

# Primary Success

Issue #2

November - December 2004

## Merry Christmas!

It is hard to believe that winter and the holidays are approaching! Yesterday was summer and tomorrow is winter. Here on the coast the rainy gray days have already begun, and by the end of October many towns across the country will have snow. Kindergarten teachers will spend lots of time doing up zippers, finding mittens and helping with boots.

November and December in the early grades are always interesting. In Grade One there is the 'November Miracle'. At the end of October teachers feel despondent because they feel their children haven't learned a thing.... and then in November a miracle happens and suddenly there are readers and capable workers! Teaching Grade One becomes very rewarding in November.

There are holiday books to read and art projects to do, Christmas concerts to practice and report cards to write. This is a very busy time. Hopefully you will find some ideas in this magazine to make this busy time a bit easier!

Primary teachers take on many extra jobs at this time. There are projects at home and many more at school. We don't like to say 'No' to those who ask us to do more, but set limits for your health and sanity! Take care of yourself first and this busy time will be more fun for you and your children.

Have a great holiday! Jean and Kelly



**Look for:**



**Tips -  
the best ideas!**

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# Education Today

## Things to Ponder ....

We get children in our classes who are products of a high speed society. This began visually in the 1960s and 70s when Sesame Street first came on TV with its flashing ever-changing scenes to hold the attention of small children. Sesame Street seems slow when compared to the video games and children's television of today.

Conversations are becoming more rare in many families. Many families don't spend much time talking with their children. With this lack, many children do not know how to listen and participate in quality conversations. The students may have had lessons in ballet, soccer, swimming and gymnastics, but they are lacking in communication skills. They do not wait their turn to speak because the parents let them interrupt. They lack creativity because their days are planned for them and their toys don't encourage creativity. Many children don't know how to entertain themselves.

These students have problems in the classroom, of course. Here are some teachers' comments on this subject:

"Yesterday I told my kids about self-control and that from now on we are going to be practicing individual self-control. We talked about it a lot during the day and I kept explaining what a person with self control does. Yesterday was the best day of the year so far - we got through the day with fewer interruptions. We will continue to work on this!"

"I am definitely finding this in my classes. Every year I have more and more students who just seem to find it hard to listen and hard to sit and focus for any length of time – even listening to a story.

I think there are many reasons and it does not all boil down to poor parenting or poor teaching. Some reasons I believe are factors in this include...

- TV and media – children are exposed to such fast moving, bright, loud, etc., things on TV and on video games and through music that I think they find it hard to focus when it is slower paced, not so colourful and quiet.

- Changes in philosophy – many parents treat their children more like "little adults" than as children – giving them choices, allowing them to make decisions that the parents should be making. This is the philosophy that is given to parents so they are only following what others are telling them to do. I've had parents tell me – 'Bobby wanted to stay up late last night so he might be tired today'. When I was growing up it didn't matter what I wanted, bed time was bed time.

- Food – with so many additives, high fat, high sugar foods out there that our children are eating is it any wonder they are either extremely lethargic or extremely hyperactive? The common snacks in my classroom include pop, chips, chocolate bars and store-bought cookies. I get so excited when I see cheese and crackers or fruit being brought to school.

I believe these items, along with others, are changing how our students respond to the world around them. It's not all negative but when the behaviour influences how they learn then we have problems."

*Cathy*

"Many of our substitutes are saying that the suburb schools (we are one), which used to pride themselves on 'better behaved' students in primary classes are now on par to inner core schools. They are finding that the students are lacking social skills, lacking that sense of common courtesy with respect to others around them.

We also talked about possible causes. Children lead a life which is programmed for them after school. They have little time for socializing, everything is planned, and computers and video games are solitary pastimes.

We find that the quality of work is decreasing, the capacity for work is decreasing, and the output is decreasing just at a time when educational goals are increasing in difficulty."



# Controlled Vocabulary Basals or Trade Books?

Reading instruction until the mid 1980s was done through texts that had strict vocabulary control with explicit sequential teaching. These texts were quite successful when taught in homogeneous groupings. In the late 1980s reading specialists advocated literature that was more authentic and had less contrived language, and publishers quickly came out with trade book anthologies that became the basals of the 1990s.

Teachers found these stories that were often taught through themes much more interesting to teach but the goals for the students began to change. The teachers found the new materials quite motivating and interesting for their average and above-average readers but there were difficulties in meeting the needs of the struggling readers with texts so challenging and variable in difficulty. These students were not learning as well or as early as with the controlled vocabulary texts and the repetition of skills. The philosophy in these days disparaged tests and competition, so the gap in learning was less obvious and ignored as unimportant.

Students were taught to use the 'three-cueing system' to read unfamiliar words. The first and most important cue was context or semantics. When students came to a word they do not know, they 'guessed' based upon the context. Syntax was the second cue. There is established order that words can be placed in a meaningful sentence, so when these cues were used by a beginning reader, the system suggested that they could make an even better guess about individual words in the passage. The third, and least important cue, was the letter-sound information. Research showed that the 'three-cueing system' did not work. People are only correct about 1 out of 10 times when they try to 'guess' content words in running text. To decode unfamiliar text, the best cue that good readers use is the phonetic information - the information contained in the letter sounds in the words.

It has been proven that the challenged learners need to learn to read through sequential specific teaching and materials. This can be either a controlled sight vocabulary or phonics based. Basals or other sequential material is needed for both of these. The language is stilted and contrived in the early stories, but these students need to have this repetition in order to learn. Neither one of these work for all students. Controlled sight vocabulary systems do not give the students enough decoding skills, and phonetic systems do not put enough emphasis on reading by visual memory.

Phonics based and controlled sight vocabulary basal readers have advantages and disadvantages. The advantage in using these basal readers is that they improve skill instruction by making it more consistent, predictable, and comprehensive, and improve the reading skills for the lower students. Basal readers have also been criticized by advocates of the literature movement because they take choice away from children and sometimes may reduce the pleasure of reading. This argument is perhaps flawed, as children must learn the skills to be able to read interesting books independently. Without these skills and background knowledge they are simply being entertained, not learning to read. The pleasure in reading comes when the student uses the knowledge to read independently.

## Things to Ponder



In the perfect classroom, teachers instruct the children using both sequential phonics and sequential sight reading vocabulary texts and basals, and the teachers also use trade books to encourage reading pleasure. Each of these has valuable and necessary consequences to help teach every child to read.

# Classroom Management



“My class sits in teams and throughout the week they earn team points for various things (the team that is quiet first, desks cleared first, etc.). One of the things I use every day is the mystery item. This is how I get my room cleaned up - pronto! I quickly write on a scrap of paper 5 - 6 things that are not where they belong. This could be a scrap of paper, a pencil on the floor, a chair at the art table, someone's coat, my scissors, etc. When I say ‘go’ the students SILENTLY take care of anything they see that is out of place. I write the name of the person who takes care of each item on my list. When the room is spic-and-span I announce the names of those students on my list. They earn points for their team if they are on the list. They absolutely adore this activity! It takes just minutes to do and I use it a couple of times a day.”

“I have certain jobs that I do each day of the week to try to keep my classroom organized and my work up to date. On Monday I run off the copies for the week and organize my own desk, on Tuesday I file things and clean the shelves, on Wednesday I make sure all my marking is up to date and filed and I do bulletin boards, Thursday I write the weekly newsletter for the parents and on Friday I plan for the following week and update my sub file. Every day I do anecdotal notes on 4 or 5 students and enter the notes on my computer so I can get through every student each week. Sometimes it is difficult to keep up with all these things, but when I can it really makes life a lot easier!”

Mary

“We sing ..... Write your name on your paper, write your name,  
Write your name on your paper, write your name,  
Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ wants to know who did this work and so....  
Write your name on your paper, write your name!”

If your students have numbers, sing the same song with “Write your number on your paper ..... etc.”

“At the beginning of the year in Grade One we just write our names on papers (we sing ‘The first thing on my paper is my name.....’ to *If You’re Happy and You Know It*). The next thing we add is our number. So the song then goes, ‘The first thing on my paper is my name, the next thing on my paper is my number, First is my name and then I write my number, The first thing on my paper is my name....and my number.’ Later, when we add the date we will sing, ‘Put your name on your paper, write it down (x2), put your name on your paper, put your number on your paper, put the date on your paper, write it down.’

“I call it ‘Quiet Cleaning’. When I say ‘Quiet cleaning has now begun....’ the kids start their jobs. Everyone has a job on the job chart that they must do without talking. The inspector walks around and looks to see if anything needs to be done, he/she is the only one who can talk and nicely tell people what they missed or what has to be done. They love that power!”

“I never let my kids use the pencil sharpener. I have two cans - one with newly sharpened pencils and one where dull pencils are put. The students take a sharp one and place their dull one in the other can and I sharpen all the pencils after school. Pencils are community property. I find they last a lot longer this way!”



“Only one boy and one girl may be in the restroom at a time. They write their name on the board when they go and erase it upon return. That way I know who is missing in case of emergency and there is no one from our room to play with when they are in the bathroom. When I taught Kindergarten, I had a ‘bathroom bear’ that the student put on his/her chair when going to the bathroom. As there was only one bear, only one child would be away from the classroom.”

“I use the tune of *Are You Sleeping.*”

Morning meeting, morning meeting,  
Come sit down, come sit down.  
Empty hands and big smiles  
Let us make a circle,  
Join us now, join us now.

“Magic 10 count – On the board I have a small chart that has my name and the class on it. Whenever I want my students to move quickly to a new activity or back to their desks I just have to say magic 10. If they can get to the next thing I’ve asked them to do without running before I get to 10 (or sometimes I count backwards) they get a point on their side of the chart. If they do not make it then I get the point. On Friday afternoon we count up the points and if they have more points than I do they get to vote and choose an activity for the end of the day. (extra recess, centers, video, colouring pages, etc..) If I have more points then I get to choose.” *Cathy*



Have a can of large craft sticks with the names of each student. You can draw names by pulling a stick when there is a special job to be done. When all the sticks have been pulled, put them all back and start again. This gives every student a fair chance!

“I use the ‘secret walker’ plan when we move to another part of the school. I tell the line that I am looking for good behaviour from my secret walker. Only I know who it is and that person gets lots of positive reinforcement and a sticker if he/she did a good job. If not, I just say that I am sad that the person I had in mind didn't earn the sticker and I don't reveal their name.”

“I use response chants to get their attention – For example I say AB-C-D-E, my students reply AB-C-D-E and then they are silent waiting for my next words.”

“I use the ‘lining up and walking’ poem:

We are so quiet,  
 Quiet as a mouse.  
 No one will know  
 That we're in their house.

We begin in normal voices and then get quieter and quieter to a very soft whisper.”



I'm giving myself a great big hug  
 I'm standing straight and tall  
 I'm looking right in front of me  
 And I won't talk at all!

My hands are hanging by my sides  
 I'm standing straight and tall,  
 My eyes are looking straight ahead--  
 I'm ready for the hall.

I'm giving myself a great big hug  
 I'm standing straight and tall  
 I'm looking straight ahead of me,  
 I'm ready for the hall.

## Focus Walls

Many teachers have focus walls. This is a bulletin board that is frequently changed and shows things that the teachers wants to bring to the students’ attention. Here are some things that can be on the focus wall:

- Spelling words for the week
- The phonics pattern the class is studying
- The ‘book of the week’ - with title, author, key vocabulary, etc.
- Reading strategies
- Word patterns
- Theme outlines
- Math concepts
- Science concepts

To see some focus walls, go to:

[http://www.smbd.org/district\\_programs/reading\\_/teacher\\_idea\\_sharing/focus\\_wall/index.html](http://www.smbd.org/district_programs/reading_/teacher_idea_sharing/focus_wall/index.html)

# Phonics

"I blend sounds based on a program I learned a few years back (Companion Reading). Basically I stretch out the sounds on easy to blend words, especially at the beginning of the year.

SSSSSSSSSSaaaaaaaaaaaaammmmmmmmmmm - Sam  
Ffffffffffffffaaaaaaaaaaaaaannnnnnnnnnnnnn - fan  
Rrrrrrrrrrrruuuuuuuuuunnnnnnnnnnnnn - run

The students learn to say the sounds without taking a break and once they seem to have this at least understood – then I add blends, digraphs, etc., and we continue using this method when they get stuck on words. Shiiiiiiip." *Cathy*

"I have the children blend sounds several ways. Here are the most successful ones:

- I put magnetic letters on a cookie sheet and put out the letters I want the child to blend. I really spread them out. The child holds the first letter, makes its sound and carries that sound as he slides the letter over to the next letter. It continues this way until the letters/sounds have all bumped into each other.

- The other way is that I put beginning blends or sounds on the left side of the blackboard, the vowels they know in a row down the middle of the board and ending sounds or blends down the right side. Next I take a toy car and I drive over the letters. As my car hits a letter the children say its sound. They continue to make that sound until I come to a vowel. They say that sound until I hit a final letter and they put the word together. You just have to be careful with this one to check and make sure that no swear words are possible from the combinations you put up! I also make sure that in both games I have beginning sounds that last.... /m/, /s/ and /n/ as opposed to /t/, /b/ or /j/, especially when I'm first introducing the process."

*Barb*

"Blending and segmenting are big things in our district. I do something almost every day that connects with this. I have one word family every week that goes along with the HM materials we use.

Two things we do are favourites with my kids. First, I have a class set of those 4x6 inch magna doodles. I also have a large sized one for me. I start by asking them to write the letter that makes the sound.. For instance, /o/ (they write the o in the middle of their slate). Then I add a beginning letter and then an ending letter to spell the word....h o t.... They erase and we start again (they hold their slates on their chests so I can see them all but others can't, though often I will tell a student to 'look at Kathy's'.

The other thing my kids love - I have a letter sorting box under my overhead projector and I pull out letters to blend word families. First I do many of them, then I call students to do them again. They love to come up. We focus on the vowel sound that week."

*Marcia*

I can spell cat – c-a-t  
I can spell bat – b-a-t  
I can spell sat – s-a-t  
But I can't sell hippopotamus

*Cathy*



## Things to Ponder



Many teachers use 'word families' or word endings to teach reading and spelling patterns. To use these, students have to recognize the end of the word and blend the initial sound to it. Some kids will have a problem recognizing these rimes. Compare this to sounding each letter from the beginning of the word to the end, blending the sounds as the word is read in the direction we read. Isn't this a more natural way to decode?

# Clipping the Sounds

*Teachers who are familiar with the grade\_one e-mail list will also be familiar with Vici's style of writing. Vici is a teacher from Rhode Island with lots of good ideas. Editing would ruin the flow and flavour of her words!*



There are those of us who shall remain unnamed who recall the days when sounds were categorized. I believe that I am way too young for that, but I do recall hearing about them olden days...

One of the categories of sounds were the 'plosives'... yes, from the word explosive... They are sounds that are not made until they explode from your mouth... They NEED the air from a vowel sound to actually cause them to explode... Think of the sounds that cannot be held, but have letter representations in our alphabet. /b/ /p/ /d/

Then there were those that were hard to hold .... like /g/ and /t/. When you make these sounds, watch your mouth and lips, put your hand before your mouth and feel the changes and the air that is emitted.

If you call /b/ BUH... then you add a short U to it and doom the child to trying to blend a consonant, vowel, and then likely, a different vowel.

Here is a hint that works great. First, do not have the kids sound things out in segmented pieces... Sentences are like songs and we don't stop between all the notes and have silence. Sounds are like notes, words are like musical phrases. The children, when blending to read... using phonics as their approach, should blend the sounds, no matter how long they hold them... if not, they must learn two skills and a child with a poor auditory memory who is really struggling, will take the last sound they said, and recall it first and you will have a guess at a word that begins with the last, not first sound.

So then how do you do those darn 'plosives'...? It is work, get a good night's sleep first, but it is so worth it. First, always ask a child to tell you what sound a letter makes when decoding... the sound matters not the letter name. Next have them hold the sound until they can recall the next sound they need to make (I will tell you about those pesky vowels in a bit). But if you have a plosive and cannot hold it, they need to (make a chart of 'plosives they can refer to):

Check out the vowel they will need to push the 'plosive open.

Say that sound a few times and get it in their head if they are new at this.

"Get their mouth ready" I say, "get your mouth ready" and while they are holding their mouths in that position, I feed them the info they will need for the vowel sound... let us say short /a/. I cue them... mouth ready... now push out that AAAAAAAAAAAAAA They will give you ba... you model it and exaggerate the pushing as if it is coming from your chest and you are blowing up a difficult balloon. Then they chunk it and go ba again for a clean start and hold the short a until they can decode the next sound.

That is what you do for the very early, very very early reader if you are doing a phonics or decoding lesson... have them look at your mouth, feel their own mouths, look in the mirror... they carry their sound maker around with them... it is their mouth, lips, tongue... if you let them in on this "secret" you can use it to your advantage for those students who have poor phonemic awareness. When they get better at it, they just get their mouths ready and then look at the next letter or vowel and think its sound in their head before pushing the 'plosive open....

You can expose the whole class to this, but those who are already reading won't need much repeat of this... it is just to make sure they also know how this whole thing called speech and reading work. It is the ones with poor memories, phonemic awareness, and all that jazz that really will benefit from this very careful presentation.

Sooooooooooooo to make a long story short... do not apply sounds to sounds that are not really a part of what you do with real speaking. You don't go 'buh at'. You go baaat... and the b is just a position which when opened by the air from the applied vowel or following consonant as in a blend... can be heard.

One big reason for failure or the slow learning curve is our failure... we do not MAKE the kids look... they must look at the letter they are trying to learn. When you point or say point over there... you must check out the eyes of these little ones to be sure they are on target. Veteran teachers know about those kids who will look up off the page while they are still saying the end of a word they are sounding out. They are not going to be able to self correct and are not doing voice to print match. Again, as they can then read and do it again and again and again, they will get some vocabulary by rote as well. It is a slow process for some and if we do not give them something that lets them have a little independent success, they will be in trouble forever... When they do sight, phonics, smart guessing, language cues and all of those approaches and strategies, they have a better chance of success. What seemed obvious to me as a new teacher years ago was not obvious to all children and I of all people should know that because I was a simply horrid reader with no memory, and I was a child in the era of all sight and no phonics. I will not as a teacher lock step any of my students into any one methodology... I watch carefully how they learn and work to strengthen their weak area, but also then depend upon their strengths to get them by.

# Home Reading

It is obvious that the more practice a child does in any skill, the quicker they will advance that skill. If a child is to be a good hockey player or ballet dancer, practice will be necessary. So it is with reading! Most teachers do a home reading program to add to the daily reading practice time.

It is important that the books chosen for home reading are books that are appropriate for independent reading, the level at which a child can best practice their reading skills to build fluency. Both children and parents are frustrated when children come home with books that are too difficult. The parent should not be required to give instruction and most parents do not fully understand the teacher's methods. The home reading should be a time where the child practices the skills that have been taught and mastered at school, and the child should feel confident and proud of reading to a family member.

It is sometimes difficult to find enough reading material that the early reader can read with confidence. The books you have taught in guided reading lessons, little photocopied books with controlled previously learned vocabulary and simple predictable text are suitable for early readers. For students in late Grade One and Grade Two and Three, there will be lots more material. Have the student read a page of the text to see if the book is at the correct level. Sometimes books that have been levelled from standard lists may not fit the student's reading ability, so check to see if the book chosen is suitable. Re-reading the same books is fine! Children will often enjoy re-reading a favourite.

Send home a note explaining why home reading is valuable and what your expectations are. Some teachers send a sheet each time where the parent can put the date, the book titles and comments. It often helps to have some sort of visible record in the classroom - stickers on a chart, a graph, etc. This is also useful for parent-teacher interviews when parents who are not insisting on the reading see the charts. Encourage your parents with the following:

## Why Can't I Skip My Twenty Minutes of Reading Tonight?

*Source Unknown*

Let's figure it out -- mathematically!

Student A reads 20 minutes five nights of every week;  
Student B reads only 4 minutes a night...or not at all!

Step 1: Multiply minutes a night x 5 times each week.

Student A reads 20 min. x 5 times a week = 100 mins./week

Student B reads 4 minutes x 5 times a week = 20 minutes

Step 2: Multiply minutes a week x 4 weeks each month.

Student A reads 400 minutes a month.

Student B reads 80 minutes a month.

Step 3: Multiply minutes a month x 9 months/school year

Student A reads 3600 min. in a school year.

Student B reads 720 min. in a school year.

Student A practices reading the equivalent of ten whole school days a year. Student B gets the equivalent of only two school days of reading practice.

By the end of 6th grade if Student A and Student B maintain these same reading habits, Student A will have read the equivalent of 60 whole school days Student B will have read the equivalent of only 12 school days.

One would expect the gap of information retained will have widened considerably and so, undoubtedly, will school performance. How do you think Student B will feel about him/herself as a student?

Some questions to ponder:

Which student would you expect to read better?

Which student would you expect to know more?

Which student would you expect to write better?

Which student would you expect to have a better vocabulary?

Which student would you expect to be more successful in school...and in life?



# The Writing Process

"I always begin the Writing Process with my class (which we call Writer's Workshop) by reading a collective story done by a former class (I always keep a copy of these) and then writing a collective story as we go through the steps to the writing process. When I tell them the story was published by students the same age, they get excited and really listen to it. After I read the story, we brainstorm the following from that story: main character, secondary characters, setting (time and place), problem or adventure, solution or conclusion. I write these headings on the board.

Then I tell them that our class is going to work as a team to write a special story, but that it will take several days (lessons) to finish, because authors often have to take time to make their stories special. First we brainstorm ideas for what our story could be about. I write the first five answers on the board (I use popsicle sticks with the students' names on them, so it's not always the same students who get picked), and then the class votes on one, which goes on chart paper under 'A story about...' Then we brainstorm ideas for a 'main character'. We go through the same procedure for all the headings, and when finished, I tell the class that we have finished our story map. It's just a skeleton of what our story will be about, but it keeps us on track when we're writing. I also remind them that because we are so many people with such different, creative ideas, we won't always agree, or have the story go the way we would write it ourselves, but that's okay...when it's time to work individually, they can each rewrite this same story with whatever ending, twists or turns they'd like, or write something altogether different.

When the story map is done, and it comes to writing the actual story, I tell them we are going to do our rough draft. It can be changed, and it's okay if there are mistakes. We'll worry about those when we edit it. Now, I am basically just a scribe and a guide. They give me all the words. I model the rereading constantly, and will make mistakes (like leaving out a word) that the students catch as I reread what has been written (pointing out the importance of rereading), and I also refer to the story map often to make sure our story stays on track.

When we move into the editing stage, I might tell them to think of different words to use if the same word has been used over and over, or to add descriptors that touch the senses, etc. We might also vote to change parts of the story to make it more exciting, have it make more sense, or whatever.

Then we move into publishing mode. Here, I simply cut the chart paper up into sections that can be illustrated on a page, and hand them out. Some students re-write their 'parts' on lined paper, others do the accompanying illustrations, the title page, dedication, and list the authors and illustrators. When all of the parts are completed, the pages are laminated, bound, and shared as a published work with all the classes that are willing to hear it. It also goes home with a different student each night, and then put on the bookshelf for silent/buddy reading times.



Do the publishing on the computer! For Kindergarten and Grade One students, type out their stories in a primary font on the computer and let the students illustrate each page. Older students may be able to type out their own stories on the computer. These are easy to edit, change and publish. Kids love to have their own stories look so professional!

This whole process takes at least a week, but it generates so much enthusiasm, and all the writing process stages have been demonstrated, that students are more than ready to begin their own stories. I have the students begin their own work in their writing folders by webbing some of their interests, friends' names, favourite sports/activities, foods, animals, etc. to be used as a start-off point for story ideas. Being in grade one, some students will take on the challenge of writing original works, while others are more comfortable copying pattern books at first. After about a month, I ask for parent volunteers to help out, and they circulate to help with spelling, generating ideas, editing, and encouragement while I do the same, and it helps to keep students on-task while I'm teaching mini-lessons to small groups."

*Martha*

# Conferences

*From last summer: a conference with Sharon Taberski, author of **On Solid Ground**.*

“Sharon is quite a dynamo. Her main focuses (foci?) were comprehension and informational literacy. She didn’t talk much about particular strategies so those who went looking for a bunch of handouts (blackline type) would have been disappointed. Nor did she spend a lot of time discussing how she sets up her class/program. She told us to read the book. It’s all there.

I got a couple of really important messages from her that are much more important than just a bunch of strategy sheets I’d probably forget to look at. Here are some of her basic messages:

1. Teaching must be systematic, explicit and authentic.
2. No one is going to give us more time. We have to choose what we do very carefully. Make sure you know why you are doing what you are doing and that it is giving you the most bang for the buck. Don’t waste your time with things that aren’t really contributing to your goals.

3. Choose a few broad goals and make everything you do work towards those goals. If you choose too many goals, you are spread too thin. Her goals are:

- students will acquire word and comprehension strategies
- students will become more skilled at reading a variety of genres
- students will use writing and talk to make sense of what they read
- students will love to read.

4. “It takes a lot of slow to grow.” Don’t rush into things. Take time to do a very thorough job of what you do. Don’t think you have to change everything tomorrow. Kids need time to learn. Don’t rush them. The comprehension takes longer. For example, Grade 2 and 3 are consolidation years, don’t push them to read harder books just because they can read the words. Always be explicit and systematic.

5. Select a core set of strategies for comprehension (fewer are better than more). Be systematic in how they’re presented (begin with lots of whole group demos, then slowly move to small group practice (within guided reading groups) and then independent practice with some group support, then finally independent practice). Provide lots of opportunities to read, write and talk.

\*\*\*There must be as much talking time as reading time (therefore choose short but powerful books!)

6. Do fewer things but do them deeper. Don’t try to cover everything because you won’t anyway, and “covering” things does not get at the kind of deep understandings kids need.”

*Heather*

*There have been requests for conference places and dates. Here are useful websites in BC and Alberta - if you know of other websites in the US and Canada that have conferences that others might enjoy, please let us know so others are aware of them. If you go to a good conference, share what you learned!*

<http://pdonline.bctf.ca/conferences/PD-Calendar.html>

<http://www.teachers.ab.ca/conference/index.html>

## Tony Stead

Tony has recently published a professional resource entitled *Is That a Fact? Teaching Non-fiction Writing K-3*. **Upcoming Workshops: Reading for the Love of It** February 10-11, 2005 Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto

Below are some points from a Tony Stead workshop on guided reading:

- When you assess students, the components of your assessment are: for grades K/1 you must use Concepts About Print; Marie Clay’s package. If a child has 15 phonemes and 5-6 sight words...guided reading is to begin.

Guided reading teaches kids what to do in reading not how to do it. Guided reading can only take place at a child’s instructional reading level.

Once children are fluent you don’t need levelled books....just good instruction in strategies.

He went through the entire process of a guided reading lesson.

The focus of a guided reading lesson is a comprehension strategy. e.g. retelling, main idea, inferencing,

Retelling is basic and is the first and most important strategy to be taught.

Always assess prior knowledge before guided reading.

Guided reading takes place during the time students are at literacy centres. Literacy centres are necessary only as long as the children need this skill practice. You need to change from literacy centres when children can do individual reading with reading responses.



# Story Snacks

Try story snacks to teach new reading vocabulary, math skills, and many other interesting things!

Pick a story with a food connection. There are lots of choices. This is often an interesting way to have other adults become part of the school experience. Ask the principal or librarian to read a story and help preparing the food, or have parents in to help.

Parents can also share books that are favourites. If they read a book at home that has a food connection, they can bring it in and share the book and food with the class. Students love parents doing this!

Here are some ideas:

“We had our first Story-n-Snack reader in our class today! I invited our principal to come and read *The Kissing Hand* and make ‘I Love You’ cookies (with candy kisses in the middle). It was a big hit!”

*Kathy*

“I just did a mini Laura Numeroff unit with the Kindergarten class I was teaching. We read *If You Give a Moose a Muffin*, and then made muffins. Then we read *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, and made cookies. Next we read *If You Take a Mouse to the Movies*, and made popcorn. On Monday, we're going to read *If You Give a Pig a Pancake*, and we'll make pancakes in the shape of the first letter of each student's name. They've loved this!”

*Martha*

“We had a great Stone Soup afternoon with my grade two kids! I brought in the things (chopped and ready to add) for the soup, and brought them out one at a time as we read the story, adding them to make the already delicious stone soup just a little better. The kids were great as they acted out each part. (I added some bouillon cubes to make it a bit tastier, too.) Then we feasted, and of course the students were convinced that the stone really did make good soup....!”

Here are some story snack books:

***The Gingerbread Man*** or ***The Gingerbread Baby*** - gingerbread, of course....

***The Kissing Hand*** – handprint cookies

***Blueberries For Sal*** – mini blueberry muffins

***The Teddy Bears Picnic*** – teddy grahams

***Swimmy*** - fish crackers

***The Doorbell Rang*** – chocolate chip cookies

***Clifford*** books – ‘dog bone’ shaped cookies

***Curious George*** – (small) chocolate covered frozen banana

***Two Bad Ants*** – “Ants on a Log” (with cheese instead of peanut butter)

***Inch by Inch*** – gummy worms

***Little Red Riding Hood*** - healthy fruits (grapes, apples, etc)



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## **The Marble Story**

*A friend of mine once said to me, this marble is for you.*

*Cause I was sure I had lost all mine, when life became so blue.*

*For now I know, despite the odds, my marbles may be few,*

*But this friend of mine reminded me, life can be wonderful, too.*

*So here's a marble just for you, and only for some fun.*

*So when you think you've 'lost your marbles', you will know that you have one.*

*Source Unknown*



# Teaching Sight Words

Children need a strong sight word vocabulary to be successful readers. These are the most commonly used words in our language. The Dolch list is one source of these words. The students should have automatic recall of these words. To get automatic recall, these words must be taught in specific sequential lessons, and reviewed every day.

Teach 5 or more of these words each week, depending on your class and the level. You will likely teach 5 words each week at the beginning of Grade One and up to 20 words each week in Grade Two.



## To teach a word:

- Introduce the word. Discuss the initial sound and the final sound. Blend the word if it is phonetic. Discuss the vowel sound(s), too. If the word is non-phonetic, say that this word must just be remembered by the look and shape.
- Look for small words in the word. Look for the word ending and think of rhyming words, if any.
- Spell the word aloud.
- Print the word on slates, carpet, in the air, etc. Make the word using magnetic letters, stamps, etc.
- Put the word into sentences orally so the students understand how the word is used.
- Print phrases using the word. Use only words that the students have already mastered to make the phrases.
- Print sentences using the word, again using only words that the students have already mastered.

To practice the words:

Do flash card drill.

Play games with the words on game boards, 'Go Fish', etc.

Read stories at the student's independent reading level that use the words.



## Sight Word Games:

### Bean Bag Toss

Divide a shower curtain liner into 16 boxes with a permanent marker. Attach the words to the boxes on the shower curtain with tape. Put small numbers on the corner of the cards. Divide the class into 2 teams. The teams take turns throwing the bean bag to a square. If the student can read the word the bean bag lands on, the team gets the number of points on the card. If the student misses the word, the other team gets the chance to say it. The team with the most points wins the game.

### Around the World

All the students sit in a circle or the students can remain at their desks. One student stands behind another student who stays sitting. Flash a sight word to the two students. Whoever says the word first moves on to the next student. The student that makes it back to their own desk or starting point is the winner and has gone 'Around the World'!

### Tic-Tac-Toe

Give everyone a blank copy of the tic-tac-toe board (or the students can draw the lines on a whiteboard), and put the list of words on the board. Have them place the words where they want in their board. As you call out the words, you will have to say if it is an X word or an O. The first one to tic-tac-toe is the winner.

### A Game Board

Have a game board with numbered spaces. Have a pile of sight word cards. Each child takes turns turning over a card. If the child reads it correctly, he/she can move as many spaces as there are letters in the word.

# More Sight Word Ideas

“We played ‘word whackers’. I wrote 16 high frequency words on the board and divided the class into two teams. The first person in each team got a fly swatter (yes, we first talked about the appropriate use of said swatters.) I stood to the side and called out a word from the list on the board. The first person to swat the correct word with the swatter earned a point for their team. Lots of fun!”



“We also did a high frequency game where they rolled a die and drew that number of cards from the pile. If they could read the words, they got to keep the cards. If not, they went back into the pile.”

“I have the Dolch words broken down into pre-primer, primer, and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade word lists.

<http://gemini.es.brevard.k12.fl.us/sheppard/reading/dolch.html>

Each of those is broken into smaller groups of words so I have 10 groups, starting with easy ones and getting harder. Each group is printed on a colour of construction paper, 10 groups, 10 different colors. The colours are the colours of the rainbow, in order - beginning with yellow for the first list. As a student can read the first group of words he/she gets a certificate of that colour. The name goes on the certificate and is then put up on a bulletin board. As the students pass each color group of words, they get another badge of the matching color. This makes a beautiful Reading Rainbow wall, with a rainbow of color badges as the kids pass each level.”

Here are sets of the Dolch words, with the great Jan Brett illustrations.

[http://www.janbrett.com/games/jan\\_brett\\_dolch\\_word\\_list\\_main.htm](http://www.janbrett.com/games/jan_brett_dolch_word_list_main.htm)

## Wordo

You need blank cards with 9, 16, or 25 blocks. Have students fill in the card with the words that you want to use. Tell them that each card will be different and to try to mix up the words they are using. Playing the game is just like BINGO. Call out the words and have the students spell it out loud with you and then mark their spaces. This will give those who are unsure of the word some extra help. The first one with a row covered calls out ‘WORDO’!

## Erase Relay

Write two columns of words on the chalkboard that are approximately equal in difficulty. Write as many words on the board as there are children in the relay. Children are divided into 2 teams, and stand in two lines at right angles to the chalkboard. At the signal, the first child in each line points at the first word in his respective column of words and pronounces that word. If his pronounces it correctly, he is allowed to erase that word. The game is won by the side that erases all the words first.



## Team Sight Word Race

The children are divided into 2 unequal teams in lines away from you. Turn over a sight word and the two children at the front of the line try to see who can say it first. The team that says the word first gets a point. Then these two children go to the back of their lines. The teams are unequal so the students have a new person to race each time as they get to the front of the line.

# Science

Check sheet for doing experiments:

1. Observe - use the 5 senses
2. Compare to other things if possible.. how are they alike or different?
3. Sequence - in time order to show changes
4. Sort and classify
5. Predict - make a good guess about what will happen
6. Gather information from what you observed
7. Measure - how long, how many, etc.
8. Research - use the computer, reference books, etc.
9. Plan - write down step by step how to find out...first, I will...then....then.....last....etc.)
10. Make a model ( show in some way how it is or how it works.)
11. Infer - guess why something happened
12. Draw conclusions (make a decision using all your information)
13. Share with others what you found out (graphs, charts, do it!)



## Matter Really Matters!

‘Matter has mass and takes up space.’

Many teachers teach the properties of solids and liquids first, comparing and contrasting those properties. Make sure the students aren't confusing the word ‘gas’ and gasoline.

Everything in the world is made up of molecules.

Use water in its three states to illustrate solid, liquid and gas. Do experiments to show water changing. What is happening to the molecules of water?

- Have the whole class stand up and explain to them that they are now going to ‘become’ molecules. Explain that warm molecules are very active and spread out away from other molecules. Have them spread out and ‘bounce.’ Explain that molecules which bounce all over are a gas.
- Ask if they've ever seen children huddle on the playground on a very cold day. Molecules do the same thing. They slow down and move closer together when they are cold. Ask the students to come into a small circle and huddle close together. They should then ‘freeze’. When molecules get cold enough they freeze, although that does not mean they are totally without motion, even as the children will not be totally without motion. Ask if they can think of an example of something frozen (ice). Explain that this is a solid.
- Molecules are sometimes in between a solid and a gas. We call this state liquid. They spread out a little bit, but they stay inside their container. Have the students bounce slightly and push apart but stay inside the circle. Ask for an example of a liquid (water).
- Have them get back in their huddle, very still and ‘cold’. Then have them ‘warm up’ gradually, staying in the circle. Then have them warm up more, and explain that they can now float up over the string because they are a ‘gas’. Ask what would happen if they were even ‘hotter’ (they would spread out even more).

Some changes are temporary and some are permanent. You can melt ice and re-freeze it, or melt chocolate by heating it and then it will become a solid again as it cools. Steam will change back to water.

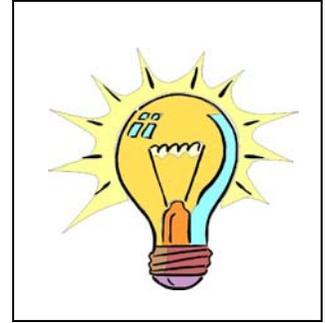
Some changes are permanent. If you boil an egg it changes permanently. You can make permanent changes by mixing substances together, by heating or burning, and by passing electricity through some substances.



Read the little book.

# Wikki Stix

Wikki Stix are made of a non-toxic wax formula in a yarn strand. They are soft and pliable, and very easy to bend and shape. Plus, they are slightly tacky to the touch and adhere to almost any smooth surface with just fingertip pressure to provide a raised line effect. No glue. No paste. No mess. They are also easy to lift off and reposition, so mistakes can be quickly corrected. They are safe, non-toxic and endlessly reusable. They will not pull apart, but cut easily with scissors. The sticks are in either 8 or 6 inch lengths and come in a variety of colours. This is a great tool for tactile learners and for creating visuals. They can be added to a map to show routes of explorers or used to underline words on a poster.



“Wikki sticks are awesome! They are so much fun for the kids to manipulate and MUCH easier to clean up! I use wikki sticks in almost every subject.

In reading, we use them to circle or underline words of the vowel sound/pattern that we're studying that week. We also use them when learning about punctuation and parts of a sentence. Highlight text on a book page or chart.

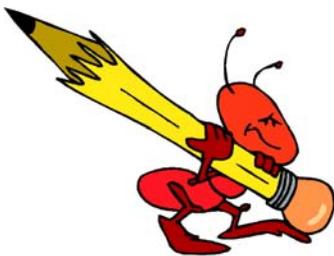
Use the words in your morning message and let students find and circle them with markers or Wikki Sticks. Do the same with poetry, finding phonetic patterns, rhyming words, vocabulary words, etc.

In Math, the kids form numbers and create addition/subtraction problems. Make diagrams and geometric shapes.

In Socials, I laminated a map of Canada. The students manipulated the wikki sticks to form the rivers, mountains, etc.

These are great to use for arts and crafts, too, or simply creative play.”

# Printing and Handwriting



Good printing and handwriting seem to have less importance in primary classrooms in the past ten years. For young children to print well, there must be specific lessons daily and emphasis placed on this skill. Often time is short, and this seems to be one thing that is frequently left out. As in reading, our goal in printing is fluency, and this takes lots and lots of practice.

Why is it important? It is one of the pre-requisites to creative writing. Writing has a high priority in our curriculum, but the students' abilities in writing are intimately tied to printing and handwriting skills. If stu-

dents are not fluent in printing or handwriting, this will decrease the amount and quality of the writing that is produced. If the children are concentrating on forming letters, the quality of writing will decrease. It is important that the students write legibly on lines, with the letters the correct heights and proper spacing. Part of the writing process is sharing the writing. The student must be able to read his own work with ease and the teacher or writing partner must also be able to read what has been written. Without this the writing has little value.

How can you ensure that your students get enough practice and become fluent printers? It is important that the children print each day, and it is equally important that you have the highest standards. Not all children are able to print perfectly, but everyone should be doing their best. Each week the amount of daily printing should increase. Most Grade Ones should be able to copy and print four or more sentences by Christmas and write a paragraph quickly, easily and neatly by the end of the year. Grade Twos should be printing fluently so they do not have to think about the printing skills at all when they are doing writing.

Classes that are taught to print well do much better creative writing!

# Self-Esteem

We know that our students' self-esteem affects their success in school. The children come to school with a level of self-esteem that has been formed by the experiences in the early years, but what we do can also affect the way the self-esteem develops.

In the 1990s the improvement of self-esteem was deemed to be a central goal in the primary grades. This was an important part of the original 'whole language' movement. Teachers didn't group for reading instruction because students in the 'low group' would have lower self-esteem. There were no tests because some students might do poorly. It didn't matter if children learned to read in Grade One - they would learn when they were ready and it would be damaging to their self-esteem if they had to struggle. There was often empty praise and too much positive feedback for mediocre work. All competition was eliminated because competition has winners and losers. Of course, this didn't work! The children were smarter than the teachers. All children knew that they were supposed to learn to read, and they could see that other children were reading when they were not. Children are naturally competitive, and the competition was there even if teachers discouraged it. Teachers with this philosophy didn't understand how self-esteem is built.

Self-esteem in school work comes from success and an understanding that this success has worth. The success must be measurable and visible to the child. Praise without this measurable and visible success is empty flattery, and may even do damage by raising doubts in the child of the adult's believability. Praise must never be given for work that is poor or mediocre for that child. Praise that does not genuinely reflect back to the child what they feel about their work will be recognized as false. This simply stops the student from trying harder to do well. If the teacher feels praise is needed, then find a separate facet of the project to praise. Children have already made a mental estimation of the project's worth, and the teacher should know the student well enough to praise accurately.

High self-esteem in the early years of school comes in great part with success in reading. Children who read well will be confident. Students who have problems should be getting the extra help they need to succeed.

Many teachers still do whole class teaching in reading lessons. This too often leaves the lower students feeling confused or left out. When you teach to the entire class, the lessons are often pointed to the middle of the class. There may be attempts to make the lesson multi-level, but students at the lower end and students who have learning disabilities will certainly feel at a disadvantage. They need direct systematic instruction at their level, as very often these children do not learn from whole-class lessons. There is an answer..... students can be homogeneously grouped without the 'low group' stigma if each group is doing a different program. For example, teach a sequential phonics program to this group, a sight word program to the 'middle' group and literature based learning for the top kiddies. You can also teach different sight word programs or different phonics programs. When you do this, the students in the group and class do not have a basis for comparison. If you make the 'low group' lessons especially dynamic, the other students will be envious. With directed explicit systematic lessons and high expectations these children will learn much faster. With the learning will come self-esteem.

You should create an atmosphere of structure and discipline. Children feel secure when they know the boundaries and feel insecure when there is inconsistent discipline and consequences. A child who is allowed to feel out of control will lose respect for the teacher and not feel as secure or important in the classroom.

Make the child feel important in the classroom in other ways. Have private conversations with the students, display student work (only if it is something the child feels is good), give classroom responsibility and make sure it is followed through, give honest praise, etc. Greet each child personally in the morning. Have a sincere compliment to say to each child as they leave the classroom after school is over. Make the child feel successful in the important subjects by teaching directed sequential lessons and celebrate the child's successes!



# Parent Involvement

“These ideas have increased my Open House attendance:

1. Refreshments: I have each child ice and decorate cheap packaged sugar cookies, one per family member. Each child sets the cookies on their desk and serves family members when they arrive.
2. Tour Guide: Each child receives a list of important classroom activities to show their parents. The child is the tour guide and the teacher takes a passive role. Easy on the teacher, fun for parents and children. They can show the calendar, the weather graph, the days-in-school chart, the word wall, etc. They can read the poems and charts to the parents, too.”

“At our Open House I handed out a parent quiz. They had to answer 10 questions about their child.

They were questions such as:

What is your child's favorite colour? number, TV show, toy.

What does your child want to be when he/she grows up?

If your child had one wish what would it be?

What does your child want to be when they grow up?

The parents loved doing it and the children loved marking a test their parents took. I even gave them red pens to mark the test.”

“I gave the parents a star template to fill in. It said ‘My child is a star because.....’”



“I love having my regular parent helpers. I always want to have something arranged for them to do, I certainly don't want them to think I don't need them! I have the parents play educational games with the children, work on word families (at, ap, am, etc.), math such as measuring, estimating etc. and crafts that are difficult and require more help than I am able to give. Parents also listen to children read. I also ask them to do bulletin boards, put marked work in the children's take home bins, file theme work in folders, make folders and help some children catch up that have been absent.”

“If you have a home reading program, you could put one of the parents in charge of helping kids exchange their books, writing down what they took home, and what they are supposed to read that night so their parents know.”

“I always ask parents what kind of problems they are having at home with their child, before I say anything about the problems I'm having at school. Then I ask them about what kinds of discipline they use - what works. Then I ask what does your child really enjoy doing? Through the answers to these questions I try to work out with the parents a reward/consequences plan together. It requires a daily rather than weekly report from me. The important part of this is the daily communication and the child knowing that parents and teacher are working together.”

“I always type up a page full of comments to be used during that first parent conference. It takes a long time, but these comments keep the conference focused and I am sure that I cover everything that I want to. I collect them in the two weeks before the conference. Parents have told me over the years that they enjoyed taking those comments home so that they could share with their families. I make a copy of those comments and they are attached to the copy that is put into the student's record.”

“I send home a weekly newsletter and on the back I have a homework sheet. The news letter has current events for our room, special events (no school days, holiday), personal (birthday), help wanted (things I need or volunteers needed) and due dates (book orders, returning things, etc.).”

# Math

## Math Journals

“I used math journals a lot last year. I never thought I'd ever do them, but once I started I couldn't stop! Usually, I didn't require the kids to write certain things. They chose what they wanted to write about the math concept we covered. At the beginning of the year, it was mostly pictures and a few words, but by the end of the year, I encouraged the kids to write sentences.

Here are a few things we did in them:

- Draw pictographs, predicting, and then drawing the reality. e.g.: At St. Patrick's Day, they all had to bring in a green fruit. The kids drew pictographs to predict how many apples, limes, grapes, etc. would be brought. Then we did a graph after the fruit were collected. They also wrote about comparisons.... there were more apples than.....

- I taught the kids many math games. After about a week of playing a game, I had them recount how to play and draw diagrams in their math journal for each step of the game, so they wouldn't forget how to play.

- For our geometry unit, students drew and labelled things in the classroom that were the shape that we were studying for the day. Eg: square: window, mat  
cube: box, t.v.

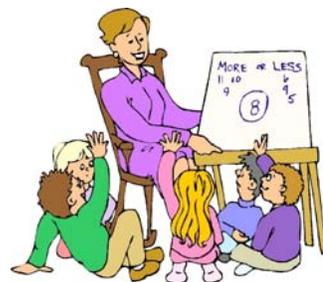
-For our money unit the kids drew the coins and their equivalents, and wrote about things they could buy.

-During any unit our students took time to write about how they felt about concepts. Did they understand it, did they like it...?

The possibilities are endless. I think that Scholastic has a book about math journal ideas.” *Iram*

Whether you write in a math journal or discuss math in the group, these questions are valuable. They increase in complexity as the students go through the grades.

- What did you learn from this activity (or lesson)?
- Is there anything about this activity or lesson you do not understand? Explain your difficulties.
- What does the word ‘ \_\_\_\_\_ ’ mean to you?
- Do you have any questions about \_\_\_\_\_?
- What is your favourite way to count? Why?
- How can you share a group of objects fairly?
- What are some ways we use numbers?
- What have you learned about adding and subtracting?
- What do you know about money?
- How do you count large collections of things?
- What words do we use when we do addition, subtraction, etc?



A Math Journal may include: recording sheets, diagrams, lists, surveys, charts, math vocabulary, questions, pictures to help solve problems, student reflections, self and peer evaluations. These can be kept in a variety of ways including: duotang folder, scrap book, binder, booklet, notebook, file folder with pockets.

The Math Journal should be used frequently and the students can read previous entries to see how their understanding has improved.

You can have the students do prompted writing, open-ended writing, and the demonstration of knowledge or skills visually or in writing. They can explain your thinking in pictures, numbers and words.

# Kindergarten Math Ideas

**Sort Shoes:** Have two hula hoops. Put the children into a circle. Have each child take off one shoe and hold it in the lap. Discuss with the children the ways you can sort shoes (colour, size, type, laces, velcro, etc.) Indicate which circle will hold those shoes that belong and the which will hold those that do not. Choose the attribute you are going to sort for and have the children place their shoes in the proper circle. Discuss the sort and how you might do it again. Gather the shoes and sort them for other attributes.

**Word Problems:** You need story mats and manipulatives. Tell the students a simple number story. Decide how to use the manipulatives to tell the story. Practice telling the story.

**Balance Scales:** Discuss with the students how they should treat the balance scales and the materials. Let the students explore with the materials. Discuss what they learned - for example: how do you know which object weighs more, weighs less, weighs the same? What words can we use to tell?

**Non-standard Measurement:** give the students different objects to measure with non-standard measuring tools - unifix cubes, etc. Discuss the vocabulary: longer, shorter, taller, etc.

**Shape Search:** Discuss common geometric shapes. Ask a student to find a square in the room, ask another to find a circle etc. Go on a shape walk. Go outside to the playground and look for shapes. Discuss the findings.

**Estimation Jar:** Every week we do an estimation jar. Write down all the estimates with the students' names.

## Other Math Ideas

“In Grade Two we fill out a paper when we do an estimation jar.

Today we are guessing about \_\_\_\_\_.

The highest guess is \_\_\_\_\_.

The lowest guess is \_\_\_\_\_.

The actual number is \_\_\_\_\_.

The sum of the highest and lowest guess is \_\_\_\_\_.

The difference of the highest and lowest guess is \_\_\_\_\_.

The number is even/odd.

The number has \_\_\_\_\_ hundreds \_\_\_\_\_ tens \_\_\_\_\_ ones.

The number guessed most often is \_\_\_\_\_.

You say this number when you count by 1's, 2's, 3's, 5's, 10's.



I have the kids put their guesses on yellow sticky notes. When it comes time to do the actual count I hand back their yellow stickies and we line up at the front of the class in numerical order. If one child has the same guess as another, they stand in front of that person, rather than beside them. If you have a common guess, you are going to have a stack of children in that one spot. This is important because it illustrates the ‘mode’ or the average that was determined by the number that came up the most. We talk about the ‘range’ of numbers that were guessed, any guesses that were terribly unreasonable and we look at the ‘median’ or the number that stands in the very middle of our line.”

*Barb*

**Counting Backwards Game:** You need: small blocks or bingo chips, cards with various numerals. Students work in a group. Each player gets 5 blocks as counters. Cards are in a pile face down. One player turns over the top card, next player clockwise starts to count backwards from the number on the card. Continue around the circle with each player saying the next lower number on his/her turn. The player who says ‘0’, loses a block. Winner is last one with blocks. Enrich by counting backwards by 2's.

# Rounding Numbers

Rounding numbers make questions that are easier to do mentally. Rounded numbers and answers are only approximate. Use rounding to get a answer that is close but that does not have to be accurate. Make the numbers that end in 1 through 4 into the nearest lower number that ends in 0. 74 rounded to the nearest ten would be 70. Numbers that end in a digit of 5 or more should be rounded up to the next even ten. The number 88 rounded to the nearest ten would be 90.

Mark the place.  
Look to the right.  
4 or less are out of sight!  
5 and more will buy one more,  
Before they, too, are out the door.  
In those empty right-hand spaces,  
Zeroes keep their proper places.

Draw a number line on the board and number it from 0 to 50 by ones. Make the multiples of ten larger on the number line. (Multiples of 10 may be written in a different colour of chalk.) Write a number on the board - 18, for example. Have a student find it on the number line. 10 and the 20. 18 comes between 20 and 30 on the number line. Which multiple of 10 is the nearest? Try this with different numbers. What about numbers with a 5 in the ones place? (We go up to the 10 above.)

This is called rounding. Can the students see a pattern for choosing the multiple of 10? Numbers with a 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9 in the ones place are nearer the larger multiple of 10. Numbers with a 1, 2, 3, and 4 in the ones place are nearer the lower multiple of 10.

In Grade Two and Three, teach rounding to the nearest hundred. Draw another large number line and number it by one hundreds (0-1000). Discuss rounding numbers to the nearest multiple of 100. Write a number on the board (647). Discuss where 647 is located on the number line. Circle the multiples 600 and 700. Explain to the students that 647 is rounded to 600 because it has 4 tens in the tens place. Numbers with 1, 2, 3, or 4 are rounded down to the lower multiple of 100. Numbers with a 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9 in the tens place is rounded to the larger multiple of 100.

## Ideas from teachers:

“We wiggle down during the first part of the poem, and wriggle up during the second part.

I made a number line around the room with the tens marked in red. I give every student a number. That student then has to go and stand beside the ten they are closest to.”

If the number that you circled is a 1,2,3, or 4  
You gotta' go down to the ten before.  
If the number that you circled is a 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9,  
You gotta' go up the number line.



“I use the idea of the roller coaster to teach rounding. We talk about a roller coaster and the humps and hollows. They draw a wavy line across their paper. They put a 5 on the top of the first hump, a 10 in the hollow, a 15 on the next hump, 20 in the hollow, etc.

If a number ends with 5 and is at the very top of the hump (roller coaster) then the number will roll forward. All the other numbers will roll downhill, either backward or forward.

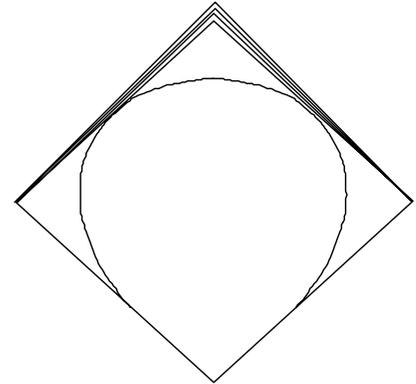
The same thing can work with 100's. This gives the students a clear picture of the rounding strategy.”

“In my grade three classroom we chant the army song tune....

1,2 round down 3,4 round down---1234 round down---  
5,6 round up 7,8 round up 5678 round up and 9 also.

# Remembrance Day

Most schools have a Remembrance Day ceremony. Make a wreath to bring up to the front of the assembly. Cut out a wreath shape from tag. Have the students cut out poppies. Fold a square of red butcher paper twice. Hold it with the four points up. Draw a petal shape as shown in the diagram. Cut out the petal shape and open the poppy. Put black dots in the center. Curl the petals towards the center around a pencil. Glue the centers of the poppies to the wreath so it is completely covered. You can add some leaves, too.



Play *We are the World* by Bryan Adams as classes walk into gym.

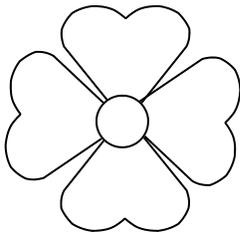


## Poppy

Poppy we are but children small,  
We are too little to do it all.

Children, you may do your part.  
Love each other is how you start.  
Play without fighting.  
Share your games and toys.  
Be kind and thoughtful,  
To all girls and boys.

“We talk about war and I ask them what they know about war. Then we talk about peace and how we feel when things are peaceful. We brainstorm things that are peaceful and write them on a chart. Some years we make a book with each child doing a page.”



“We make poppies by cutting hearts. The students first practice folding paper and cutting hearts, and when they are confident they are each given four squares of red paper. They cut out four hearts. Then the tips of the hearts are glued together to make poppies. They can add a red circle and then put yellow and black spots in the centers. Curl the petals into the center. Put them on a bulletin board display or a wreath.”



## Little Poppy

Little poppy  
Given to me,  
Help me keep Canada  
Safe and free.

I'll wear a little poppy,  
As red as red can be,  
To show that I remember  
Those who fought for me.

## Remembrance Day

We wear a poppy  
On Remembrance Day,  
And at eleven  
We stand and pray.  
Wreaths are put  
Upon a grave.  
As we remember  
Our soldiers brave.

# Behaviour Management

Are you familiar with the 80/15/5 rule? Any one technique works great with 80% of kids, somewhat with 15% of pupils, and not at all with 5% of your students!

What are our goals? We want:

1. To have the students use more of the 'good' behaviour.
2. The students to use less of the 'bad' behaviour.
3. To have positive and caring interactions with our students.
4. To create a classroom in which kids feel welcomed, valued, useful, challenged, respected, and physically and psychologically safe.

## To Ponder ...



Students will be more likely to feel the desirable things in '#4' if our classrooms are structured, organized, and efficient. Do not underestimate the importance of neatness, routine and organization!

## To promote this classroom behaviour:

1. Have a genuine interest in your students. Be at the door to meet students in the morning. Learn about students' families and cultures. Offer praise and encouragement frequently. Always treat youngsters with respect and preserve their dignity.
2. Make sure all students understand the classroom rules clearly and review them often. Rules are made to be followed! Be consistent and fair with the enforcement. Consider each incident's unique circumstances while making discipline-related decisions.
3. Be objective, not judgmental. Try to look at things from the students' perspective.
4. Be prepared to admit your mistakes. Use humour, when appropriate. Model tolerant, patient, dignified, and respectful behaviour.
5. Address problem behaviour directly and immediately. Unresolved conflicts and issues often resurface. Addressing a problem early lessens the chance that it will expand.
6. Seek solutions, not blame. Use the least intrusive intervention possible.
7. Catch kids being good!

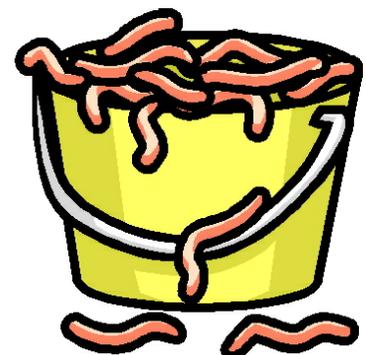
"I use several free incentives with my kids and they are more popular than anything that I could buy in the store! They are:

- Eat lunch with a friend pass - students get to invite a student from another class (that eats lunch at the same time as our class) or a student from our class to eat lunch with them at the center tables in our lunch room.
- Be line leader.
- Eat lunch with me.
- Sit at the teacher's desk - students get to sit at the teacher's desk for a day (This is by far the most popular, so I don't do it often."

## The Wigglers!

What strategies do you use for wigglers?

"I use a lot of reminders and short-term activities. I pick out those students who are my wigglers and I come up with a number of ways I can have them do me little favours throughout the day so they have a chance to get out of their seats and move. Sometimes if I see a few getting antsy I'll call out stop, stretch and move. Then everyone is supposed to stop, stand up and stretch as I am and move their bodies before sitting back down."



# Map Skills

Maps are very abstract. Many adults have problems reading maps! Small children need to be led into map reading by concrete examples, familiar places and gradually expand to maps of larger areas.

Kindergarten teachers can teach beginning map skills by using play doll's furniture. Set up a room and then look down on it. Draw the room on large paper, and have the children pretend to be in the room and go from one feature to another. Draw a map of the classroom on large paper and let the students use it as a play center with dolls.

*Dora the Explorer* has simple maps in each episode, with graphic items on the map.

Grade One students can make maps of the classroom, the school or their bedrooms. When they understand these examples, the teacher can make a big map of the town or local area of the city. Find streets and familiar buildings. Label the map. You can also make a local map on a table, making models of the buildings and local sites. Discuss the different ways you can go from the school to your home, from your home to the grocery store, etc.

Grade Two and Three students should be ready to learn more abstract map skills. They can learn about their province, their country, the continents and oceans.

## Ideas from Teachers:

"We created a class character that took a trip around the world. I wrote the first "chapter" and got our character from our school to the first country. Then each child was assigned a country and would write another chapter that told what our character did and saw in that country and got him/her to the next country."

This website has lots of poems and songs to learn the continents and oceans:

<http://teachers.net/gazette/DEC02/continents.html>

Make a book called **Me on the Map**.

Photocopy the book with the maps needed, and the student can place himself on the map. Have lines at the bottom of the page for printing the sentence.

Page one is a picture of the student...This is me.

Page two is a picture of the school...This is me at (name of school).

Page three is a picture of the town...this is me in (name of town).

Page four is a picture of the province...This is me in (name of province).

Page five is a picture of the country....This is me in (name of country).

Page six is a picture of the continent. This is me in North America.



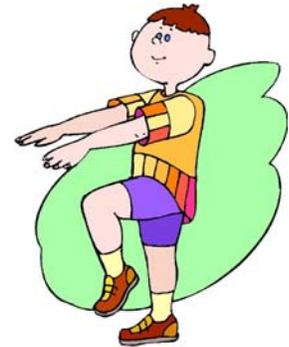
"Read the book '*How to Bake an Apple Pie and See the World*' by Marjorie Priceman. The little girl travels all over the world to get her ingredients. The children love the book and we end up making apple pies."

There are lots of books that involve maps. The *Winnie the Pooh* books have a map of the Enchanted Wood, *My Father's Dragon* has a good map for the students to follow, and there are lots more. You could even do a map to illustrate *Goin' on a Lion Hunt!* As you read books to the students, make maps of the characters' travels.

"We created salt dough maps. I checked out a bunch of books that had the characters going from one place to another. The students read the book, drew a map to show where the character went (like through a meadow, over a stream, past a forest, mountains in the distance, through a field, etc.), and then made their salt dough maps."

# P.E. and Fitness

“Our school has done a study on the students’ fitness levels. The PE teacher tested their running, jumping, skipping, push-ups, and lots of other skills. He graded the kids with a 1 - 10 score. When this was done it was felt that the fitness level of the school as a whole was less than what it should be. (They could likely have figured this out without the testing!) Too many kids go home from school and watch TV, rather than going outdoors and playing. Perhaps the fear among parents that children must not be on the street playing or walking to a friend’s house to play prevents the children from the daily outdoor play we remember. The athletic kids do organized sports - hockey, soccer, etc., but many children do not.



We have started to do two things this year. We have a short 5 minute exercise time each day, where the PE teacher leads aerobic exercises before the students come in from the lunch playtime. They line up by the door as usual, then space themselves (this took some training), and then the PE teacher puts on jazzy music and the whole school does the exercises. It doesn’t take long. Then every PE period (we have three each week) the class again does aerobic exercises for the first ten minutes. Here is where we practice the exercises and discuss how to do them well. Then we spend the rest of the period doing games or exercises where everyone is moving. We try not to do things where there is time wasted on setting up activities, or on games where half the students are sitting out or waiting - relays, as an example.

It doesn’t seem to be that much, but it has made a big difference in the children’s abilities. The PE teacher plans to re-test at the end of the year, but there doesn’t seem to be any doubt that the students’ levels have improved. They are able to do the exercises without becoming tired or straining. Even the teachers are finding their fitness levels improving!”

*Marg*

A school district in the UK has been doing a three-year project looking at how schools can deliver two hours of high quality PE and games each week. It has been delighted with the results.

While more high-quality P.E. certainly improves students’ health, the added effects are even more encouraging, according to the report. Schools that set out to increase the time spent on games and exercise discover this brings quite an astonishing outcome. Attendance goes up and bad behaviour drops, pupils grow healthier and happier, confidence improves and results start to climb.

Scientists have done extensive research on the links between physical activity and cognitive function and have found that mental ability is indeed enhanced through exercise. Research from the Harvard Medical School tells us that exercise benefits the brain by improving the blood flow and spurring cell growth. Len Almond, director of the British Heart Foundation’s national centre for physical activity and health, agrees. ‘A regular ten minutes of exercise has a major impact on learning ability. In addition, physical activity decreases depression. The increased blood supply makes you feel better and more alert.’



<http://www.gameskidsplay.net/>

Are you looking for games to play with your kids? This is a super site - in fact, there are so many games here that it may be very difficult to choose one. There are jump-rope rhymes - fun if you spent your childhood with a skipping rope.

There are ball games, chasing games, circle games, games from different countries and much, much more!

# The Polar Express

by Chris Van Allsburg.

The movie of *The Polar Express* will be out before Christmas, so it will be a popular book this year!

You can spend a morning or afternoon reading the story and doing related activities, or stretch it into a longer theme. Here are some ideas for this theme.



- Introduce *The Polar Express* by giving each student a train ticket to board the unit adventure. The ticket could say, 'The Polar Express ..... a return ticket from the \_\_\_\_\_ school to the North Pole.'
- Set up an electric train. The teacher could dress as the engineer.
- The children (and the teacher) can dress in pajamas, slippers and robes.
- Give the students a travel guide diary to record the trip.
- Give the students a map of the world and discuss where the north pole is located.
- Introduce the title of the book and the author, and show the cover of the book to the students.
- You can set the scene for a train ride and simulate a ride to the North Pole. Set up pairs of chairs in two parallel rows with a center aisle for the imaginary train ride.
- Give each child a cup of hot cocoa.
- Check the tickets and get aboard the 'train'! Read the book as you ride along.
- Find a bell that resembles the boy's bell in the book. When you are reading the book and the boy receives the bell, take out your silver bell and show the students. When you read that only those who truly believe can hear the bell, ring the bell for your students and ask if they can hear it.
- Give each student a magic bell at the end of the book. Put it on a ribbon so they can wear it around their necks.

After reading:

- Decorate a bell shape with colour, glitter and ribbon.
- Sing Christmas songs while still on the train.
- Give each student a blank paper and have them pretend they are riding on The Polar Express. The paper is their train window, so they should draw what they see as they look out of their window.
- Make a train mural for your hallway or classroom. Cut out the 'cars' and then cut yellow squares of paper to fit the windows. Have the children draw their heads and shoulders on the yellow squares. Then glue them on the cars so it looks as if the children are riding on the train.

Grade Two and Three:

Make lists of the visual images in the story: 'the train thundered through the quiet wilderness', the reindeer 'pranced and paced, ringing the silver bells that hung from their harnesses. It was a magical sound, like nothing I'd ever heard.'

Make lists of the interesting descriptive vocabulary words.

Discuss what the author did to raise suspense.

This story has a distinct beginning, middle and end. Do a story map to show the flow of the story.

Grade Threes can find similes and metaphors in the story.

Do map skills, finding the north pole and other features.



Go here for lots of wonderful stuff!

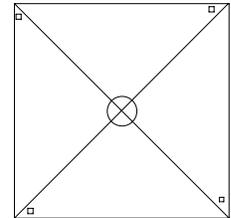
<http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/thepolarexpress/fungames.shtml>

# Christmas Art

## Poinsettias

Have the students fingerpaint a sheet of red paper and a sheet of green paper. Use large oval leaf patterns and have the students cut out five green oval shapes and eleven red oval shapes. (Pick an uneven number - older students will be able to make more pieces than young ones.) Glue one end of each red oval into the center of the flower so the petals are evenly spaced. Glue the green ones behind the red ones so the ends stick out. Put a red circle in the center of the poinsettia and make yellow spots for the flower center. The bigger you make these, the more striking they are!"

Make pinwheels from red paper,. Begin with a square and fold diagonally twice. Draw a small circle in the center. Cut down the lines from the corners to the circle. Take the corners with the little squares and bring them into the center and glue. These make three-dimensional poinsettias that are great for tree decorations or bulletin boards.



## Christmas Trees

"For a neat bulletin board.... we made green footprints last week and this week we added glitter toes! I stapled them by the heels into the shape of a Christmas tree, all overlapping each other. It's really cute."

The children trace and cut out their hand prints from green paper. I arrange them in a tree shape on the bulletin board and we decorate it with all the decorations we make."

We turn the pointed cones upside down and paint them like little Christmas trees.

## Ornaments

"I like to make paper chain hanging ornaments. This is also a math lesson. I give the children a math sentence (plus or minus). They use pieces of wrapping paper to make the paper chain answer. We hang them on the paper tree that we'll make for the bulletin board.

"I buy inexpensive silver ball ornaments. The children paint the silver balls with either designs or just a mush of paint. The mush of paint looks absolutely dreadful and then it dries into the most beautiful ornaments. The silver shimmers through the dry paint. I use dry paint discs with lots of water, not liquid tempera. The liquid paint tends to be too thick and it breaks off when it dries. I wrap these up for Christmas gifts for the parents. The paint seems to last for a long time."

## The Handprint Snowman Ornament

Buy dark blue Christmas balls. Put the hooks in the balls before you begin. Paint a child's palm and fingers with white acrylic paint. Set the ball down in the palm of the child's hand. Press the fingers up around the sides of the ball. Open the hand and lift the ball out carefully. While the paint is still wet, sprinkle the fine glitter on the white paint to make it look like the snow is glistening. Hang to dry. when the child's fingerprints come up around the sides of the ball, it looks like snowmen standing in the snow. Use sharpie markers to make black eyes, orange carrot nose, mouth, and buttons.

These aren't just 5 snowmen as anyone can see, I made them with my hand Which is a part of me.

Now each year when you trim the tree, You'll look back and recall Christmas of 2004 When my hand was just this small!

<http://www.littlegiraffes.com/christmas.html> This site has a picture of the ornaments.

## Reindeer

“I’ve made simple reindeer. Purchase a puzzle with larger pieces, and then remove all the pieces with a straight edge. Have the kids each select 3 pieces and paint them brown on one side. When dry, arrange the pieces so that two are pointed outwards as the antlers, and the third piece is on top pulled down so it looks like a nose. Add googly eyes, and a jeweled nose with a red sequin at the tip of the piece. You can attach a small magnet on the back with hot glue, or a ribbon to hang it on the tree. They can also have a small pin hot glued on the back to make a Christmas brooch.”

“Use three craft sticks and glue them to form a triangle. Put a red pom pom on the nose point and pipe cleaners cut in half and wrapped around the horizontal stick. Add wiggly eyes on the angled sticks.”

### <http://www.littlegiraffes.com/christmas.html>

Here is a great poem about Rudolph that you can make into a little book for your students or even use as a concert poem. There are oodles of other super art ideas for the Christmas season. Don’t miss it!

Make hand and foot reindeer! Trace one foot and two (opposite) hands on brown paper and cut them out. The foot is the head with the heel as the nose. The hands are the antlers.

These are great sites to see Christmas crafts and ornament

<http://www.geocities.com/txhogue/crafts/ornaments.html><http://www.geocities.com/txhogue/crafts/dec.html>

## Santas

Enlarge this Santa head (or other) as large as possible. The students trace their hands on white paper and cut them out, cutting across the palm. Curl the fingers. Glue them onto the beard, beginning at the bottom and layering them.



You can also pull cotton batting apart until it is thin, ‘paint’ liquid glue on small sections of the beard and hat band and stick on the cotton batting. Then glue another section, until the beard is all covered.

## Bulletin Boards

Make angels and put photos of the children’s heads on the angels.

Make a large fireplace. Have the students make Christmas stockings and decorate them - hang them on the fireplace. Print the names on the stockings. Older students can use a stocking shape to write a story or a letter to Santa.

## Classroom Christmas Trees

Do an environmentally friendly Christmas tree in your classroom. Use an artificial tree or a bare deciduous tree (as is, or painted white).

See if all the decorations can be natural and student made.

Do some ‘old-fashioned’ decorations - string popcorn and/or dried cranberries.

Make paper chains using small strips of red and green or silver and gold paper. Make the strips small so the chains don’t dwarf the tree.

Re-cycle old Christmas cards. Have the students collect can lids (with the rolled edges) and glue Christmas card cut-outs to both sides and add a string. These can also have student’s pictures.

Roll small cones in paint and glitter or use the coloured glitter pens. Hot glue a ribbon loop to the top.

Make the cinnamon and glue gingerbread men ornaments. They smell lovely!

# The Christmas Concert

“For our Christmas concert I rely on split-track tapes. What’s nice is I have background music for my students to learn songs too. We do not do plays or skits as we do not have a great sound system so it’s too difficult for the audience to hear the lines.”

“We’re doing two songs in our Christmas concert as well as one poem. We’re singing ‘Nuttin’ for Christmas’ with our Grade Seven buddies. The grade sevens are singing the part where they explain all the naughty deeds they did and that someone snitched on them (that’s when they point to my kids), and the kindergarteners sing the part about ‘they’re getting nuttin’ for Christmas, their mommies and daddies are mad....’ (as they point back to the grade sevens).”  
*Barb*

“We are going to do a song called the Turkey Dance (based on the Chicken dance).”

## Christmas Boxes

Big boxes little ones  
Some in between  
All holding presents  
That cannot be seen.

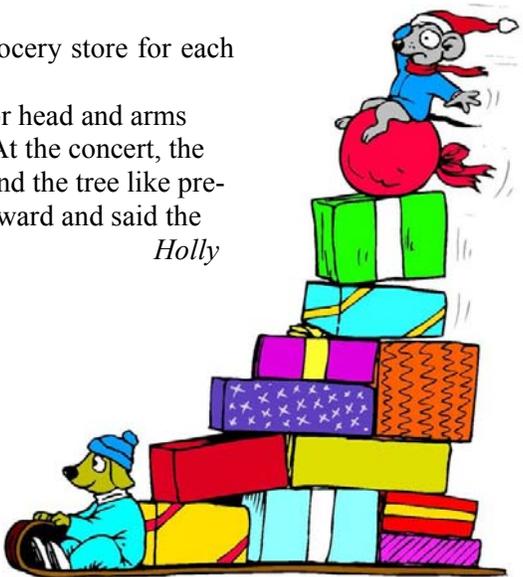
Boxes with ribbons  
Boxes with string  
Boxes with wrappings  
That don’t tell a thing.

Boxes with lids on  
Boxes that fold  
Boxes that whisper  
Of treasures they hold.

Green boxes, red boxes  
Silv’ry ones too  
Under the Christmas tree  
Waiting for you.

“We got a box from the grocery store for each child - big enough to put on.

Parents cut holes in them for head and arms  
The kids had fun decorating them. At the concert, the kids at first were all crouching around the tree like presents. Then they stood up, came forward and said the poem. Everyone loved it!”  
*Holly*



Keep it simple!

Do what YOU do best - sing if you have taught singing well, do drama if your class has done drama, do poetry if you teach a lot of poetry.

Practice until the kids can do it in their sleep.



“A few years ago, I had my class do a dance to Raffi’s *Christmas Time is Coming* on his Christmas album. The song is very country. The children wore denim skirts, jeans, vests and plaid skirts. They wore cowboy hats with garland tacked on. We did a simple dance that I created to go with the music. They were lined up in two lines facing a partner, and did some movements like dancing up to each other (more of a stepping) and then clapping, then repeating with a do-si-do, then repeating with a swing your partner kind of thing. Kept on doing that kind of thing a few times, then we made a circle and danced to the middle, then out again. We just used very basic dance steps and put them to the music. The finale was where we lined up facing the audience and one line zigzagged through the other line. Everyone was clapping to the music. It worked out great.”

*Cathy*

# Christmas Gifts

## A Candle

Buy three kinds of small beans, preferably in three colours. For Christmas colours, get kidney beans, white beans and green split peas. You can also use the coloured aquarium rocks. Have a 6 oz. paper cup for each child, with the names on the bottom.

Mix up the beans and add liquid glue (the white glue that sets clear). Fill the cups with the mixture to about 2 cm. from the top. Take a 25 cm. tapered candle and push it down in the bean mixture. Let it dry for at least two days. Cut or tear off the paper cup carefully. Tie a ribbon around the base of the candle, next to the beans.

“We get baby food jars and ‘paint’ glue on the outside. We then cover them in a layer of red and green tissue paper squares. We then do one more layer of glue. Drop in a tealight candle and we’re all done!”

## Photos

“I take a digital photograph of each student in front of a Christmas bulletin board and print them out. The students glue the outer edges of the photo to oaktag. Then I give them eight coloured tongue depressors to create any type of frame they’d like. We string them on gold ribbon. I then give the kids glitter glue pens to neatly decorate their frame. They really are fancy and beautiful. Parents always love them.”

Christmas tree decorations with the student’s photo and the year and grade level are always appreciated, and are brought out every year afterwards to decorate the tree.

“My children make ornaments using Elmer's glue, green food dye, and shredded wheat crushed. You mix this, shape it into a wreath shape and place the child's picture in the middle after they dry. They can be dressed up with glitter and ribbon.”

## Exchanging Gifts in the Classroom

This practice is becoming less popular, but the children do love presents! When students exchange gifts, some are always disappointed. Some children don’t bring gifts and some of the gifts are not suitable. Here are some other ideas that let the children have the pleasure without the problems.

Have the students each bring a book wrapped as a gift for the classroom. Have a few extra for the students that don’t bring one or are unable to bring one. They can all be put under the tree and each child in turn may take one or take one that another student has previously chosen. You can also put on Christmas music and hand the gifts around until the music stops. When every child has a gift, take turns opening them. Or.... the student that brought the gift can open it. You can put a insert in the beginning of each book telling who brought it and the year. Kids will come back in later years to visit and see if their book is still there!

Have every child bring enough of a small item for every student in the classroom. Put these in individual paper stockings. Possibilities are wrapped candies, school supplies such as pencils or erasers, stickers, small toys, party grab bag favours, etc. This way every child gets a stocking to open and everyone gets the same things.

If your school is in a higher socio-economic area, have each student bring a present for a child that can be given to a social agency that hands out gifts at Christmas.



The favourite Christmas gifts for parents are pictures of the child and/or neatly done crafts - child made not teacher made....



# Christmas Activities



“For our holiday party, we switch between the 3 classrooms and the students do 2 activities in each room:

1. We made a paper plate Santa with cotton beard.
2. We organized a bag of reindeer food with a poem about sprinkling it on the front lawn. We mixed raw oatmeal, birdseed and the coloured sugar crystals to sparkle. (Don't use glitter - it can harm wildlife and is not bio-degradable.)

Sprinkle on the lawn at night  
The moon will make it sparkle bright  
As Santa's reindeer fly and roam  
This will guide them to your home.

3. We made a nutcracker using toilet paper rolls.
4. A teacher taught the children how to play the dreidel game.
5. They liked to make snowmen cookie treats - an oatmeal cookie as the bottom snowball, a vanilla wafer as the head, frosting over both cookies, a 1/2 gumdrop hat, mini-m&m eyes, mini-chocolate chip buttons, and a fruit rollup strip for the scarf.

6. We made a snowflake windsock - large piece of blue construction paper, a few snowflakes made by cutting coffee filters, and blue and white streamers to hang down. Glue the snowflakes onto the blue paper, glue the streamers along the bottom, roll into a cylinder and staple, hole-punch the top and tie ribbon or yarn through to hang.

As they make everything and rotate, they carry around a plastic grocery bag to keep everything - except the cookies- they're saved to be eaten at the end of the party.”

## Help Others

Have a penny drive and donate the money to a children's charity. This is a good project - just think of all the math work you can do with all those pennies! Have a penny race with students in the next class.

## The Partridge in a Pear Tree

For each one of the days, we like to do a different hand or body movement.

- Partridge in a pear tree - hold your hands over your head like a ballerina (my girls like to stand on their toes)  
Two turtle doves - put your folded hands on one cheek and bend your head to the side (like you're showing that you're sleepy)  
Three French hens - put the backs of your hands on your bottom and flutter your fingers up and down like they're feathers  
Four calling birds - put your hands around your mouth as if you're making a megaphone and say (a little loudly) four calling birds  
Five golden rings - hold out one hand and sing this line really loudly.  
Six geese a-laying - squat down like you're laying eggs and get right back up  
Seven swans a-swimming - fold your arms at your elbows and make like you're swimming with your hands  
Eight maids a-milking - pretend you're milking a cow with both hands  
Nine ladies dancing - tap your feet in front of you like you're dancing  
Ten lords a-leaping - leap up and down a few times  
Eleven pipers piping - hold your hands out to the side like you're playing a fife  
Twelve drummers drumming - drum your hands up and down in front of you like you're playing a drum

# Gingerbread, Gingerbread!

If you have a digital camera take pictures of the students and make their faces the gingerbread people.

## Gingerbread Poem

Stir a bowl of gingerbread,  
Smooth and spicy brown.  
Roll it with a rolling pin,  
Up and up and down.  
With a cookie cutter,  
Make some little men.  
Put them in the oven  
Till half past ten!



## My Gingerbread House

I made a house of gingerbread.  
It was so sugary sweet.  
It took me all day long to make.  
But lasted just a week!  
Monday - I ate the ceiling  
Tuesday - I ate the door  
Wednesday - I ate the windows  
Thursday - I ate the floor  
Friday - I ate all four walls  
Saturday - I ate the lawn  
Sunday - I licked up the crumbs  
My gingerbread house is gone!

*Author Unknown*

“We made a great door decoration by putting aluminum foil on our classroom door and then putting on the gingerbread men. The children made gingerbread men out of construction paper. We decorated them by tracing the outside of the shape with white paint and then decorate inside with glitter, construction paper, etc. The foil is the cookie sheet - you can curl up the edges to make it look real. This would make a good bulletin board display, too”

## Jan Brett's Gingerbread Baby

There are so many things to do on Jan Brett's site! Try these to go with *The Gingerbread Baby*.

[http://janbrett.com/activities\\_pages.htm](http://janbrett.com/activities_pages.htm)

[http://janbrett.com/activities\\_pages\\_masks.htm](http://janbrett.com/activities_pages_masks.htm) Masks to use to put on a play. She has patterns for the animals and more suggestions on her website on how to use the book for a play!

[http://janbrett.com/gingerbread\\_baby\\_recipe.htm](http://janbrett.com/gingerbread_baby_recipe.htm) The best gingerbread recipe!

And try these sites for lots more gingerbread ideas.....

<http://tech.dcboces.org/~oneill/gingerbreadpage.htm>

<http://www.mrsmcgowan.com/cc/gingerbread.htm>

## Peppermint Stick

I took a lick of my peppermint stick  
And I thought it tasted yummy.  
It used to hang on my Christmas tree  
But now it's in my tummy.  
Peppermint stick, peppermint stick  
I thought it tasted yummy!



Make a candy cane ornament to go with this song.

We play 'Santa's Bell'. We put a bell under the chair of the person who is 'Santa' and the person who takes it must ring it all the way back to his desk. Santa then has an clue as to which direction the ringing bell went.



Santa, Santa where's your bell?  
One of the elves took it home.  
Santa, Santa, Where's your bell?  
Somebody took it.  
Listen hard, a clue will tell.

# Getting Started with Computers in Your Classroom

*By Marcia Goudie, Vacaville, California*

In the last issue I talked about the many ways to set up your classroom to get the most from your computer(s). This month I will share some basic ideas to get your students started with technology.

What are some standards for the use of technology for primary students? I went to the NETS (National Educational Technology Standards) (USA) to see what other educators had to say about technology and students. Here are some of the priorities they expressed.

Students should:

- understand the basic operation and concepts in the use of technology.
- develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that will support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.
- use productivity tools to collaborate in a broad range of technology projects and activities.
- use telecommunications to collaborate, publish, and interact with peers, experts, and other audiences.

The ranges of skills that connect students to these standards seem very broad. With primary students, we need to develop a starting place for educators. Here are some examples of activities and lessons that will begin to meet the needs of your students.

Before getting started, introduce pictures of computers and their primary parts to your students. Provide the correct terminology for students to use from the beginning. Develop some basic rules and guidelines for the use of computers in your room, stressing the proper care and treatment of electronic equipment. Model lessons for students and perhaps repeat these instructions several times over a course of a few weeks. There are several great downloads and lessons that can be found for teachers to use to present these concepts here: <http://www.kidsdomain.com/brain/computer/lesson.html> This site is a treasure house.

If you want your students to be able to work with many kinds of software they need to be able to maneuver through the pages. Now is the time for some hands on lessons using the mouse. I found some great “healthy” sites on line for my students. All my introductory lessons were done whole group and then students were allowed to start out on their own or work with a partner.

I recently chose several websites for my students to use that would enhance their use of the mouse. One unique way I made these specific websites available to my students is through the use of a HOTSHEET. Students access these sites through an open document on our computer desktop. You can visit my website <http://www.marcias-lesson-links.com/ThingstoShare.html> and download several documents that can be used with your students.

One site online to start with is <http://www.starfall.com> You’ll find storybooks to read, games, puzzles and much more. These simple activities give your students a chance to use the mouse to develop their maneuverability skills.

Another great place is <http://thekidzpage.com> At the top of the home page is an icon for jigsaw puzzles. Students can pick through a variety of pictures, choose how many pieces they want the puzzles to be divided into, and begin with little assistance from an adult. My students love working on “math” skills at the same time sharpening their mousing skills. As with all activities model proper use with your students and give them support as they get started.

Another activity for those without online access, is using the Paint program (standard with most Microsoft products). Introduce the tools for students, and then give instructions for them to draw themselves, geometric shapes or any other designs. Students may also type text in their “graphic”. If you are lucky to have a printer connected to this computer, you can give your students permission to print out their pictures or stories.

In the next issues watch for some outstanding sources for simple lessons in the classroom using Kid Pix.

Check this out! Here are links and pictures of Marcia’s classroom.

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



# Websites

There is a great site called RhymeZone. It gives rhyming words, synonyms, homophones, so much.

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

<http://www.jmeacham.com/lessons.htm#erase>

Listen for rhyming words doing erase-a-rhyme, erasing part of a picture as the kids say the rhyming word. This could be done by colouring the part of the picture, too.

Winter Holidays Around the World for Kindergarten - a food to make for each winter celebration.

<http://members.aol.com/il2teach/pubpage.holidays.htm>

[http://www.fvsd.ab.ca/stm/sites\\_for\\_teachers.htm](http://www.fvsd.ab.ca/stm/sites_for_teachers.htm)

Cathy-Dee has collected many good sites to explore.

<http://www.sabine.k12.la.us/zes/resource/default.htm>

This is a great site! Go exploring - but only when you have lots of time - you might just get hooked!

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

Another great resource.

<http://www.abcschoolhouse.com/free.html>

Blackline masters on a variety of themes and subjects ready to download free.

<http://www.teachingheart.net/>

This is a teacher's site that has been on the web for many years and is being continually improved. Look through her themes and headings!

Here is a keyboard you can download and photocopy.

<http://www.teachnet.com/powertools/neattools/keyboard/index.html>

If you have on-line access in the classroom or computer lab - here are typing exercises:

<http://www.typingpal.com/exercises/>

<http://www.canteach.ca/>

Iram is a BC teacher. Her site is known by teachers around the world as the place to look for poems to use in the classroom. There are lots of other interesting things, too - look in the Science section, and the math section - they are all interesting!

<http://members.shaw.ca/henriksent/>

Another BC teacher has a great collection of poetry. Tia has collected poems on every subject under the sun.....



# Odds and Ends

## Read, read, read!

“I do not use centers in my classroom - I find them time-consuming to set up and difficult to monitor. I like to teach reading in small groups, and while I am teaching these groups or having conferences with individual children, everyone else reads. My Grade Two kids can read up to an hour by the end of September. Some children can get into a book and be comfortable reading independently for the entire time, and others do a variety of reading and can change several times during the period. I have a basket of books on each table with picture books, non-fiction books, magazines, books of varying difficulty, books by authors we are studying, books about themes we are studying, copies of books made by the class, etc., in them.

As long as the students are reading material at their independent reading level, this is the best use of time! Their reading really improves with all this practice, and even the lower readers learn to concentrate and read lots of books.”

“My kids do ‘Book Shopping’. They come in, mark lunch choices, sharpen pencils, get their browsing boxes (box of books at their level) and head to our classroom library to read on the rug or bean bags or choose new books for their boxes. I know it sounds like it could be a ‘free for all’, but it's not. They know the rules for appropriate ‘shopping’ and appropriate book selections and know the consequences if they break the rules. I really feel that this is one of the most important times of the day. I'm easily able to do my ‘teacher business’ and they are totally engaged in reading!”

## Hot Chocolate

Make a pot of hot chocolate on a cold winter day. It is great while you read *The Polar Express*, too!

In a big pot, mix: (this serves 20 kids)

16 cups skim or low-fat (1%) milk

1 cup sugar

1 1/2 cup chocolate-flavored syrup

Marshmallow cream, or nonfat whipped topping

Mix the milk, sugar, and syrup. Cover and cook on LOW until the milk is hot. Stir, and ladle into mugs. Garnish with the marshmallow crème or whipped topping.



## Poetry Folders

“My kids kept a Poetry/Song Folder this past year in a duotang. Every time we did a poem or song for morning meeting, reading, writing, science, social studies, or for fun, I would copy it and give it to them to put in their folders. They could illustrate the poems whenever they had a chance - or during our Finish Up Friday time. I use a LOT of poems and songs, so by the end of the year they each had a fat folder of memories from our year together. Throughout the year, the kids really loved reading their Poetry Folders and revisiting the poems/songs we had done. They stored the Folders in their book baskets. I did not allow them to go home during the year, for fear of them not returning since we used them almost daily! They took their folders home on the last day of school. Lots of summer reading material!”

“I do a class songbook with my students. I use a 3 prong portfolio for this. At the beginning of the book, the students place two sheets of lined paper. These are labeled ‘Table of Contents’. As we add songs to our books, we number each page and write the page number and song title on our table of contents page. The songs themselves are typed and the students can decorate the pages if they wish. This is a good reading experience, too, as there are often higher level vocabulary words in the songs.”

# Teaching the Little Books

## Our Five Senses at Christmas (K - 1)

- 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 the five senses, and things we see, hear, smell, touch and taste at Christmas.
- 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.

For the pictures: page 2..... cut a rectangle from Christmas wrapping paper for a gift. Attach some ribbon for a bow. Page 3 ..... paint the gingerbread man with gingerbread mix (adjust the texture). Page 4 .... put a tiny bell on a thin ribbon and glue it at the reindeer’s neck. Page 5 ... glue a tiny candy cane (wrapped) on the page.

Page 6 ..... pull cotton batting very thin and then paint the beard, etc. with glue and stick on the cotton. Page 7 - draw a Christmas picture.

## Matter Matters (1 - 2)

- 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 matter, the solids, liquids and gases. Do this as part of a science unit.
- 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.
- Illustrate the book after discussions.
- Use the words in the story to discuss the phonics you are teaching.
- 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.

## Christmas at the North Pole

- Photocopy the needed copies of the little book and staple them.
- Show the title page and read the title.
- What do you think Christmas at the North Pole would be like? Brainstorm things that might happen.
- Give a book to each student.
- Read the book to the students or with the students and discuss each page.
- What do you think it is like at the North Pole? Are there really trees? Where would they be more likely to get a Christmas tree? Would you like to be there for Christmas?
- 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 book in groups, partners and individually. Have the students read the book to you.

## How To Tell If You Are A Real Teacher

Real teachers mark papers in the car, during commercials, in staff meetings, in the bathroom, and have been seen grading in church.  
Real teachers drive older cars owned by credit unions.  
Real teachers clutch a pencil while thinking and make notes in the margins of books.  
Real teachers can't walk past a crowd of kids without straightening up the line.  
Real teachers have disjointed necks from writing on boards without turning their backs on the class.  
Real teachers have been timed gulping down a full lunch in 2 minutes, 18 seconds.  
Master teachers can eat faster than that.  
Real teachers can predict exactly which parents will show up at Open House.  
Real teachers know it is better to seek forgiveness than to ask permission.  
Real teachers know the best end of term lesson plans can come from Blockbuster.  
Real teachers know the shortest distance and the length of travel time from their classroom to the office.  
Real teachers can "sense" gum.  
Real teachers know the difference among what must be marked, what ought to be mark, and what probably should never again see the light of day.  
Real teachers are solely responsible for the destruction of the rain forest.  
Real teachers have their best conferences in the parking lot.  
Real teachers have never heard an original excuse.  
Real teachers will eat anything that is put in the workroom/teacher's lounge.  
Real teachers know secretaries and custodians run the school.  
Real teachers know the rules don't really apply to them.  
Real teachers hear the heartbeats of crisis; always have time to listen; know they teach students, not subjects; and they are absolutely non-expendable.



Dear Colleagues,

Have a great November and December! Remember to take time for yourself and smile and laugh every day - even when things get hectic!

And if you have time - we would really appreciate anything you could send in for the coming issues.....

Jean and Kelly

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To contribute a great idea, a funny story,  
a project or an insight  
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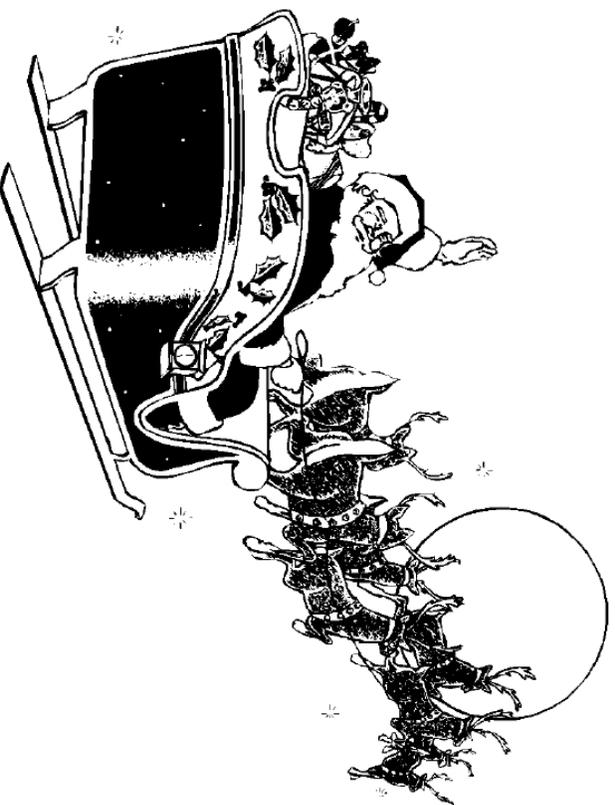


# Christmas at the North Pole

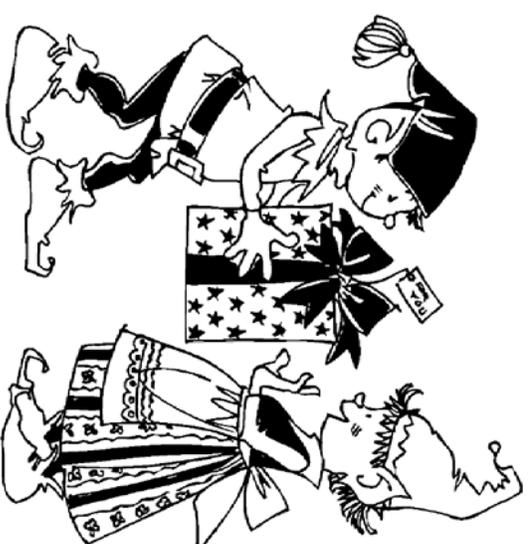


Christmas at the North Pole

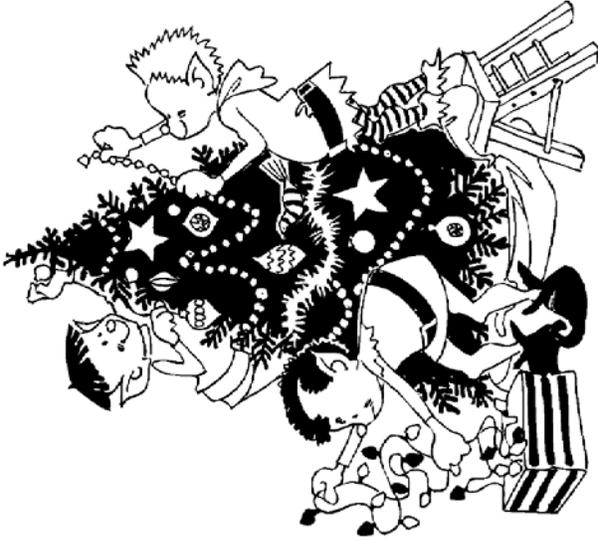
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It was Christmas Eve. Santa's elves had been working for weeks and weeks to get all the toys ready for boys and girls around the world. Now Santa had gone on his long trip, and the elves started to think about their own Christmas Day.

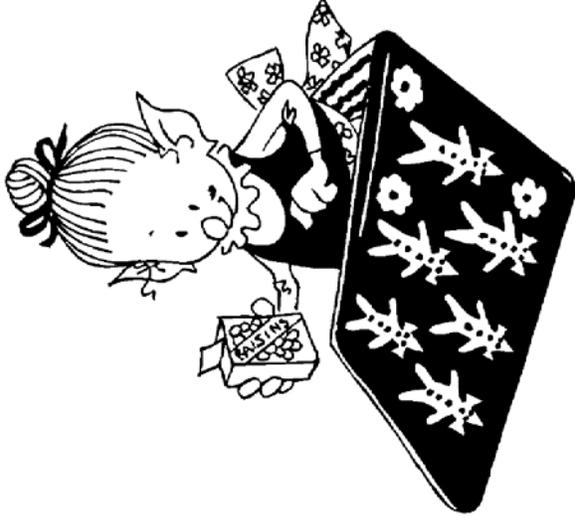


But the elves knew that Christmas isn't about trees and gingerbread. It isn't about lights and Christmas balls. Christmas is about giving and sharing. It is about friends and family. It is about making others happy. Merry Christmas!



Then all the elves helped to trim the tree. They put lights on the tree and stars and Christmas balls.

The tree looked beautiful! When it was finished, the elves all stood around and admired the sparkling tree.



Meg went into the kitchen and poured and mixed and stirred. Then she cut out gingerbread men and put them on a pan. She found raisins to make buttons on the gingerbread men.



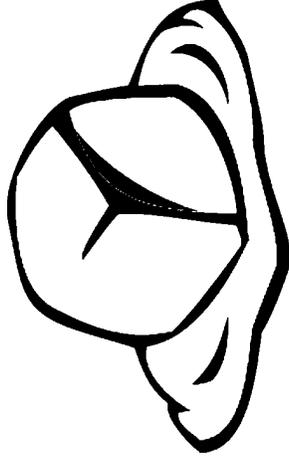
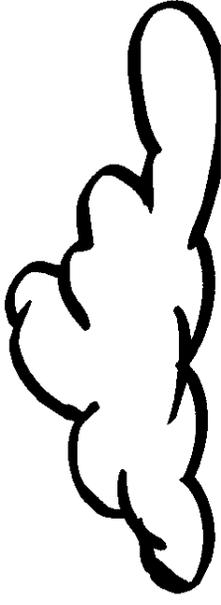
Mike was very happy to be finished all the work with the toys. He went out into the snow and the cold with his little hatchet. He found a perfect Christmas tree and brought it back to the North Pole.

4

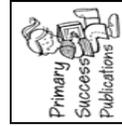


Mac wasn't helping the other elves! He went into Santa's closet and put on one of Santa's extra suits. He made a funny beard and pretended to be Santa. Do you think he fooled the other elves?

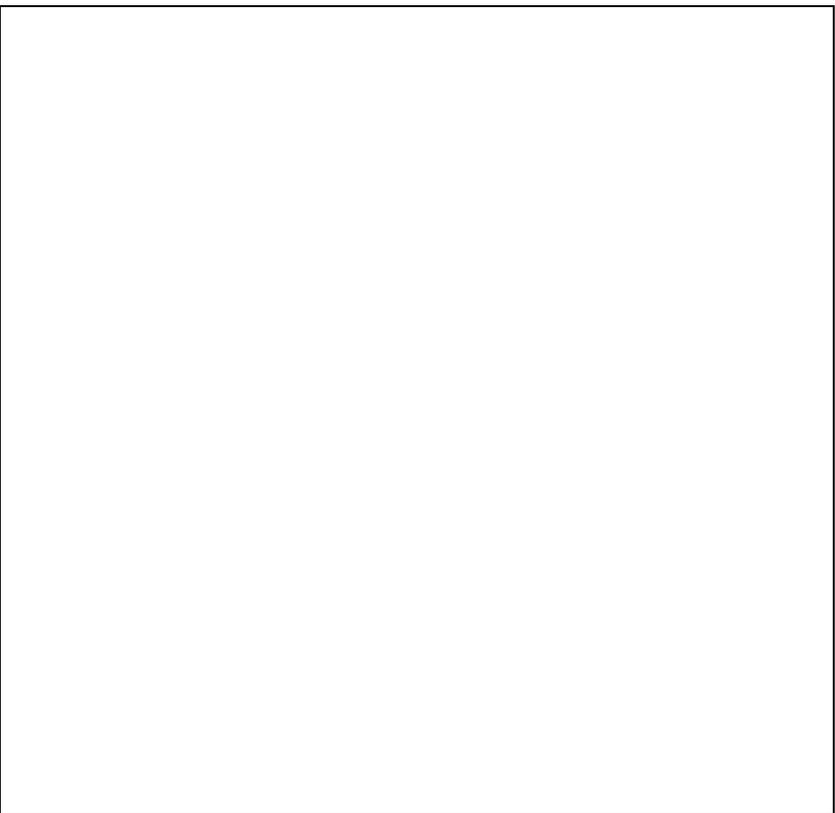
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Matter  
Matters!

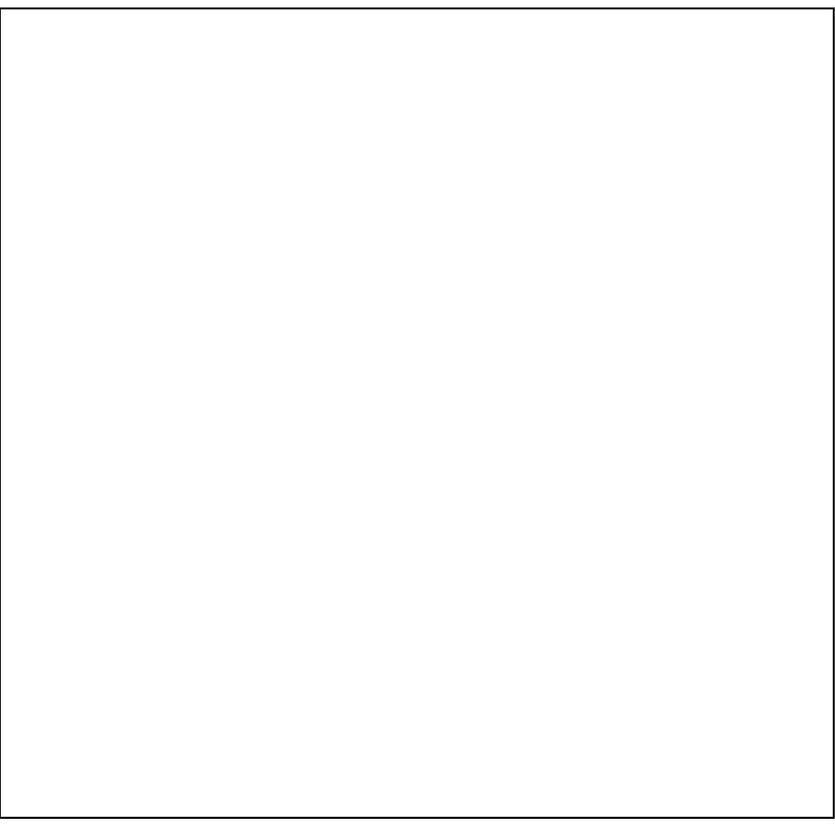


Matter Matters



## Solids

Some matter is solid  
It doesn't change shape.  
It can't move around,  
It stays in one place.



It keeps up a kite.  
Air fills up a bubble.  
Without it to breathe,  
We would be in BIG trouble!

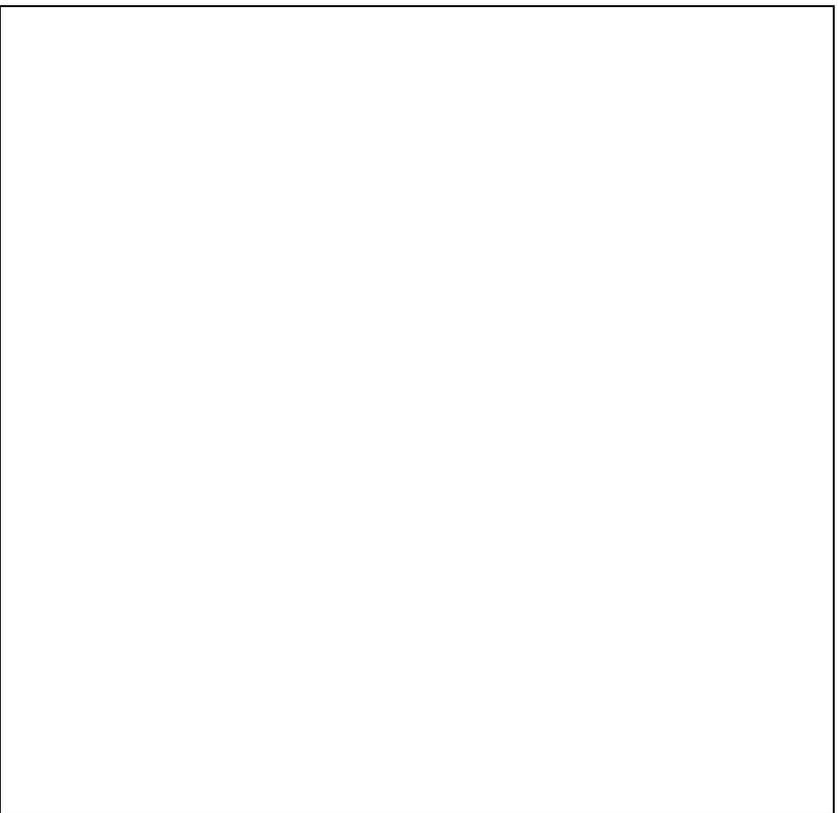


## Gases

Air is a gas.  
We can't see it, that's true;  
But often we feel it  
In things that we do.



Your desk is a solid,  
And so is your chair.  
Just look in your classroom -  
Wow! They're everywhere!



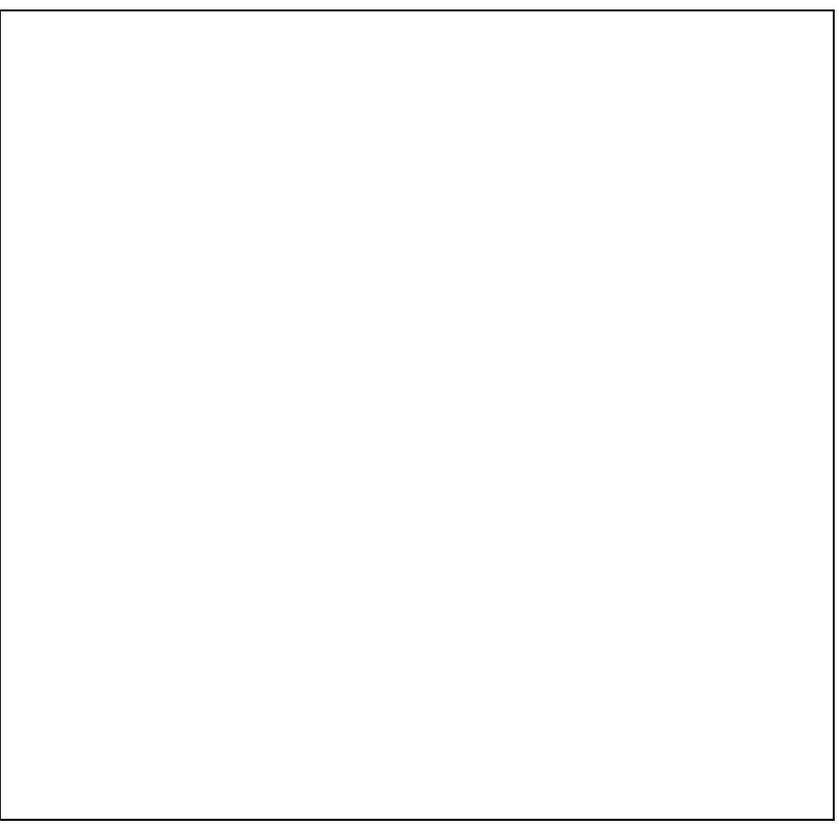
## Liquids

Liquid matter moves smoothly.

We say that it flows.

From one place to another -

How quickly it goes!

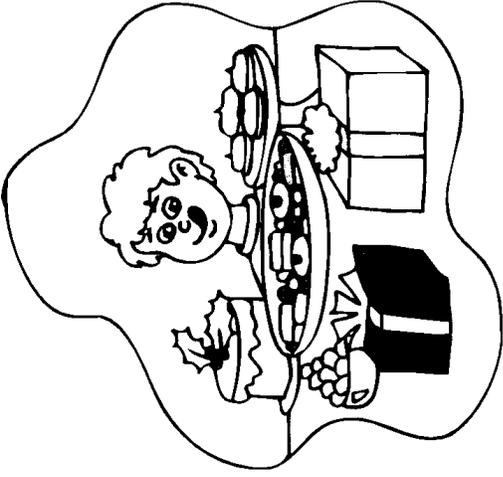
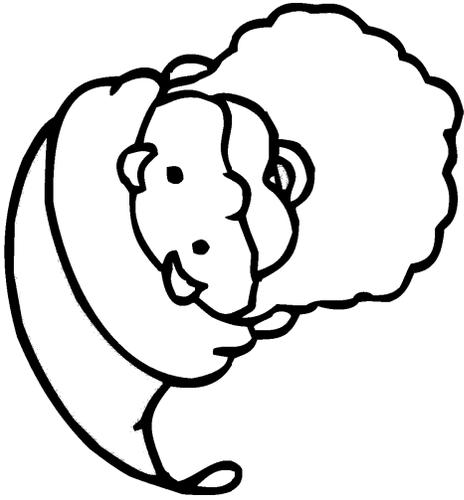


We know that most liquids

Are easy to see.

With no shape of their own,

They're not like you and me.



# Our Five Senses At Christmas



Our Five Senses at Christmas

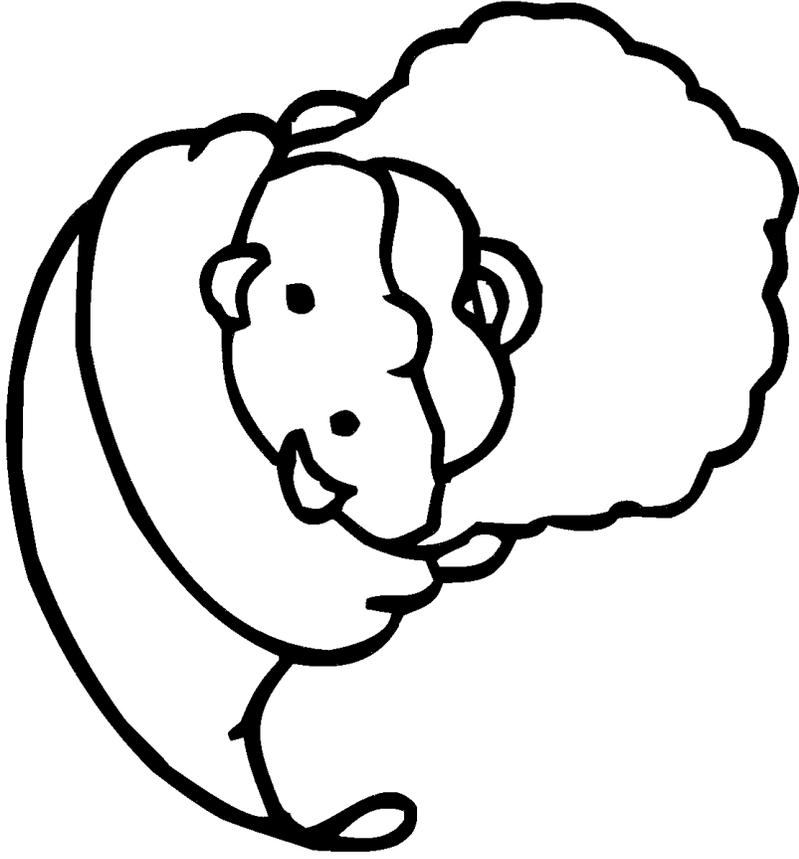
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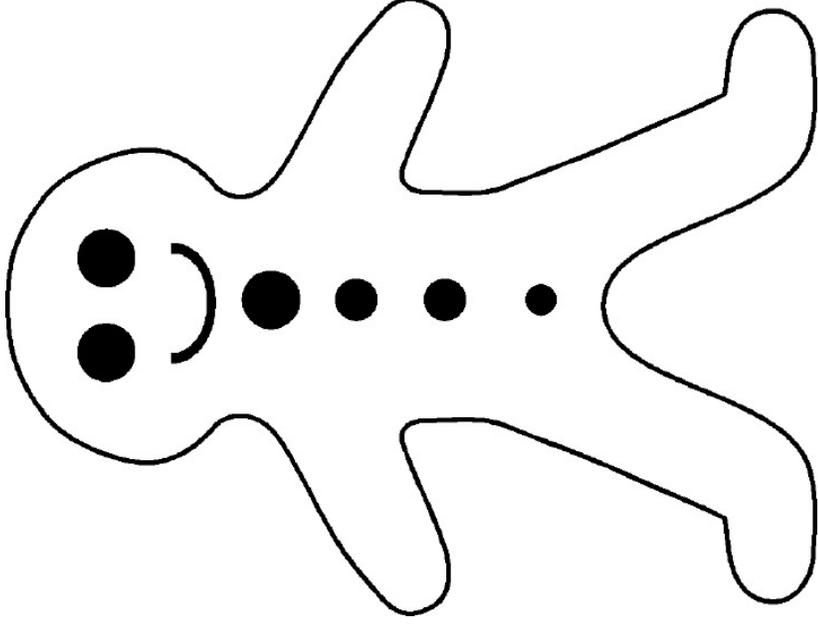
We see presents  
at Christmas.



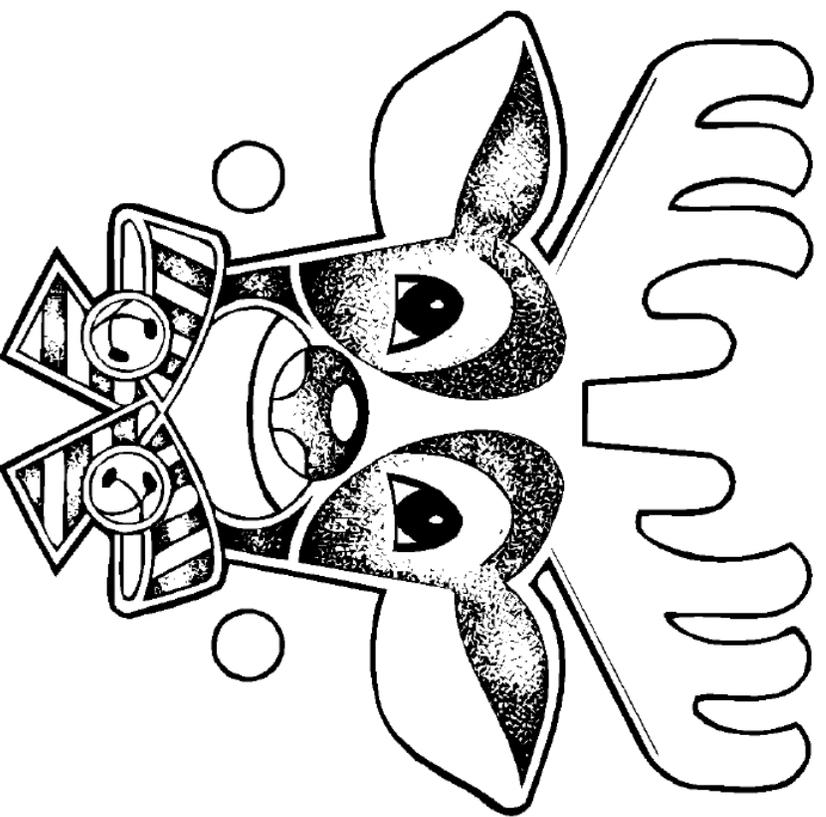
I like Christmas!



Christmas feels  
like Santa's  
beard!

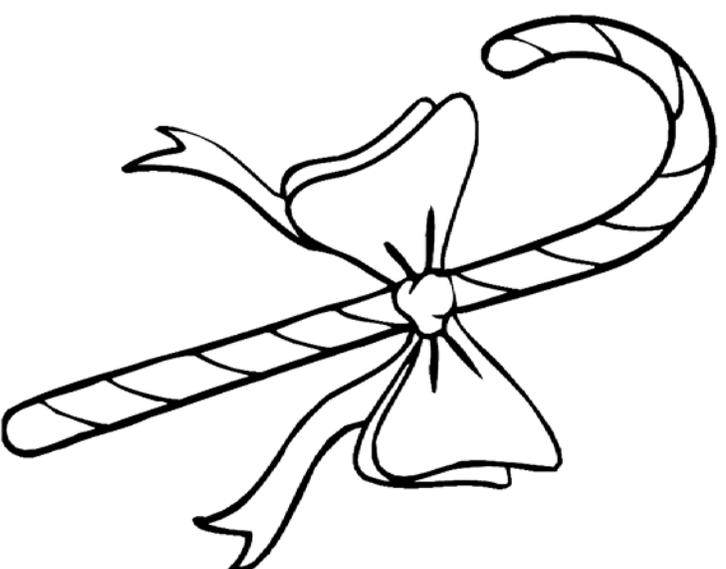


We smell  
gingerbread  
at Christmas.



We hear bells  
at Christmas.

4



Christmas  
tastes like  
candy canes.

5