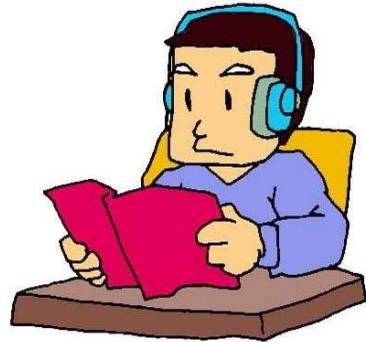
Alphabuilders: Straight, curved, and half circle parts are used to make letters.  
Letter Sort: sort alphabet tiles on a two part graph - letters in my name/not in my name, curves/ straight, tails/no tails, etc.  
Alphabet Sorting: Put the letters in the correct alphabet order.  
Matching: Match initial consonants and pictures.

### **Spelling and Word Centres:**

Magnetic letters/words and magnetic boards: Students manipulate letters to spell names, words, or sentences.  
Name/Word sort: sort into boys names/ girls names, by number of syllables, by beginning letter, by number of letters, by number of vowels, etc.  
Rainbow Writing: Students write words/letters in words in different colours.  
Magazine/Newspaper Search: Students search for particular letters or words in magazines or newspapers. Cut and glue the letters/words on another piece of paper.  
Word Families:: Students use fold-overs to create new words in the same family.  
Building Words: Put out the letter tiles of the letters the students have learned and they build words using phonics. Then print the words on a sheet of paper.

### **Audio-Visual Centres:**

Listening Centre: Students choose books and matching tapes to listen to stories using a tape recorder and headphones. Listen to directions given on a tape to complete a worksheet after listening to a story.  
Computer Centre: Students work on the computer with games that teach phonics, spelling or reading.  
Overhead: Students use clear lettered tiles, water-based pens, and other materials to practice stories, letters, names and words on the overhead projector.  
Keyboarding: Learn where the letters are on the keyboard and practice typing. Practice typing names and words.



### **Other Centres:**

Science Observation: Students examine objects or displays and then draw and record what they see.  
Art Centre: Use a variety of materials to illustrate stories that have been read.  
Fine Motor Centre: Have activities to improve fine motor skills: colouring books, dot to dot, write on chalkboard, nuts and bolts, use stencils or trace simple pictures, use Lite-Brite, lacing or stringing beads.  
Printing Centre: Practice printing perfect letters.

### ***Organizing Your Centres.....***

Centres should have a learning outcome and a method of assessing that outcome in order to be useful.  
Place all the materials needed into a labeled container with a lid. When not in use put all the containers in the same place each day.  
Make your centers portable by putting the materials into a plastic tub. The students pick up a tub and go elsewhere in the classroom.  
Outline the space to be used for the center by using placemats, a floor mat, a desk or table, a hula hoop or other space delineation.  
Model the behaviour required and the necessary outcomes.

# Writing

For many children, writing is the most difficult task in the early grades. This is because writing involves many skills, and some children have a problem with one or more of these skills. Writing is a complicated form of communication, and communication cannot occur until the completed writing task can be read and understood. Before being a writer, students must understand our language and be able to put speech into separate words and also put separate words into a complete sentence. They must choose a topic and decide on the first sentence. They must keep these words in mind and in order as they go through the next steps. Students must have some knowledge of spelling and be able to spell the common words or know where to find them. They must have a knowledge of phonics to help them spell words with which they are unfamiliar. Then they must be able to print these letters and words legibly, and this is a formidable task for some children. After the words have been printed, the student must be able to read the words, so reading is also a prerequisite.

Many students do not feel comfortable writing because one or more of these prerequisites is difficult for them. This will improve as their skills improve. By the end of Grade One almost all children will have the necessary background skills and will be writing freely.

## Ideas from Teachers:

"I make a chart of all the students' names for the class to use in their writing. I also reply to Journal writing, asking a question or commenting on the entry."

"Each month in Grade 1 I made a journal for them by making shape books (September Journal with a picture of a leaf, October a pumpkin, etc.) I put in paper with lines for a title, a space for an illustration, and lines for writing. I always use the interlines so the students keep the letter heights correct. Later in the year the paper was all lines with no illustration."

"I encourage my kids to print neatly and softly in their first copy. Each child reads the first copy to me and we talk about things that need to be changed. I use a pencil, too, and draw a soft line under errors to remind him/her to make changes. For example, I might put a line under a spelling mistake, or a letter made lower case when it should be a capital or missing punctuation. Then the child goes back to his table. He carefully uses an eraser to get rid of the mistake and then corrects it. I find that it is important that the children correct the writing, but it is too much to expect that they re-print it. This way they have a good copy without re-writing. I don't believe in a 'sloppy copy' - I don't like sloppy work and I certainly wouldn't encourage my kids to do it!"

"I have a computer in my classroom and a printer. When each child completes a story for publishing, I quickly type it out on a template I have made with a suitable primary font and a space above for an illustration. My kids love this 'real' publishing. I have done this in Kindergarten, Grade One and Two, and I find it works really well. In the early grades this is a good way to give the child reading material, too. Often we put these stories up on a bulletin board for everyone to read and sometimes we make them into a book."



You can write in your backyard,  
You can write in a tree.  
You can write on the beach,  
Or in a boat out at sea.

You can write when it's raining,  
Or under the sun.  
But no matter what,  
You can write just for fun!

*Kathleen L. Stone*

## Something to ponder.....

Why do we have our children write fictional stories? This is a skill they will probably never use. Can you write a good story? If you teach fiction, do it because the students enjoy it - do it for a treat. Don't treat it as a goal because most students won't do well at it in primary - even in later school years. Our students need to be able to write a good paragraph on one subject, using correct sentence structure, good spelling and interesting words.



# Library Books

“My library has three parts. The first part has plastic book bins that are leveled. Each bin has a colour on the end, so the kids know which bin is the one for them. I put a coloured sticker on the spine and cover of each book so it is easy to make sure the books are in the right bins and the children can put them back with ease. These leveled books are used for the self-selected reading time, and most have been read by the children in guided reading.

The second part has books that are not leveled. Most are too difficult for the students, but they are able to look through them and try to read. Many of these I have read to the class so the children are familiar with the stories.

The third section is non-fiction. I only put out books that illustrate the theme or seasonal work that we are doing. If we are working on the rain-forest theme, I put out books of places, plants and animals that live there. If we are learning community helpers, then I have a selection of books to fit.”

“I sorted my library into four groups. They are not precise levels but rather very easy, moderately easy, more difficult and beyond. I do this for any grade I teach. For example, in Grade Two the books range from easy picture books to difficult chapter books. I put stickers on the books to show the level.

Then we go through the Goldilocks strategy. We talk about finding books that are not too easy or too hard, but just right. We also talk about the ‘five finger rule’ - open a book and begin to read a page. Raise a finger for each word you can’t read. If you have five fingers up on a page, the book is too hard.”

“When they feel they have mastered a level, I have them read several books to me and if they’re ready they can go on to the next level. I also do running records.”

“They keep their own leveled books in a bookbag. These are stored in tubs. They get their bookbags anytime they are finished their work or have free time.”

“The students in my class have book boxes for silent reading time. They select these books weekly. They choose six books for their box on Friday. I stipulate that at least two of the books must be ones that they can read to me when I visit them during SSR. I record the books that they read to me on a conference sheet. Most children in my class work well with this system. Some children need to change books more often, I let them do this during recess (it usually takes just a few minutes). Some children need help selecting books, so I will help them with a few choices, but not all six. On Friday, when books are ‘switched’ we have a sharing time where children talk about a favourite book they had that week. I feel that this encourages other to try that book, too.”

## The Goldilocks Strategy

### ‘Too Easy’ books

1. The book is short .
2. The print is big.
3. You have read the book before.
4. You know all the words in the book.
5. The book has lots of pictures.



### ‘Too Hard’ books

1. The book is long.
2. The print is small.
3. There aren't many pictures in the book.
4. There are a lot of words that you can't figure out.
5. There's no one to help you if you get stuck.

### ‘Just Right’ books

1. The book looks interesting.
2. You can figure out most of the words in the book.
3. Someone has read this book aloud to you.
4. You have read other books by this author.
5. There is someone to give you help if you need it.
6. You know something about this subject.

### My Book Bag

I'm as happy as I can be  
This bag of books belongs to me!  
I like to read a book each day  
I like it more than I can say.



## Things to Ponder...

### School Testing

Why do some schools do much better than others in the annual testing that is becoming a standard procedure across the country? Why do so many teachers and principals protest the testing?

The tests themselves are often blamed. Many educators dismiss the testing as a procedure that doesn't truly represent schools. Schools are much more than what the testing shows, and this is true. But ..... the testing shows how well the students know the basics of reading, writing and mathematics, and that is also true. Saying the test results are meaningless (as is often heard) is a self-defeating attitude. Students who are doing well in reading, writing and math will do well on the tests! If the students in the school are not doing as well in those subjects, the tests will reflect it. Excuses will not change that. The protests generally come from schools that do not rate very highly on the tests. Perhaps they do not know why their schools are not testing well and excuses are made to justify the poor results.

Educators say that schools with high numbers of non-English speaking students or schools in poor socio-economic areas will obviously not do as well as schools in high socio-economic areas, but in every city you will find schools in the lowest areas that rank high on the tests, and schools in what should be high areas that do very poorly and you will find both high and low schools in similar socio-economic areas. In my city, a school in a poorer area of town where the parents have an average of 13 years of education (only half graduated from high school) ranked 250 out of 1000 provincial schools on the testing. A school in a high socio-economic area where the parents have an average of 16 years of education ranked in the bottom 100 schools in the province. Educators who say that this doesn't matter are cheating their students.

What do schools that rank highly do differently than schools that rate poorly? There are a number of factors that help determine the scholastic levels of the students and the testing results, and these have little to do with the socio-economic levels of the school area. If you visit a highly rated school, you will usually find these in place.

1. The teachers and the principal of the school are not dedicated to only one philosophy. They are willing and eager to try new programs and ideas in order to help the children learn.

2. The teachers use sequential programs to teach reading and math, beginning in Grade One or even Kindergarten, and progressing through the grades. This could be a step-by-step phonics or sequential sight word basal program, or several specific programs. Any sequential program with specific teaching will produce better readers and higher math marks than programs that are not sequential or that do not teach specific skills in progression. Schools that use the literature-based methods as the primary philosophy to teach reading will generally have lower scores because the skills are not taught in sequence to mastery. Math scores will be lower if students are using programs where they 'discover' the concepts rather than having lessons that have specific teaching, hands-on work, lots of review and independent practice. Direct phonics programs are said to be 'research-based' and will produce higher student marks, but schools that teach any sequential program will have higher reading marks than schools that teach non-specific non-sequential literature-based programs - and higher scores mean that the children are reading at a higher level, with a greater reading vocabulary and better comprehension. And isn't teaching every child to the best of his/her ability what it is all about? Process should never be more important than results.

3. The teachers understand how the lower and LD children learn, and use specific sequential strategies to teach them in the classroom rather than sending them to a Learning Assistance teacher except for extra practice of the skills taught in the classroom and reading practice. The teachers do not expect others to teach their children, as skills taught elsewhere are not followed up through the school day. The programs they use give these students everything they need to succeed.

4. The staff works as a team to improve the reading and math levels of the students. There is frequent sharing of ideas and strategies to improve understanding and proficiency.



5. There is a high degree of accountability with the teachers. No teacher blames another teacher, the parents or the child himself for low skills - the teacher who has that child is completely responsible and accountable.

6. The teachers understand that their own observations and classroom assessments are valuable, but they are made without comparisons to other classes. A teacher may feel that her class is doing very well, but that could be an inaccurate assumption when compared with other similar classrooms. Regular standardized testing shows the accuracy of the teacher's observations and assessments and should be used for that purpose, and excuses for low marks on standardized tests should not be accepted. Low averages on standardized tests mean the teacher is not doing as well as he/she should and the students should be working at a higher level.

7. A teacher's proficiency should be rated by the reading, writing and math knowledge of every child in the classroom including the challenged children, not just by the achievements of the students who are at the top of the class or her ability to defend her present philosophy. It's easy to teach bright kids but it takes skill to teach the challenged ones.

8. If you visit a highly rated school, you will find an atmosphere of enthusiasm and pleasure. Teachers and students are happier and this permeates the building. Success is the best self-esteem builder!

9. The school has high standards of discipline. The students know the boundaries and respect them. The classrooms are organized and the children work and move about quietly.

10. The principal understands early reading and how children learn. He/She will put the best teachers into the early grades to give the children the best possible start. Students who are not doing well in reading and math by the end of grade two will usually continue to be far behind their peers.

Of course schools are more than the test results in the core subjects, but it is wrong to try to justify or excuse poor results. With high expectations in reading, writing and mathematics will come other highly desirable qualities. There are many things a school and the teachers can do to make changes that can make your school into one of the best in your province. It takes dedication and perhaps a philosophical change but it is worth it, especially for the students who will be learning so well. Philosophy should not be an excuse for poor results. After all, good marks mean students are at a higher level of reading, writing and mathematics. Isn't having every student working to his or her potential our goal?

## How do you know if you're a primary teacher?

You move your dinner partner's glass away from the edge of the table.

You ask if anyone needs to go to the bathroom as you enter a theater with a group of friends.

You hand a tissue to anyone who sneezes.

You ask guests if they have remembered their scarves and mittens as they leave your home.

You say 'I like the way you did that' to the mechanic who repairs your car.

You ask 'Are you sure you did your best?' to the mechanic who fails to repair your car.

You sing the 'Alphabet Song' to yourself as you look up a number in the phone book.

Do you say everything twice? I mean, do you repeat everything?

You want to slap the next person who says, 'Must be nice to work from 8 to 3 and have your summers free!'

You believe chocolate is a food group.

You can tell it's a full moon without ever looking outside.

You believe 'shallow gene pool' should have its own box on the report card.

You believe that unspeakable evil will befall you if anyone says, 'Boy, the kids sure are mellow today'.

You have no time for a life from August to June.

You laugh uncontrollably when people refer to the staff room as the 'lounge'.

You can't have children because there's no name you could give a child that wouldn't bring on high blood pressure the moment you heard it uttered.

Meeting a child's parents instantly answers the question, 'Why is this kid like this?'



# Autumn

As summer ends and autumn comes, the days get shorter and shorter. This is how the trees 'know' to begin getting ready for winter. During winter, there is not enough light or water for photosynthesis. The trees will rest, and live off the food they stored during the summer. They begin to shut down their food-making factories. The green chlorophyll disappears from the leaves. As the bright green fades away, we begin to see yellow and orange colours. Small amounts of these colours have been in the leaves all along. We just can't see them in the summer, because they are covered up by the green chlorophyll.

The bright reds and purples we see in leaves are made mostly in the fall. In some trees, like maples, glucose is trapped in the leaves after photosynthesis stops. Sunlight and the cool nights of autumn turn this glucose into a red colour. The brown colour of trees like oaks is made from wastes left in the leaves. It is the combination of all these things that make the beautiful colours we enjoy in the fall.

## Make a book with these pages:

1. In the autumn the days get shorter and cooler.
2. Many plants stop making food in the fall. Then the green chlorophyll goes away.
3. We can see orange and yellow colours. These colours were in the leaves all summer, but the green covered them up.
4. Some leaves turn red. This colour is made in the autumn, from food trapped in the leaves.
5. Brown colours are also made in the autumn. They come from wastes left in the leaves.
6. Then the leaves fall and the trees are ready for winter.



## Separate Colours in a Leaf

Collect a few large leaves from several different trees. Tear or chop the leaves into very small pieces and put them into separate small baby food jars labeled with the name or location of the tree.

Add enough rubbing alcohol to each jar to cover the leaves. Using a plastic knife or spoon, carefully chop and grind the leaves in the alcohol. Rubbing alcohol can be harmful if mishandled, so use with care.

Cover the jars very loosely with lids or plastic wrap or aluminum foil. Place the jars carefully into a shallow tray containing 1 inch of hot tap water.

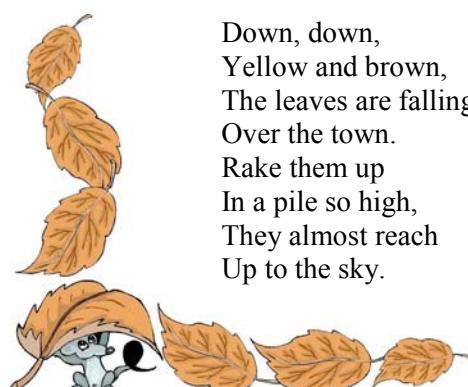
Keep the jars in the water for at least a half-hour, longer if needed, until the alcohol has become coloured (the darker the better). Twirl each jar gently about every five minutes. Replace the hot water if it cools off.

Cut a long thin strip of coffee filter paper for each of the jars and label it.

Remove the jars from the water. Place a strip of filter paper into each jar so that one end is in the alcohol. Bend the other end over the top of the jar and secure it with tape.

The alcohol will travel up the paper, bringing the colours with it. After 30-90 minutes (or longer), the colours will travel different distances up the paper as the alcohol evaporates. You should be able to see different shades of green, and possibly some yellow, orange or red, depending on the type of leaf.

5 little leaves in the tree next door,  
1 fell off and then there were 4,  
4 little leaves all over the tree,  
a bird pulled off 1, and now there are 3,  
3 little leaves up where the wind blew,  
1 fell off and then there were 2,  
2 little leaves sitting in the sun,  
a bug ate a leaf and now there is 1,  
1 little leaf in the tree alone,  
the wind blew and blew and now there are none!



Down, down,  
Yellow and brown,  
The leaves are falling  
Over the town.  
Rake them up  
In a pile so high,  
They almost reach  
Up to the sky.

# Art for Autumn

## Leaf Rubbings

- Cut out leaf shapes from a stiff paper. Colour with yellow, orange or red chalk or pastels. Place coloured shapes on construction paper then use thumb and rub the colour from the leaf to white paper. With younger children put a loop of tape to hold the leaf in place.

- Tape real leaves to the table. Lay typing paper over and have the students rub with the side of a peeled crayon.



## Leaf Prints

Collect large leaves. The students paint them fall colours and then make prints of the leaves by white or beige construction paper over the painted leaf. They rub the paper until they can feel the veins of the leaves through the paper. Peel the paper off and you have a beautiful leaf print!

## Autumn Trees

Draw and colour a tree with branches. Show the younger children how to draw a tree as big as the paper. For the 'leaves':

- They can glue colourful puzzle pieces (the leaves) on the tree. You can use the pieces as they are or paint them first.

- Put yellow construction paper in a cake pan. Dip marbles into red and orange paint and roll them around on the yellow paper. Let it dry and then cut out leaf shapes to put on the tree.

- Thumbprint the leaves on the branches using red, orange and yellow.

## Leaf Art

- Have each student cut out a large leaf shape. Dip the paper leaf into water. Dab yellow, red, orange, green, and brown paint all over. Fold the leaf in half and smear the paint together.

- Fingerpaint using two colours - red, orange or yellow. When the paintings have dried, draw huge leaf shapes on the back of the papers and cut out. These are wonderful to decorate the classroom.

- Shave peeled crayons using a potato peeler (or pencil sharpeners) onto waxed paper. Cover with another sheet of waxed paper and a cloth and iron until the crayon melts. Cut in leaf shapes. These make nice sun-catchers for your windows.

- Collect small leaves and press them in books for several days. The following day the students paint the leaves with glue and then press them onto black paper to make a glue leaf print. Then they sprinkle glitter over their leaf print. These are very striking!

## Leaf Math

- Have each student collect a specific number of leaves - 12 or 20, for example. Then sort them by colour, shape, points, etc.

- Graph your leaves.

- Put leaves in an estimation jar and estimate how many are in it.

## Keeping the most beautiful leaves:

- Place brightly coloured leaves between two layers of wax paper. Cover with a cloth. Press the fabric with a warm iron, sealing the wax paper together with the leaf in between. Cut the leaves out, leaving a narrow margin of wax paper around the leaf edge.

- Laminate your favourite leaves or put them between two sheets of clear contact plastic.



# Calendar and 'Days-in-School' Math

## In Kindergarten

- Use the calendar and the days-in-school chart to practice counting.
- Learn the formation of the numbers.
- Answer questions: 'How many days until \_\_\_\_'s birthday?'
- Learn the days of the week and the months.
- Learn about time past, present and future - yesterday, today and tomorrow.
- Learn before and after.
- The days-in-school chart can be used for patterning and odd and even numbers.

## In Grade One

- As above. Ask more difficult questions about the calendar.
- Learn place value from the days-in-school chart. Add a stick each day, bundling tens.
- Use the calendar day number and make equations to equal it (later in the year).
- Make the calendar day number with coins.
- Using the days-in-school chart, count by 2s, 5s and 10s.

## In Grade Two

- As above. Use higher level skills as you ask questions about the calendar.
- Use the days-in-school day number and make equations to equal it.
- Make the days-in-school number with coins.
- Do place value exercises.

## In Grade Three

- As above. Ask more complex questions about the calendar.
- Use the days-in-school chart to count by 3s, 4s, 6s, etc., skip counting for multiplication.
- Make complex equations (+, -, x and ÷) to equal the days-in school number.
- Use this number to teach money.
- Discover the prime numbers.
- Question from the charts to teach problem solving.

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1 - down you run and one is done  
2 - around and down and out go you, that's the way we make a two  
3 - around and around, like a B, that's the way we make a three  
4 - go down, go right, go down once more, that's the way we make a four  
5 - short neck, belly fat, Numeral 5 wears a hat  
6 - a line and a loop, a six rolls a hoop  
7 - go right, slide down from heaven, that's the way we make a seven  
8 - make and s and do not wait, go right back up and make an eight  
9 - a loop and a line, that's the way we make a nine

1 A straight line down and 1 is done.  
2 Around and back on the railroad track, 2,2,2. (Read as 'choo-choo-choo')  
3 Go around and around a tree. That's the way to write a 3.  
4 Down and across and down once more. That's way to write 4.  
5 Down and around, make it fat. Numeral 5 wears a hat.  
6 Down and around, make a loop. Numeral 6 rolls a hoop.  
7 Across, slant, then you are done. Writing 7 can be fun.  
8 Write an S but do not wait. Come back up and write an 8.  
9 A loop and a line make numeral 9.  
10 Pull down straight, lift, and then curve down, curve up - that's a 10.



# Zero the Hero

This old number,  
It means none.  
It is even less  
Than one.

Zero the Hero  
Came to school  
Zero the Hero  
he's no fool~  
Zero the Hero  
Stays in his space.  
So all the other numbers  
Can stay in their place!

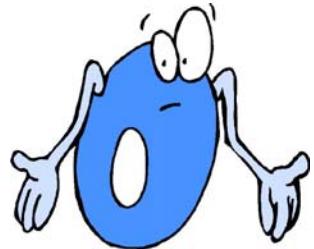


When you see a zero on the numberline.  
Look for a visit or a sign -  
From that super hero  
Who loves to see a ZERO,  
Oh, he always comes to visit right on time!

Zip-a-dee-doo-dah, zip-a-dee-day,  
Here we are on the \_\_\_\_ day,  
Zero the Hero's coming our way,  
Zippidy-do-dah, zippidy day!

Many teachers use Zero Hero to teach place value. . . .

"We count the number of days in school so the day before school starts is day number '0'. Since the children weren't in school yet, when Zero Hero came by, he left us something in a bright red bag. We opened the bag on the first day and..... there was a note from him, a poem, and a treat that looked like zeros. That was not all.. He left us an estimation jar (with a suitable number of items in it), too, and I introduced them to estimation (guessing). We talked about the size of the jar and the size of the objects and then made estimates. I recorded them and then we put the numbers in order. The child that was correct (or nearest to it) got a small prize."



"In kindergarten I show them what a zero looks like and to look for days with another zero because Zero Hero returns each time the zero appears. He comes every 10th school day, and we always miss seeing him. He always leaves us a poem, a treat and an estimation jar."

"In our school one of the aides dresses up as Zero Hero with a red mask and cape and a white sweatshirt with a red Zero on it. He comes around to all the K, grade 1 and 2 classes."

"On days we have a zero, we play games with a zero. We play tic-tac-toe, and ring toss. We do exercises with hula hoops. We play circle games, too."

"I buy washers at the hardware store and have the children thread them on string or something to make a necklace on the first 10th day. They wear their necklaces every Zero Hero day."

"I give the children some hole re-inforcers and a small piece of black construction paper to make a picture."

	<b>Some Zero the Hero Treats:</b>
	red zeros - cherry lifesavers
	zero beads - Fruit Loops
	Cheerios
	pineapple rings
	olive slices
	mini-bagels
	fudge striped cookies
	sliced oranges
	cored apple
	doughnuts

# Getting To Know You

## **Names, names (K, 1):**

Buy foam letters and the students make a name plate for their desks - or - have the students use alphabet beads to make bracelets. Make the names using different stencils. Use the computer to make names using primary font.

Print the names in fingerpaint.

Use alphabet sponges to print names.

## **Names, names (2, 3):**

Assign each letter of the alphabet a number (a = 1, b = 2, etc.). The students print their names in the code and put them in a hat. Then each takes one out and spells the name and takes it to the original student. They can add the numbers to make their own totals.

Do a name glyph. The student follows directions to complete his code. The student traces wide letter stencils to spell his name on a paper strip or two strips taped together. Trim any excess length. The student decorates his name by the code, using desired colours for the indicated patterns.

After all students have completed their glyphs, they can challenge one another to interpret the glyphs. These can be laminated and used as desk tags.

## **The Code:**

First Letter of your name: Are you a boy or girl? If you are a boy make diagonal lines across the first letter and if you are a girl make a grid pattern

Second letter of your name: Do you have any brothers or sisters? yes = red, no = green

Third letter: Do you have a pet? no = make dots on your letter, yes = colour the letter the colour of your pet

Fourth letter: Which subject do you like the most? reading = red, math = blue, science = green, social studies = purple, art = orange, music = yellow, other = brown

Fifth letter: How do you get to school? walk = yellow, bus = purple, car = red, van = orange, other = green

Sixth letter: Do you like to read? yes = make small coloured circles on the letter, no = make small coloured triangles on the letter

Seventh letter: Do you like sports? yes = make small yellow stars on the letter, no = make small black stars on your letter.

If you have more than seven letters in your name, colour the eighth letter like the first one. Colour the ninth letter like the second one, and so on.

You can put this code onto a sheet and have the students circle the answer to the question and then do the colouring of their stencilled name.



## **Chrysanthemum**

Read the book **Chrysanthemum** by Kevin Henkes. The students discuss why their name is absolutely perfect. Write: My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and it is absolutely perfect because\_\_\_\_\_.

This can be displayed with a picture on a bulletin board to begin the year.

## **Name Math**

Make a class graph of the numbers of letters in the names. Find out how many letters are in all of the names together. Sort the names and then guess how they have been sorted. (vowel sounds, number of letters, number of syllables etc.)

# A Friendship Theme

## The More We Get Together

The more we get together,  
Together, together,  
The more we get together,  
The happier we'll be.

For your friends are my friends,  
And my friends are your friends.  
The more we get together,  
The happier we'll be.



## Hello My Friend

Hello my friend  
How are you?  
Say your name.  
And we'll clap for you! (*Clap out syllables*)

Two friends are better than one,  
And three are better than two,  
And four are much better still,  
Just think what four good friends can do.

## Our Book of Friends

Have each child draw a self portrait. On the top of each page print the words:  
Our friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Have each student print his/her name on the line. Bind the pages together to make a favourite book.

## A Friendship Salad

“Each year we make a fruit salad. I bring in beautiful fruit and a big bowl. We talk about how wonderful the fruit looks and how sweet it will taste. As we are talking we create a fruit salad. I cut the fruit up, we taste a bit and add the rest to the bowl. As we add each fruit we mix it up and talk about how nice it looks and how tasty it will be. At the very end I bring out two very black over-ripe bananas. The children are horrified and I ask them what's wrong. They tell me the bananas are rotten and eventually the discussion gets to the idea that those two rotten bananas will ruin the whole fruit salad if we put them in. Now we equate the fruit salad to our classroom. What happens when something is added that is not pleasant? When something unpleasant is added to the salad it is spoiled, and when something unpleasant is added to the classroom it is spoiled for everyone.”

## Friendship Web

“We made a friendship web. We had a ball of yarn and sat in a circle. The first student held the end and said something about himself/herself, and then rolled the ball to another student, who held the yarn and rolled the ball to another. When everyone had a turn we raised our hands and held the web up high in the air.

## What Good Friends Do!

Take pictures of the children working, playing, reading, doing math, etc. in pairs or small groups. Mount each picture onto construction paper and write ‘Friends \_\_\_\_\_ (read together, do puzzles, etc.)’ Bind the pages into a book. Title the book ‘What Good Friends Do’.

## Hands Of Friendship

“Carefully trace around each student's hands on a sheet of white construction paper with a black marker. Let each youngster colour in his handprints with a skin-toned crayon or marker. Write each name above the pair of handprints. Arrange all the children's handprints on a bulletin board so that they make a circle.”

## Friendship Fall Tree

Trace and cut out hands from fall colours. Put the hands on a tree for autumn leaves.



# Thanksgiving

My name is Tom Turkey  
I'm afraid as I can be.  
I'm wearing my disguise  
So you won't catch me.



Two or three weeks before Thanksgiving send home a turkey outline on brown construction paper. Send a letter that asks the family to give the turkey a disguise so he can avoid being caught for Thanksgiving dinner. Dress him up like a fireman, Superman or a ballerina, for example.



Another idea is to ask the families to decorate the turkey. They could use real feathers, glitter, etc.

Students in Grade Two or Three can write a story about how their turkey manages to escape!

## Stone Soup

This is a favourite book by Marcia Brown. Stone Soup is the story about three hungry soldiers who come to a small village in search for food and a place to sleep. The town is poor, and the people hide the food so the soldiers can't have any. The soldiers then show the villagers how to make stone soup. The stone soup begins with a stone and only needs a few other things in order to make it superb.

The students can each bring in an item needed for the soup. They can bring potatoes, carrots, onions, garlic, tomatoes, ground beef, beef bouillon, macaroni or rice, and celery. Act out the story. Assign your students different parts and have them add the ingredients to the pot. Cook the soup and serve with bread!

## Turkey Talk

Use turkeys to teach a lesson on quotation marks. Have the students make construction paper turkeys and glue them onto large pieces of paper. Then they print something they think a turkey would say about Thanksgiving. Glue elbow macaroni around the words the turkey speaks.

## Pumpkin Pie in a Baggie

Pour ½ cup of milk into a small ziplock baggie.

Add 1 tbs. of vanilla pudding mix. Add 1 tbs. of the canned pumpkin pie mix into the baggie as well.

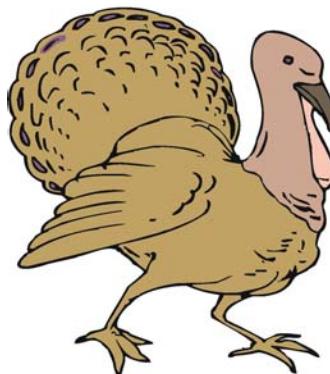
Close the ziplock sandwich baggie tightly. The students mix the ingredients in the bag by squeezing gently until the texture is smooth and thick - about three minutes.

Carefully snip off one bottom corner of the baggie with scissors. Each child will then squeeze out the pumpkin pie pudding into the pie crust, graham cracker crumb crust or onto a plate. Top with whipped cream, cinnamon, or graham cracker crumbs.

## Thankful Poem

There are many things I am thankful for,  
I can find them near and far.  
There are many things I am thankful for,  
Let me tell you what they are.  
I am thankful for the sun.  
I am thankful for the trees.  
I am thankful for my friends.  
And I'm thankful to be me!

*Author Unknown*



Turkey, turkey  
Gobble, gobble.  
Eat too much and  
Waddle, waddle.

## Websites:

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/thanksgiving/> Lots of art ideas.....  
<http://www.edhelper.com/Thanksgiving.htm> Lots of ideas and printables!

# Class Management

Organization before school begins:

1. Have lesson plans done for a week. Overplan! It is much better to have too many activities planned than not enough. Plan a variety of activities by putting a game, singing or movement between work or listening activities.
2. Make 'Day of the Week' folders - Label tag folders in different colours with the day of the week. Laminate them. Place lesson plans and materials for each day in these folders.
3. Prepare a substitute folder - Include: procedures and detailed daily schedule, class list, seating plan, emergency directions, math practice sheets, journal topics, a book for guided reading with lots of activities, etc. Add to this through the year.
4. Posters with the class/school rules, the daily schedule, etc., and the room decorated pleasantly.
5. Make files for important school forms, staff meeting notes, principal hand-outs, etc.
6. Organize files in your filing cabinet so you can find things easily.
7. Have procedures for supplies prepared.

## Ideas from teachers .....

### Inexpensive chart holders:

"I bought some of those white plastic hooks that hang up on the wall with sticky tape backs. I have also used the kind of spring loaded hooks you can use to hang Christmas wreaths on metal doors and used them on my metal chalkboards. They hold up pocket charts perfectly. I use one for my 'Making Words' lessons."

"I hot-glued clothes pins to the wall and hung poems and charts. They won't hold anything heavy, but they are fine for a single chart."

"Skirt hangers with a number of clothes pins hold many charts in my cupboard."

### Using glue:



"This may be dated and the children won't understand where it came from, but we say 'A little dab'll do ya'."

"Carefully pry off the little orange cap on the top of each new bottle of liquid glue. Take a Q-tip and coat the inside of the orange cap and the tip of the bottle where the glue comes out with a thin coat of Vaseline. (Or.... spray it with Pam....) Then snap the cap back on. This prevents the glue from sticking to the bottle and the cap."

"I spend time in the first week teaching the students how to use the glue bottles and how to use the glue sticks, too. I am tired of the problems when they don't learn to use them properly!"



Attach vinyl eaves trough to a wall to display books so the covers can be seen.

# Science

"I have a science tip that I find works really well. We usually start a science unit by talking about the type of scientist that would study the same thing. When we did a unit on butterflies we talked about entomologists. Next, we make visors out of paper plates and strips of bristle board and I write Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ on them. Whenever we do something on our unit, we all put on our scientist visors and refer to each other as Dr. 'So and So'. I put a note on the class door that says 'Caution! Entomologists at Work'. We talk a lot about how scientists would act when at work (would they say things like 'ew, gross', or would they say 'hmmm, interesting...' when they dissect something, for example). I find that the children put on the visors and the room takes on a different air. We are all on our best scientific manners and they love it!"

To make the visors, cut the front peak out of a paper plate. Use half the plate and trim the inside so the whole thing looks like a moon. Next take a strip of tagboard that's 18" long and 2-3" wide. Draw a line right down the middle of that strip lengthwise. The kids cut into the strip stopping at the line making cuts every inch or so. Once they've made their cuts, they bend them up at the line. Now you staple the strip to the visor (the cuts enable the strip to bend around). Staple on the jagged edge of the strip so the visor peak hugs the line the kids cut up to. Once the peak is stapled on, trim the rest of the strip up to the middle line and fit to their head size. There's a picture of them on my website."

~~<http://www.nvsd44.be.ca/Sites/ReportsViewOnePopM.asp?RID=11329>~~

*Barb Mathieson*

"In the first unit of the year we study what a scientist is and does. First, I have the kids talk and draw pictures to see what they know about scientists. Almost every student will draw a man in a lab making potions. Then I bring out books that feature women and minority scientists. We talk about all the different things that scientists study. It really helps to expand their thinking."

"I try to use a physical connection when we learn new concepts. In science we do this, too. When we do a plant or seed unit, they curl up in a ball for the seed and then they stick out a leg for a root. Then they bend the leg down so the foot is on the floor to show that the root knows to grow down. Then the arms - both touching as if one from elbow up and hands flat together go up for the stem and then the hands go out for leaves; the hands spread out with thumbs touching on each side of the face for the flower...I hope this makes sense...integrative learning (not integrated, but integrative) combines visual, auditory, and kinesthetic body involvement is very helpful for all learners.

For the 5 senses, you can show them all using the five fingers on one hand. Point to the ear with your thumb, point to the eye with the pointer, tap the nose with the tall middle finger (we call it tall man), put the ring finger in front of the mouth and smack your lips, and tap the chin with the pinky. You keep all of the fingers in their respective spots, and you show all 5 senses at the same time.

I did something similar for the water cycle. They were lying flat down on the ground for ground water, up on knees with fingers and hands floating and wiggling up to show evaporation, standing up and arms making a circle with hands touching to show a cloud for condensation, the hands wiggling (but not floating) down as it rains or snows for precipitation on down to lying down for ground water...this can be done 2 or 3 times in succession to show it is a cycle and to cement the concept a little better. Later we used flashcards for each part of the cycle."

*Ada*

## Science Sites

Try these sites for great science ideas.....

[http://www.exploratorium.edu/science\\_explorer/index.html](http://www.exploratorium.edu/science_explorer/index.html)

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



# Websites

This site has a good collection of learning centers and ideas for their use:

~~<http://www.geocities.com/learningcenters2003>~~

**<http://myschoolonline.com/page/0,1871,24742-145616-27-2916,00.html>**

Or Google '~~Mrs. Elliott's Second Grade~~' instead of the long URL.

This site has a very good collection of Grade 3 classroom sites.

One site linked to the one above has lots and lots of photos. Do a bit of exploring!

~~<http://www.geocities.com/mrmooresclassroom/index.html>~~

**<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/>**

Explore the BBC site. There are lots of activities in reading, math and more. Many are games for your students - a safe interesting place.

**<http://www.kellybear.com>**

Click on 'Teacher/Counselor Articles'. See the article called 'Getting to Know Each Other Activities', and lots more.

The following two sites have huge amounts of 'back-to-school' ideas and poetry.

**<http://www.thevirtualvine.com/BacktoSchool.html>**

**<http://www.teachingheart.net/backtoschool2.html>**

~~<http://myschoolonline.com/page/0,1871,24742-146190-27-4536,00.html>~~

Or Google '~~Mrs. Sirois' Country Kindergarten~~' because of the long URL.

This is an interesting Kindergarten page. Go down the headings at the side of the page and explore. The 'Cheers' are fun, and there are lots more ideas.

## Thinking Ahead



"This coming year I plan to take lots of pictures with a digital camera, and every month do a page with photos in black and white talking about all the activities that month, and have the children do a page of autographs and a self portrait, and a picture of the school, etc. If I am organized enough to do this each month (maybe the last day of the month and have the children decide the important things and the best pictures) - then it would be a cinch to put together at the end and bind it to make memory books - the parents would love it and it would be a favourite keeper."

"I do a class big book each month that we kept in the book center. I begin the first week of school by taking a picture of each child and attaching it to his personal page. We interview each student and add interesting facts. At the year end they can take their page home."

At the end of each month we do a page of a big book with pictures of special things we did and stories written by the students. They write about the things they have learned and special days. I put this big page up in the hall each month so everyone can see it. (Great for parents to look at and read while they are waiting....)

At the end of the year I have all this great information and pictures on my computer, and I put together a memory book for each student."

# It's Hallowe'en!

A pumpkin round and very fat (*hands clasped, arms forming a circle*)  
A scary witch with a pointy hat, (*hands making hat above head*)  
The shiny eyes of a big black cat, (*point to eyes and look around*)  
That is Hallowe'en!  
A ghost that's hiding the hall, (*make swooping "ghost" gestures with arms*)  
A skeleton wobbling on the wall, (*make body wobble back and forth*)  
The spooky sound of an owl's call, (*hand cupped behind ear, listening*)  
That is Hallowe'en!  
A walk in the dark in the shivery night, (*shiver*)  
Door bells ringing with all their might, (*imitate ringing door bell*)  
Candy, cookies, and apples to bite, (*rub stomach*)  
That is Hallowe'en!

<http://www2.lhric.org/pocantico/2ndgrade/halloween.htm>

Grade Two students have made up Hallowe'en math problems.  
Try these on your goblins!

Cut out pumpkins from construction paper. Give each pumpkin an expression.  
Attach a stick to each pumpkin puppet.

Say the poem using appropriate expression.

Here is a pumpkin who's happy  
Here is a pumpkin who cries  
Here is a pumpkin who's sleepy  
Here is a pumpkin who sighs  
Here is a pumpkin who's angry  
Here is a pumpkin who's sad  
Here is a pumpkin who's noisy  
Here is a pumpkin who's glad!



"We folded a piece of paper like a greeting card and drew a pumpkin on the front. Inside we drew the outline of the pumpkin and printed, 'I like a pumpkin, the outside .....'. Inside we showed the 'meat' and then glued seeds. Inside was printed 'and inside!'."

When Is Hallowe'en?  
When (adjective) (noun) (verb)  
And (adjective) (noun) (verb)  
When (adjective) (noun) (verb)  
And (adjective) (noun) (verb)  
Then it's Hallowe'en!



*Say this in your spookiest voice.*  
**Ghost Chant** (recite very quietly)  
Ghost so scary.  
Ghost so white  
Don't scare (child's name)  
On Halloween night!

"I let my grade two students plan their Hallowe'en party. At the beginning of October we discuss the party and the students put their own ideas for games and food into a plastic pumpkin. A week before Hallowe'en we vote on the food that has been suggested. The games must be created by the students, so they discuss the games that have been suggested and vote for three or four. They write out the rules and agree on them. This makes the party more relevant."

## **Halloween Is Coming**

Halloween is coming,  
What will you be?  
I might be a pirate  
On the deep blue sea.

Halloween is coming,  
What will you do?  
I might go trick or treating,  
How about you?

Halloween is coming,  
Who will you meet?  
I might meet a princess  
Skipping down the street.

Halloween is coming,  
What will you wear?  
I might wear a blanket  
And be a brown bear.

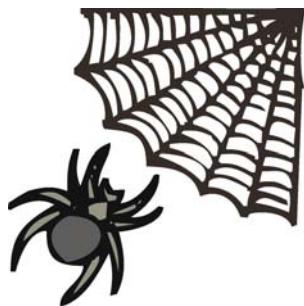
Halloween is coming,  
What will you see?  
I might see a jack-o'-lantern  
Winking at me.

Halloween is coming,  
What will you be?  
It's a SECRET,  
So wait and see!

"We did white handprints (minus the thumb) on black paper. The fingers were together so the palm made the ghost head and the finger tips the skirt. We added eyes. The students printed 'Ghost so scary, ghost so white, please don't scare \_\_\_\_\_ on Halloween night'."

Cook spaghetti and rinse it well. Let it cool and lay the strands out on wax paper to make a web. Put a bit of glue where the strands cross. When it is completely dry, remove the wax paper.

Talk about spider webs and how they are formed. Draw a couple so the students are familiar with the formation. Now take liquid glue bottles and 'draw' the web on wax paper. Make sure all the lines join and that there aren't any spaces. When it is dry remove the wax paper carefully.



### **Hallowe'en Games**

*Hallowe'en Musical Chairs* - Play it the same as the usual Musical Chairs, but play spooky Hallowe'en music.

*Pin the Stem on the Pumpkin* - This is played just like *Pin the Tail on the Donkey*. Have a large pumpkin cut-out and make a separate stem. Other variations: *Pin the Nose on the Pumpkin*, *Stick the Nose on the Witch*.

*Find the Ghosts* - Make enough Kleenex ghosts for each child (and a few extras) and hide them around the classroom. To make the ghosts: take a lollipop and wrap the tissue around it so that the top of the lollipop is the head. Tie a piece of ribbon or yarn around it.

*Doughnuts on a String* - Instead of bobbing for apples (5, 6 and 7 year old children often don't have front teeth, so bobbing for apples doesn't work well), tie donuts on a string and tack to the ceiling or above a door. Try to bite the doughnut keeping their hands behind their backs.

### **Hallowe'en Sounds**

This is the way the witches fly, witches fly, witches fly,  
This is the way the witches fly,  
Swish, swish, swish.  
This is the way the ghosts go by, ghosts go by, ghosts go by,  
This is the way the ghosts go by,  
Oooh, oooh , oooh.  
This is the way the black cats howl, black cats howl, black cats howl,  
This is the way the black cats howl,  
Meow! Meow! Meow!  
This is the way the pumpkins laugh, pumpkins laugh, pumpkins laugh,  
This is the way the pumpkins laugh,  
Hee! Hee! Hee!  
This the way the night owls cry, night owls cry, night owls cry,  
This is the way the night owls cry,  
Hoo, hoo, hoo.

Make yourself an easy costume: buy a large sheet of red felt, fold it in half, cut out the shape of a ladybug but keep the fold at the top. Cut a hole on the fold for your head, and fasten the sides together leaving large spaces for the arms. Use a black marker for the spots or glue on black felt spots. Find big oversized round glasses and a bobbing headband with antenna.



Make gingerbread haunted houses for Hallowe'en! Do them on the small milk cartons with graham wafers, or 'glue' graham wafers with royal icing. Use chocolate and licorice, and orange candies and candy corn for decorations and make dark chocolate icing for 'glue'. Oreo cookies and Oreo crumbs can be used. Have the students brainstorm what candies or other food can be used for decoration that is suited to Hallowe'en.

# Getting Started with Computers in Your Classroom

By Marcia Goudie, Vacaville, California

Computers can be used in so many meaningful ways to enhance curriculum. It is another tool we use to teach our students that addresses different learning styles in our classrooms. To get the most out of your computers you need to plan ahead.

## Big ideas in planning for a positive integration of technology

Whether you have one computer or five, here are some ideas to think about.

Where are your Internet connections?

How many computers do you have?

What software do you have that your students can use with little assistance?

Think about classroom management. When you start your students out on the computers they must be able to independently use them. Start out slowly and gradually increase student access to computers. Think about:

How many students to a computer.

The order that students will get their turn.

How long each session will last.

What software programs your students will use.

Set behavior standards and expectations.

Teach the students to handle the computer with respect and care.

Develop a short set of computer rules.

As you begin working with students make it your task to discover which students are already computer "literate". Designate them as "Computer Assistants". Teach other students to go to these assistants first before interrupting you (in your small groups).

To prevent head lice outbreaks, encourage students to bring their own headphones, which can be kept in a large freezer zip lock bag with names printed on the bag.

*Marcia has one of the best sites for primary teachers on the web! The second link shows you her exceptional classroom.*

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

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

## Just An Idea

Here is how I am planning to set up my room this year. I have four computers (actually five, but as I have the tiniest room I can't figure out where to put the last one). I teach first, but I use my 'carpet' area for about 55% of my instructional time. I have two computer Internet outlets. One is near my carpet. I have put the computer monitor on a desk so it faces the carpet. My students will receive instruction on the computer in this area before they ever get a chance to touch it themselves. Although I don't have a SMART board, or connector to the t.v., all students will be able to see what's happening on the monitor right there on the carpet. This is where instruction will begin.

*Marcia will continue to share her ideas in the next issues of Primary Success.*



# The ABC's for Parents

If you are planning a classroom handbook for parents, this is an interesting format!

A - Absence - what to do if your child is going to be absent from school,  
notes to explain, phone calls

B - Buses - bus safety, bus information

Book bags - bring the book bag to school each day

C - Computers - the day and time in the computer lab and a request for a  
parent helper

D - Drugs and Doctor note for special concerns - all our prescription and  
non-prescription medicines at this age must be transported to  
school by parent with doctor's note if they are to be given at school

Discipline - the school and classroom rules

E - Emergency contact number if the parents cannot be reached

F - Field trips

G - Gym - our days and times, what the children should wear

H - Homework - expectations, frequency

Home Reading - helpful hints for reading with your child

I - Illness - when to decide if your child's illness is one that requires him/her to be kept at home

J - Junk food - snacks should be healthy foods and not junk foods

K - Kisses.... grade one is HARD...they need lots of support, hugs and KISSES

L - Library times and library books

Lunch - healthy lunches if brought from home, also information about the hot lunch program)

M - Money - how to be sure money sent from home actually gets to me!

N - Newsletters - how often they will be sent home and what day of the week or month. Send them on a certain  
colour of paper so the parents can watch for them.

O - Outdoor clothes - if your child is well enough to come to school he/she is well enough to play outdoors at  
recess and lunch. Make sure they are dressed appropriately!

P - Peanut allergy - we have one child with a severe allergy this year

Parents Group - day/times of meetings, how to get involved

Parties - we will have classroom parties at Hallowe'en and Valentine's Day

Q -Questions - how to contact the teacher and the school

R - Recess - healthy snacks, nothing messy as they eat their snack outside most days

Report cards - when they will be sent

S - Shoes - indoor shoes, or a pair to be left at school to wear for gym

T - Telephone - school phone number. Toys - no toys are allowed at school except on special days.

U - Upset children - please let us know if your child comes to school upset about something at home.

V - Volunteers

W - Water bottles - water helps brains to function well!

X - Xtra work... or xtra practice for homework - some teachers want the students to have an 'Xtra' set of  
clothes at school.

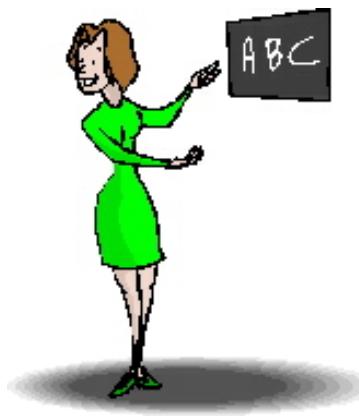
Y - YOU - importance of parent communication and support

Z -ZZZZ.... - sleep and bedtimes. The days at school are long and busy. Children need to have a good night's  
sleep.

"Our school has a handbook and fortunately, it covers so much of this. I think the parents may even  
have to sign that they read it and covered it with their child!"

Here is a parents' ABCs for Kindergarten.....

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



# Odds and Ends

“One important piece of advice for the parents (or teachers) is to be sure they are not training kids to ignore them by repeating the directions over and over and over. Kids are smart enough to know that we will tell them again and again, so why should they stop what they are doing and listen the first time? Prompt their attention by saying, “I am going to give you some directions, so get ready to listen.” Do not rescue them by repeating things again and again. Start off with only 2 very specific directions at a time. Then have them repeat the directions back to you. When they master 2 directions, go on to 3 directions at a time. They will have to concentrate to remember the directions in order so they can repeat them back and then follow them.”

<http://www.ehhs.cmich.edu/~tbushey/newfree.html>  
Printables! Check out the ‘Student Survival Kit’.

## Desk Drawer Necessities!

- safety pins
- lunch bags
- an umbrella
- variety of stickers
- extra class key
- candles for birthday cakes
- lighter or matches
- batteries
- pair of socks
- change of clothes
- a sweater or vest
- deodorant
- flashlight
- cough drops
- baby wipes

Teachers drew up a list of things to be found in their desk drawers!

- lipstick
- medication like Advil and Tylenol
- Vitamin C and Echinacea
- a pointer
- blank cards for thank you notes
- Goo-gone
- scraper
- dice
- bandaids
- peroxide
- latex gloves
- staple remover
- extra pair of shoes
- awards
- timer or stopwatch

- prizes for the students
- extra pairs of shoes
- feminine necessities
- Scope
- hair clips for students with hair in eyes
- thread, twine
- different kinds of tape
- a whistle
- a hand bell
- some blank CDs
- antibacterial wipes



Try doing a focus wall! Here is an example:

[http://www.smbsd.org/district\\_programs/reading/\\_teacher\\_idea\\_sharing/focus\\_wall/index.html](http://www.smbsd.org/district_programs/reading/_teacher_idea_sharing/focus_wall/index.html)

“This is a wonderful idea for your ‘All About Me’ unit. Ask, ‘What gift can you share with others?’ All children have something in which they shine! This is a great community-building activity. Perhaps it is bike riding, math, science knowledge in a specific subject, reading, playing soccer, singing, drawing, etc., - all have equal value.”

“I became a teacher so I could do all the careers I was interested in - writing, social work, anthropology, science, linguistics, nursing, law ... you name it, a teacher does it!”

## I'm Ready!

(Tune: If You're Happy and You Know It)

I'm ready for the first day of school,  
To tackle every test and every tool!  
I'll learn to read with ease,  
And math will be a breeze,  
‘Cuz I'm ready for the first day of school!

I have a brand new shiny pencil case.  
My desk will be a very tidy place.  
My backpack is just right,  
And I'll bring it home each night,  
‘Cuz I'm ready for the first day of school!

Now, Mom, you really need to say good-bye.  
How come you always look like you might cry?  
My teacher will be there  
To guide me and to care,  
‘Cuz she's ready for the first day of school!

# Teaching the Little Books

## I See Yellow

- Photocopy each page as large as you can – 11 x 18 would be a x200 enlargement. Staple the pages into a book.
- Show the title page. Read the title to the children, touching the words. Have the children repeat the words.
- Read the book to the children, touching each word as you read.
- Discuss things that are yellow. Can the students see yellow around the classroom?
- Have the children memorize the pages by saying them several times as you read and touch the words.
- Give each child a small book, stapled in the centre.
- When the children open the little book, ask, ‘Where will we begin to read?’ and discuss beginning at the top left, and then continuing to the right hand page. See if the children can use a pointer to touch each word as you read together.
- Can the children remember the words by using letter and sound cues?
- Teach the high frequency words ‘yellow’, ‘I’, ‘see’, ‘a’ and ‘and’. Add the nouns mentioned in the book.
- Find letter sounds that have been previously taught.
- Read the book in small groups and partners, touching each word as they read.

## Apples in the Fall

- Make a large copy of the book pages. Photocopy the needed copies of the little book and staple them.
- Show the title page and read the title.
- Discuss the title. Talk about apples and favourite kinds.
- Give a little book to each child.
- Read the book to the children and discuss each page. This is a poem. Print the poem on a chart to see the lines beginning with capital letters.
- Teach the high frequency words appropriate for your class or group.
- Go through each page, and isolate vocabulary words.
- Put these words in phrases and sentences and practice reading them
- Find these words in the book. Have the students highlight them if you wish.
- Memorize the poem and read it in pairs and groups. For passages that are memorized, make sure the children are looking at the words and touching the correct words as they read.
- Read these phrases/sentences: **I like apples. in the fall you and me etc.**
- Use the words in the story to discuss the phonics you are teaching.
- Other activities: use this story as part of a unit on apples.
- Finally, have each child read the book aloud to you. Note the strategies the child uses and errors, if any. Then the child can take the book home to read.

## The Big Pumpkin

- Photocopy the needed copies of the little book and staple them.
- Show the title page and read the title.
- Discuss pumpkins. Where do they come from? What can we do with them?
- Give a book to each child.
- Read the book to the children and discuss each page.
- Where would you find pumpkin seeds? Have you ever planted a seed and grown a pumpkin? What might you do to make it grow very big? Discuss fall fairs and the harvest.
- Teach the high frequency words appropriate for your class or group. Go through each page, and list words that may cause difficulties. Put these words in phrases and sentences and practice reading them. Find these words in the book. Have the students highlight them if you wish.
- Read the story through together, either with the teacher leading or have the children whisper read the story. Read the story in pairs.



## **Rules for Writers.....**

Analogy's in writing are like feathers on a snake.  
Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.  
Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.  
Verbs HAS to agree with their subjects.  
And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.  
Also, always avoid annoying alliteration.  
Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.  
Avoid cliché's like the plague. (They're old hat.)  
Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.  
Comparisons are as bad as clichés.  
Be more or less specific.  
One-word sentences? Eliminate.  
Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are (usually) unnecessary.  
Also too, never, ever use repetitive redundancies.  
No sentence fragments.  
Contractions aren't necessary and shouldn't be used.  
One should NEVER generalize.  
Don't use no double negatives.  
Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.  
Eliminate commas, that are, not necessary. Parenthetical words however  
should be enclosed in commas.  
Never use a big word when a diminutive one would suffice.  
Kill all exclamation points!!!  
Use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.  
Understatement is always the absolute best way to put forth earth shaking ideas.  
Use the apostrophe in it's proper place and omit it when its not needed.  
Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."  
Resist hyperbole; not one writer in a million can use it correctly.  
Puns are for children, not groan readers.  
Who needs rhetorical questions?  
Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.

And finally...

Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.



Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your support as we begin this new venture. We would be very happy to get comments from you on this magazine and/or ideas for future issues. Drop us a line by e-mail or snail mail!

Have a great start to the new school year: a wonderful class, cooperative colleagues and pleasant school days with lots of laughter.....

Jean and Kelly



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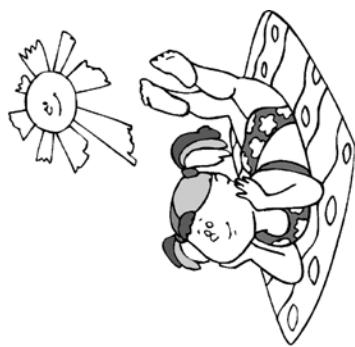
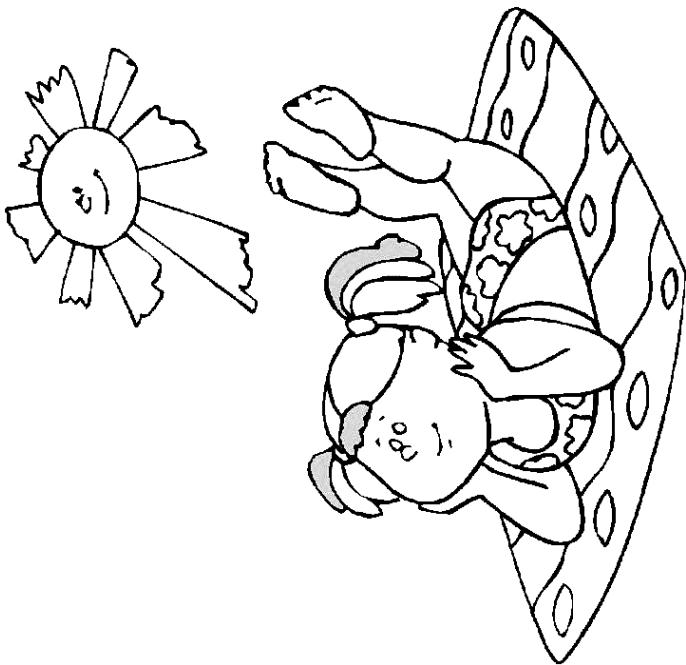
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I See Yellow

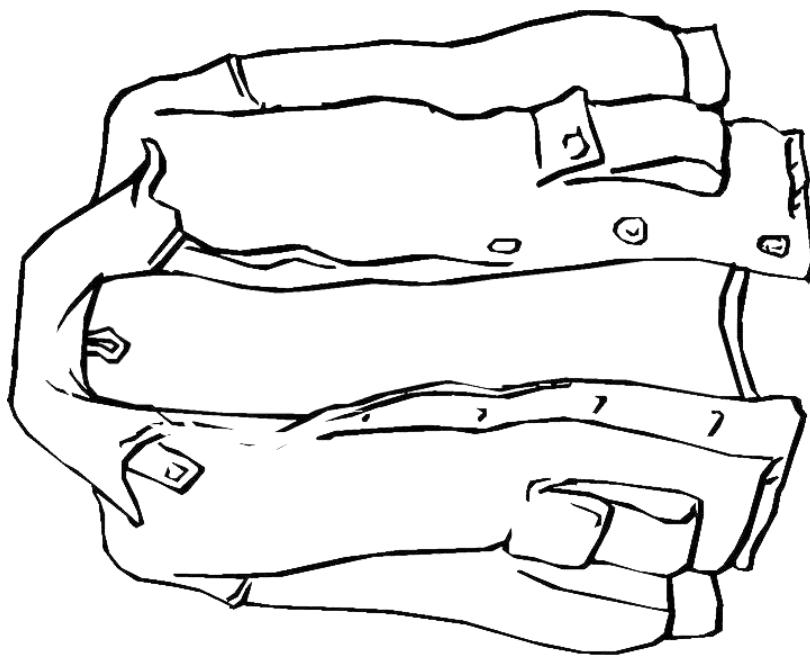


I see a yellow leaf  
and a yellow school bus.  
I see yellow!



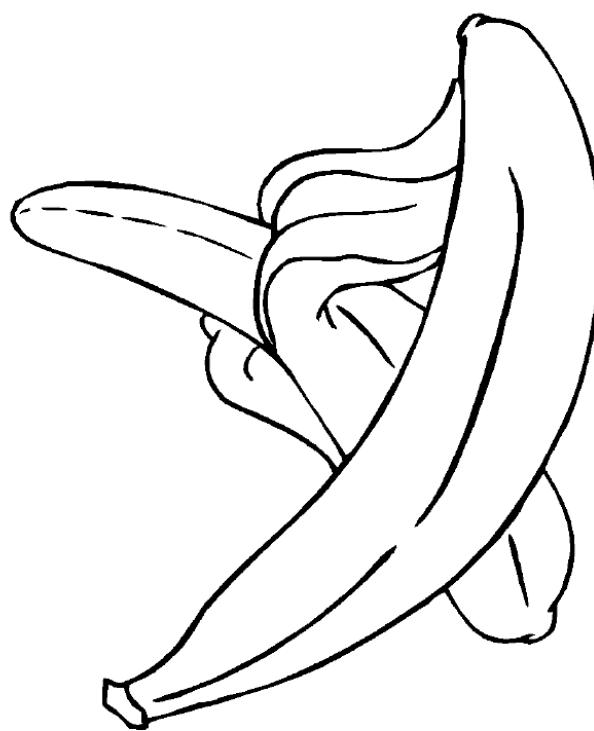
and a yellow jacket.

3

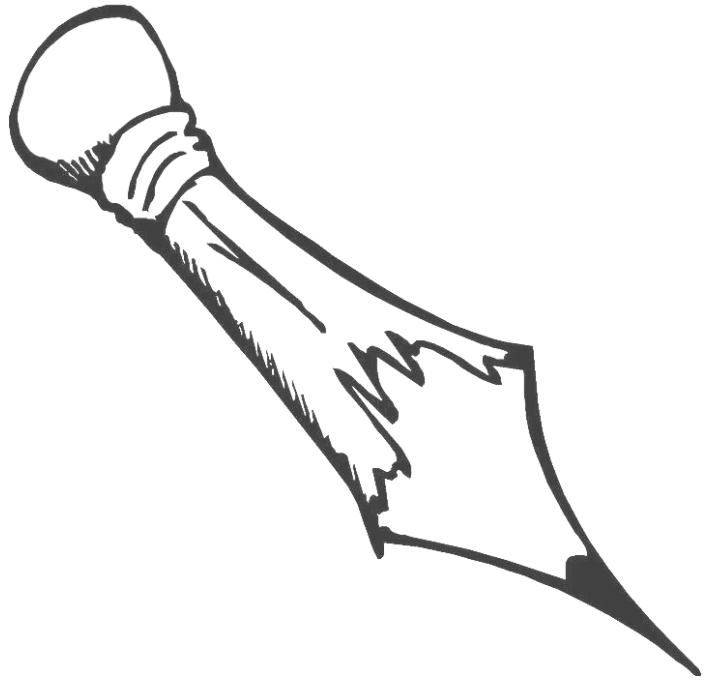


I see yellow bananas

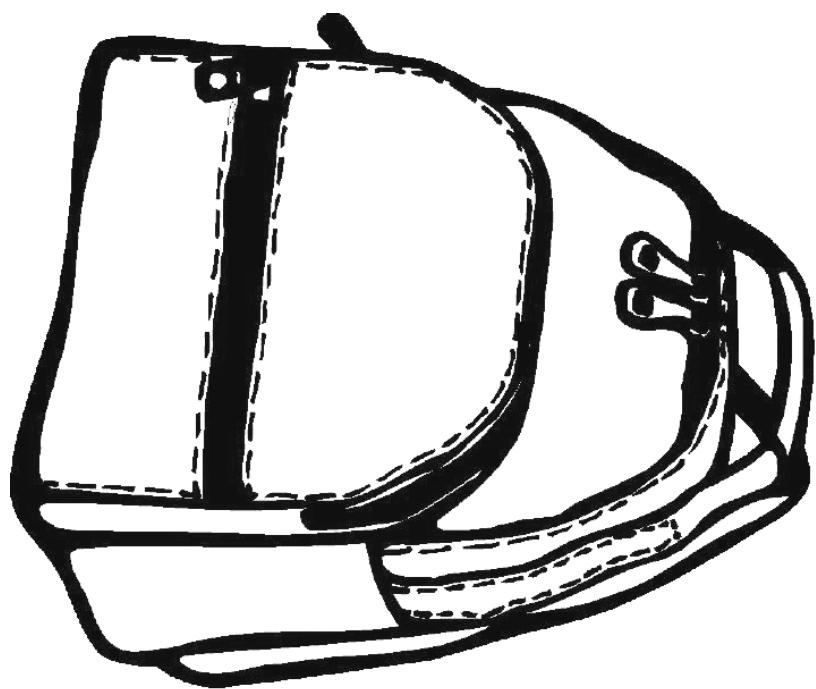
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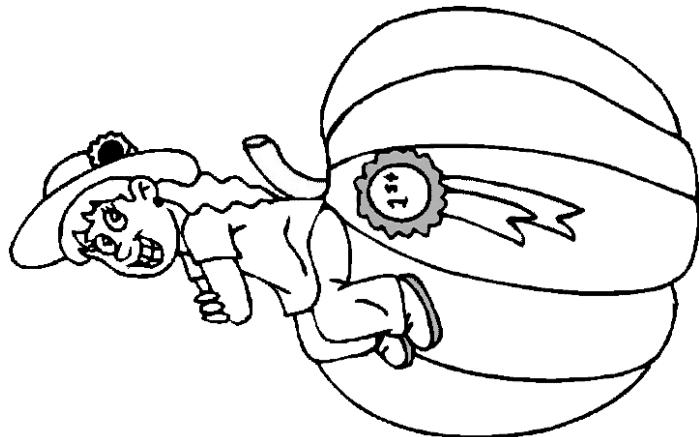
I see a yellow pencil



and a yellow backpack.



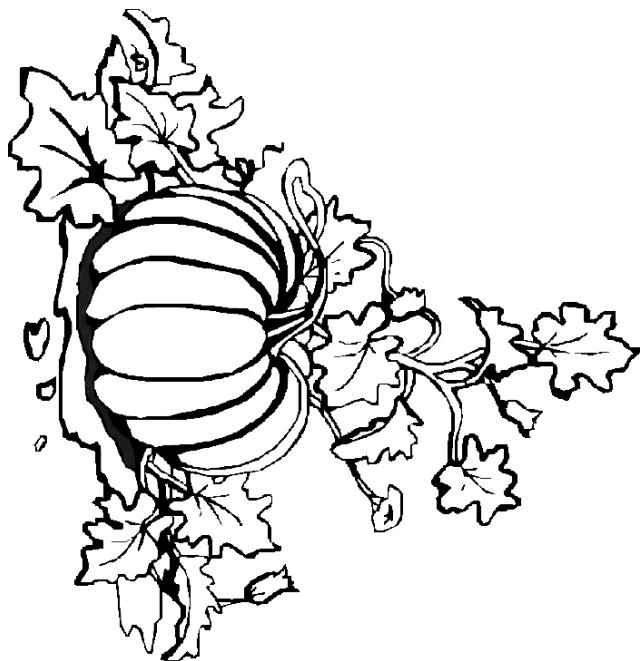
# The Big Pumpkin



8



**The Big Pumpkin**  
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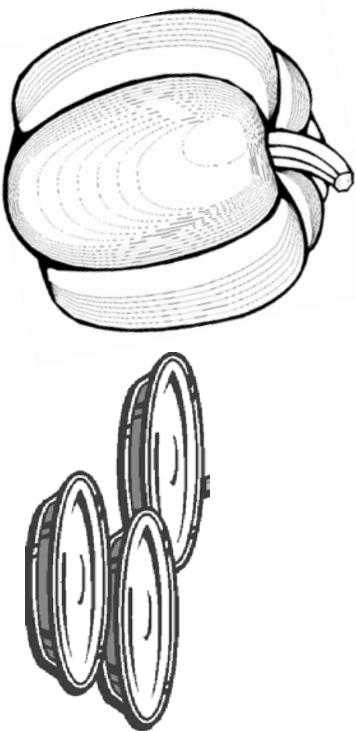
It was fall. Pam had worked hard all summer growing a big pumpkin. She was getting her pumpkin ready for a contest at the fall fair.

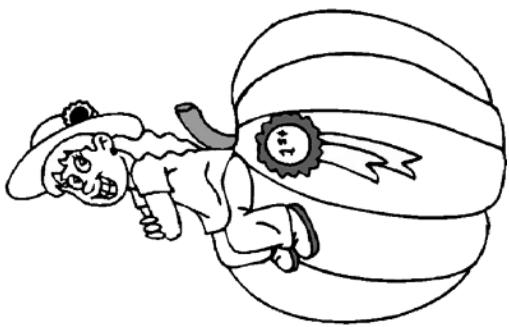
Pam was happy to win first prize, but the pumpkin was still stuck in the door!

"There's only one thing to do," said Dad. He got out a big knife and cut up the pumpkin. He cut it into big pieces and put all of the pieces into a big bag.

Then they took the pieces home and Mom made big, big pumpkin pies out of Pam's big, big pumpkin.

Pam made sure that she saved some seeds to grow next summer!

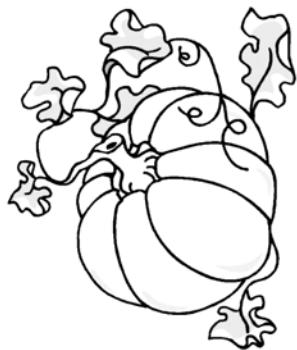
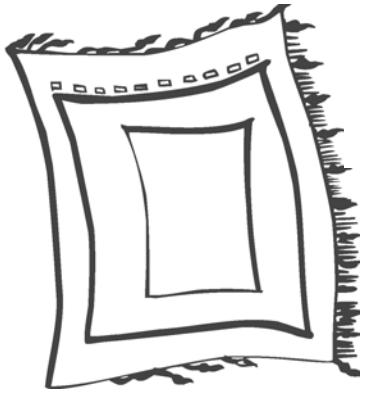




On the way into the contest room, Pam's big pumpkin got stuck in the door. It was halfway in and halfway out! It was stuck!

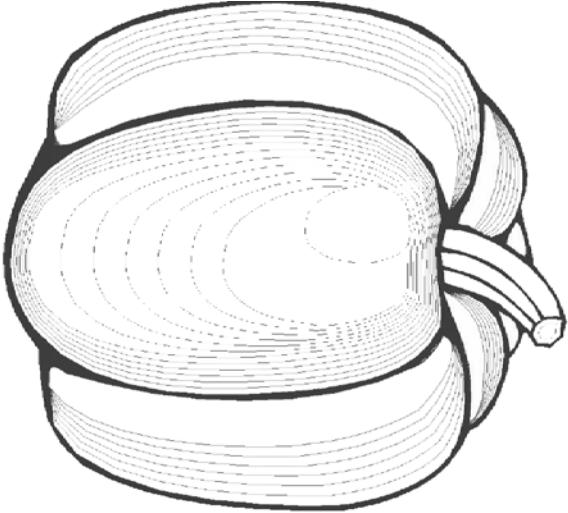
The judge of the contest came running over.

"First prize! What a big pumpkin!" he yelled, and stuck a blue ribbon on Pam's pumpkin.

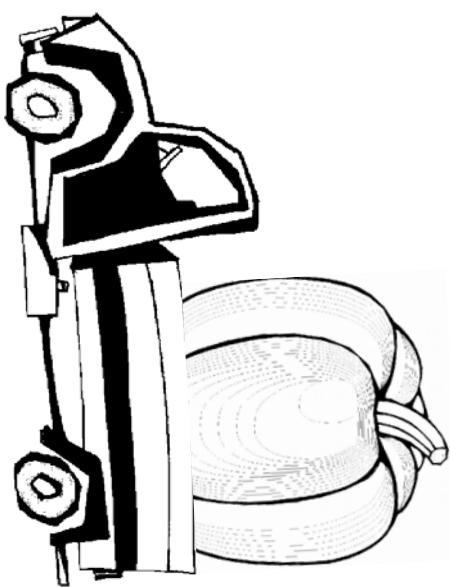


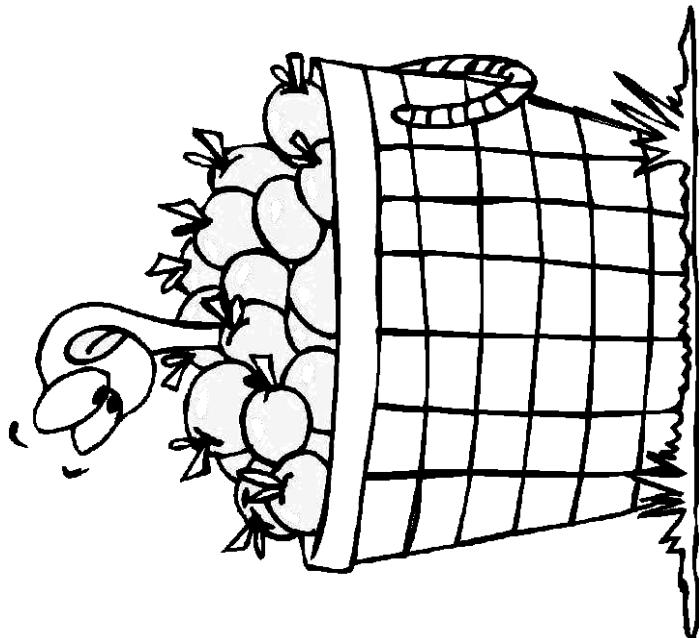
Pam watered her pumpkin every day. She gave it plant food, and even covered it with a blanket on cold nights. The pumpkin grew and grew.

It was fall and time for the fair. Pam was ready. Her pumpkin was huge! Her Dad and Mom and grandpa and big brother all had to help lift the pumpkin from the pumpkin patch and onto the back of the truck.



They drove with the big pumpkin to the fall fair. When they got there, Pam's Mom and Dad and grandpa and big brother all helped get the pumpkin off the truck. They took the pumpkin to the contest room.

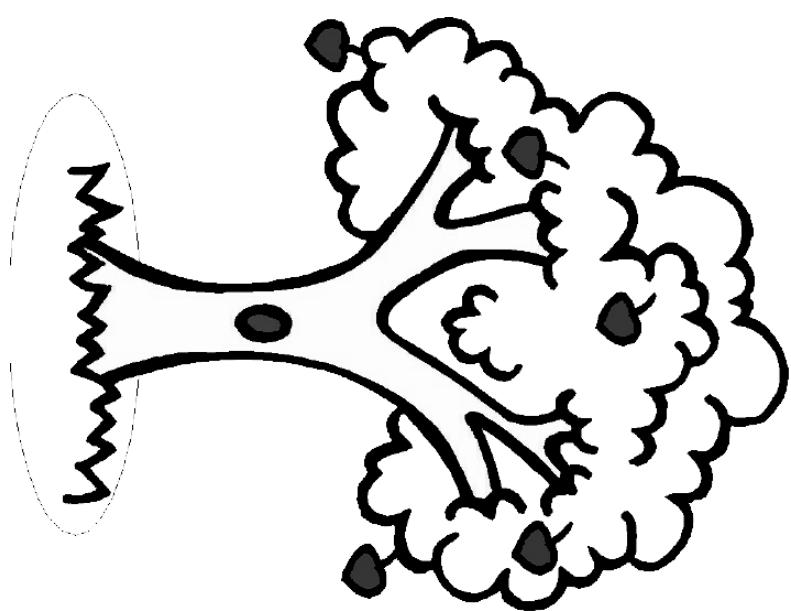




# Apples in the Fall



In the fall  
my apple tree,

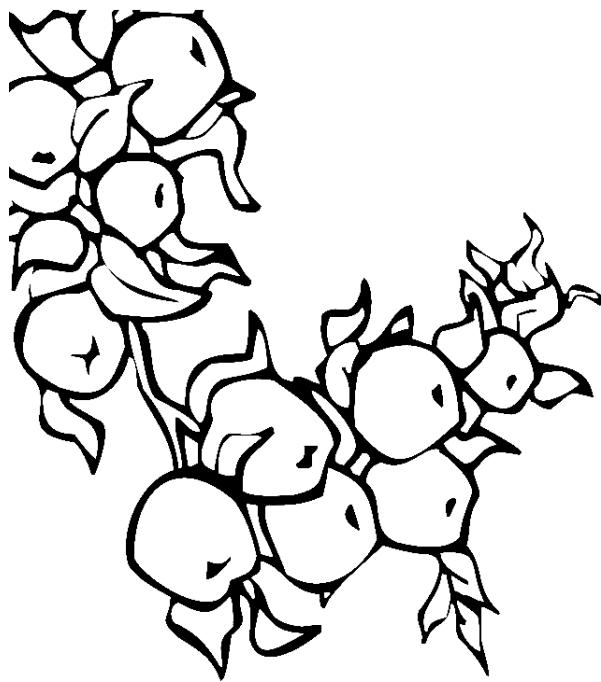


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Apples big and apples small,  
I like apples in the fall!

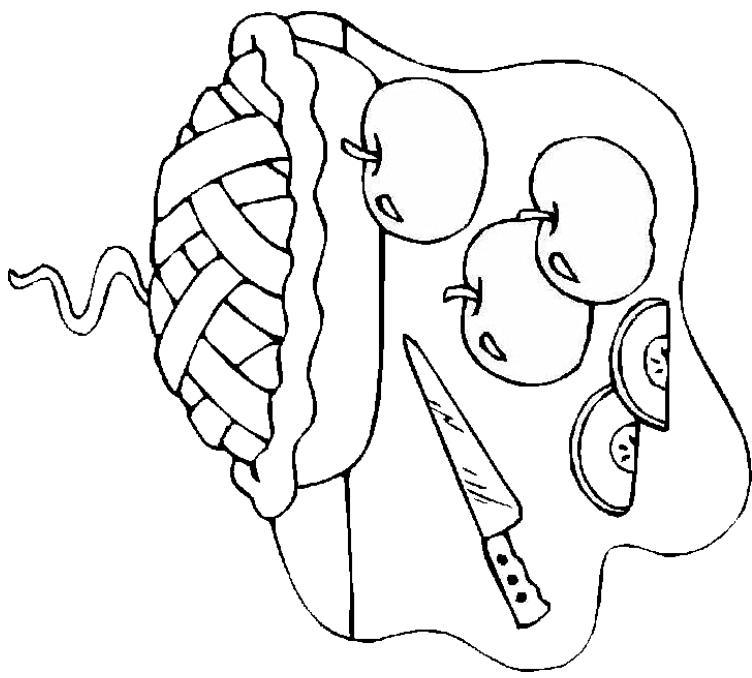


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Has big red apples  
for you and me.

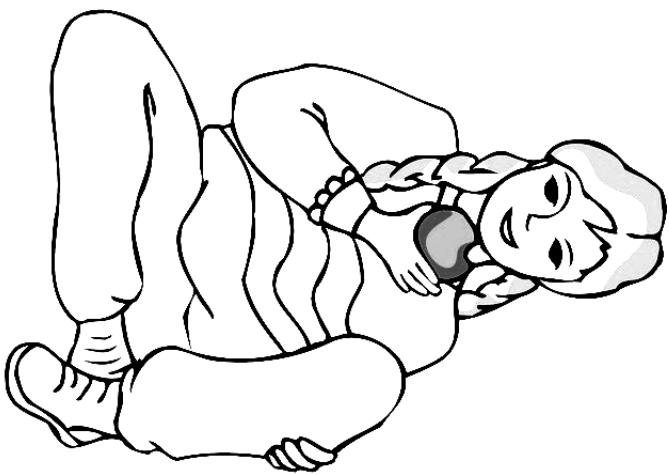
3



If I'm lucky Mom will make  
An apple pie that she  
will bake.

6

We pick the apples  
and have a munch,



And Mom will put them  
in my lunch.

