

## **Developing Character Through Writing**

*Maureen Ellis*  
*Mifflin Elementary School*

Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.

John Wesley

### **Overview**

### **Rationale**

### **Objectives**

### **Strategies**

### **Classroom Activities**

### **Summary**

### **Bibliography/Student Booklist**

### **Appendices**

### **Overview**

For my project I have developed a unit that combines two required programs at my school's first grade level. The Pittsburgh Public Schools has adopted the Harcourt reading curriculum as its basic reading series. This curriculum has a course syllabus, which includes achievement expectations, pacing schedule, course materials and assessments. In addition to the reading program, our individual school has bought into the character building program, Caring Habits, which includes a thematic monthly series of traits that are presented and reinforced daily. By reinforcing these monthly themes daily, teachers hope to encourage the development of positive character traits in the students. Since we follow a strict timeline of completing units and levels in our reading series and since there are many valuable lessons that can be taught and much time can be spent on the caring habit, I wanted to find a way, through writing opportunities, that I could integrate the two programs, in the wisest and most efficient ways possible, using the limited amount of time that I have. I have decided to choose one month's trait and integrate it with the specific stories that we are reading at the time in our Harcourt reading series. By using this model I hope to be able to contribute to the Pittsburgh Public Schools portfolio

requirements and attain the performance benchmarks at the first grade level. I hope this model can become one of a series of monthly plans that integrates the two programs throughout the year.

## **Rationale**

By taking the seminar *Writing, Its Role in Literacy*, I have learned how easy it would be to approach the teaching of the Harcourt series and the Caring Habit writing elements through a modified Writing Workshop method. By being able to relate the stories in their reading book and in other books that they can read, to their personal lives, the children will become better writers. The goal of any reading curriculum is to enable children to become writers, readers and thinkers. As Dr. Eldridge told us in our seminar, “writing is thinking” and we want to render the visible thought in writing. What better way to interest children in reading and writing than to make it personal for them? Lucy Calkins, in *The Art of Teaching Writing*, tells us that as human beings we need to represent our experiences and by doing this we make our truths beautiful. One thing first graders enjoy most is telling about their experiences. I hope to be able to attach a theme to these experiences and have the children express the theme through writings. I hope they also will be able, by reading good stories that reinforce the theme, to write about the characters in these books and how they relate to what we do in our own lives. I want them to see that there is significance in their lives. As writer Vicki Vinton claims, non-writers do not live a more insignificant life than writers. It is just that writers are in the habit of finding the significance that there is in their lives. I hope by writing everyday, students will acquire the writing habit and feel the importance of their own words. I want them to learn to be brave about writing, to be fearless and to bring attitude and energy into writing. I want them to make writing matter.

Part of our curriculum is teaching the mechanics of writing. Our district gives us a list of skills to cover during the year. As Lucy Calkins underlines, the district’s goal and our goal is ultimately the same. We want to support our students’ growth as readers, writers and thinkers. If we teach these skills through a writing workshop format, the students will still be learning the skills, but the goal also will be to make them better writers. This goal will be attained throughout the day, through different kinds of writing. Their writing will be about their reading curriculum but also about their lives.

I learned in the seminar that there are some basic things that we can do in our classrooms to encourage students and get the best possible work from them. We must build a learning community in our classrooms to establish an atmosphere of care and respect. We must establish rituals in our classrooms and

demonstrate the quality of attentiveness in our own lives to help the students see and value themselves. We must use these routines and not stray from them. It is time that the students can count on.

They know they will begin in a certain place and even though what they do each time may be different they will have time to work on whatever it is and finally meet again together. We must make students see, hear, notice, wonder and gather so they see themselves as having wide-awake lives. By doing these things we create a climate for the students to work in productively.

In *Best Practices: New Standards for Teaching and Learning in American Schools*, Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde tell us that most children have been writing long before they reach kindergarten. Beginning writers can make meaningful marks on paper and move to conventional messages that can be understood by a wide range of audiences. Thus our attitude about teaching writing should be to value our students' attempts at writing and value the importance of writing as an act in itself.

As teachers we need to further develop writing enthusiasm by encouraging all students to write, valuing their attempts and the importance of writing as an act in itself. We can't fall into the trap of thinking that kids can't write. By supporting all our students as they write we teach them that while there are times when correctness and form are important, all writing is a valuable means of communication and should be part of their daily lives. This doesn't mean that we should not evaluate writing or critique student writing in an attempt to increase their competence and fluency as writers. However, our writing activities should be designed to make writing an activity that is considered accessible and natural to our students. Just as students need intensive opportunities to read, each and every day, meaningful and engaging texts, both aloud with others and independently, first graders also need ample time and encouragement to write. The students in my first grade classroom will benefit because I am not going to be taking away from the existing curriculum prescribed by the Pittsburgh Public School. Instead, I will be enriching the program and presenting it in a way that the students will feel they matter.

## **Objectives**

By incorporating the Caring Habit of the Month with the Harcourt curriculum I will be incorporating the standards that the Board of Education wants teachers to address. The students will be using the library to find books and information. They will be using word attack skills, context clues and pictures to help them understand what they are reading. They will be reading, retelling, writing responses and answering questions about the literature they read. They

will be writing about themselves. They will be differentiating between real and make believe and distinguishing between facts, information and opinions. They will share ideas, listen carefully to others, follow directions and ask and answer questions. They will plan, write and discuss what they have learned and, ideally, they will apply and share their understanding of what they have learned wherever they go. By following a weekly outline of ideas and activities and by implementing a writing workshop in the classroom three times a week, the students will become better thinkers, readers and writers.

My second objective is to enable the students to become better people. I want them to come out of the month's focus with new strengths to be proud of. I want them to learn that acting with kindness by helping others is the best way to help themselves. I will be stressing the Lend a Hand theme throughout the month and helping them to see that by doing simple things they will feel good about themselves and will want to continue feeling this way. The objectives are not complete when the month is over. Character development through written and oral response is always a work in progress. In fact the ultimate goal is to create an awareness of what can be.

## **Strategies**

The Caring Habit for the month of January is "Lend A Hand." During this time we are in Level 3 of our Harcourt reader. I plan to use the stories from the basal reading book and add many children's books that address the theme "Lend A Hand." In the course of the month I will give the students many opportunities to express how they lend a hand, how the characters in the stories lend a hand and have the children brainstorm and write about other imaginative ways they can lend a hand. These writings will take various forms from journal writings to list making, personal narratives, and critical thinking essays about the authors' motives.

The students see and hear the caring habit each day; it is reinforced through posters in the hallways and classrooms, on the school public address system, and verbally by school personnel. By writing about it, the theme can be made more concrete for the students and they will be able to become personally a part of lending a hand. In *The Art of Teaching Writing* Lucy Calkins states that writing matters most when it is personal and when it grows out of a purpose in one's own life. By reflecting on their own lives the students will be able to express how they lend a hand and how if they don't, they can. They will also learn how this simple trait affects other people's lives each day. Ms. Calkins states that writing begins with lifework, and that is what also builds character. The children will write about what is alive and real for them. During the course

of the month I will help them develop their ideas and become personally involved in their writings.

By using a writing workshop format three times a week, I hope to have the children include writings that will help fulfill requirements needed to complete the first grade reading/ writing Standards Based Portfolio. These include reading fifteen books, which are stories not included in the curriculum. With the books I will add to the classroom library that address the theme “Lend A Hand,” the students will have many to choose from. For the writing portfolio exhibits, students need to include a response to literature, a narrative writing, an informational writing and a procedural writing. All of these genres will be easily addressed through the monthly theme and in the Harcourt reader. Children will have many opportunities to include samples of these writings in their portfolio through the writing we will be working on in this unit alone. Thus, by the end of the unit I hope to address the Pittsburgh Public Schools Communication Standards, keep pace with the prescribed outline of the Harcourt reading series, teach the Character Education Program, Caring Habits, that our school supports, and at the same time help my students build character by integrating the programs thorough writing.

## **Classroom Activities**

### **Background Information**

By the time the classroom activities for this unit begin certain routines and guidelines will already be in place in the classroom. I will discuss this background information first.

### **Lend A Hand**

At the beginning of the month the caring habit phrase will be introduced along with the goal. “Lift our spirit and the spirit of others by caring, sharing, and giving. Together we will brighten the world that we share.” We will discuss that lending a hand can be as simple an action as holding the door open for someone or as complex as helping to organize a project like our school is doing this year for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. We will stress that you should always help others because you never know when you will need help too. We will all be focusing this month on how we can make each other’s lives a little bit easier.

The monthly caring habit folders will be handed out. Each month the folders are a different color, which emphasize the theme. January’s color is “gentle aqua.” This folder will be used for holding the writing papers of the students for the month.

We will generate a list of words that symbolize the Lend a Hand theme such as caring, giving, helping, volunteering, kindness, donating, chipping in, sharing, and unselfishness. We will also list the words that are the opposite of caring such as selfish, mean, stingy, unkind.

The children will have daily journals in which they will write things they notice throughout the day about lending a hand and being kind. These observations may be things that they have done or what they have seen others do, or just feelings about lending a hand. I want these journals not to be collections of stories but, as Lucy Calkins says, places of gathering bits and pieces of their lives.

There are many ideas included in the monthly planner that is given to us from the Caring Habits. I will be focusing on the writing activities that are meaningful to first graders and how these can be incorporated into our Harcourt reading stories.

#### Harcourt Reading Series

Before the writing workshop parts of the unit are set into motion many other components of teaching the stories will be in place. There include vocabulary introduction, phonics, and story presentation, and silent and oral reading. These are many opportunities for writing in each story but since I am focusing on integrating the Lend A Hand theme with the stories in the Harcourt I am choosing writing opportunities that reinforce that theme. I feel that the more chances the children get to write about the theme, the more real in their lives it will become for them.

#### Writing Workshop

By participating in the seminar I have learned many components that make up the art of teaching writing. I have taken many of Lucy Calkins' ideas and made them into my own model of how I would try to run my version of a writing workshop in my classroom. Not having done this before, I have devised a plan that is comfortable to me and that I feel I could follow successfully. I have taken many of her ideas and especially her format of mini lesson, independent work time and sharing and made it into a workable plan for me to use. I have made my writing time a more structured version where I am following the required stories. I am using specific topics for the writings since I am trying to tie in two aspects of the curriculum while making the lessons more meaningful and interesting to the students.

Since I am planning my unit as three workshop sessions a week, there are basic things that will be in place before the lessons begin. The workshop environment needs to be predictable and consistent. It also needs to be an

environment that supports growth in writing. There are many ways that this can be accomplished. The first way is establishing routines. The routinizing of procedures and activities in the classroom is an important mechanism for sustaining classroom order. Routines make the classroom less susceptible to breakdowns because the students know the normal sequence of events. Classrooms run better when rules and procedures are announced, demonstrated and enforced. Thus knowledge of classroom rules and procedures cannot be taken for granted. The more explicit the rules and the more clearly they are communicated, the more likely the class will succeed. If the rules are followed and the students know the consequences for not following them, the teacher has more freedom to attend to two or more events at the same time and the children benefit. Thus order is a harmony of action with structure and purpose.

The second area to be in place before the writing workshop begins is availability of supplies. The students need to know where they can get what they need and the teacher needs to monitor these items so the students do not disrupt the flow by having to ask for them. These include glue sticks, pencils, scissors, markers, crayons, construction paper, tagboard patterns, etc. These items should be available in a central location for children to use. The rituals and routines that are established will ensure that the room is set up for the children to succeed.

The writing workshop procedure will be followed in my classroom three times a week according to this model and keeping in mind that the goal is to integrate the caring habit of the month and the stories in our Harcourt reading series. The steps I will include in each session are mini lesson, work time and sharing. The first two days will be based on the story we are reading in the Harcourt series. The third day will be based on an additional book supporting the theme of the month Lend A Hand, that either I will have read to the class or they will have read as a group.

1. Mini lesson- a general meeting of all the children on the carpet. This comfortable area will be where we convene as a community of learners and discuss the topic of instruction for the day. During the mini lesson the teacher may use modeled writing, shared writing or interactive writing as a strategy. The mini lesson will take one of four aspects as follows:
  - a. procedural -- where to get materials, how to proceed with transitions, time restraints
  - b. writers' process -- strategies to help the students choose what they will write about
  - c. qualities of good writing -- demonstrating what to do, use of good language, information to deepen students' understanding of literary techniques
  - d. mechanical skills -- punctuation, grammar, capitalization rules

2. After the mini lesson is completed the students will proceed to work time. At this time the teacher will move about the room and act as support. This can be in the form of giving pointers, conferring with students, coaching and praising. This needs to be done in a positive form, so students do not give up on their work. The teacher needs to be circulating in the classroom, listening to the conversations students are having and guiding them in a productive direction. In this way students can build a supportive context for working collaboratively. Conferences with the students can support lessons on listening and respecting other people's ideas, help the class work responsibly in small groups on collaborative projects, emphasize the importance of improving their own writing skills and model respect and supportive questioning.
3. The third step will be sharing. The students will again move to the carpet where they will discuss, take turns in the authors' chair or even evaluate. The evaluation can take place by using checklists or rubrics that have been previously presented to the students.

Many of the students' works will be "published" for the class. Ways to share include writing displays of work, bookmaking, web site publishing on the school's website, storyboarding, idea quilts, displays of graphic organizers, posters, collages and murals. Students take pride in sharing their products with peers and others.

Throughout the writing workshop these recommendations will help students' writing to continue, expand and flourish.

- a. Give students many opportunities to write.
- b. Enable students to write for a variety of purposes.
- c. Offer various opportunities for the student to share their writing with others.
- d. Teach standard writing mechanics and spelling when appropriate.
- e. Give students numerous opportunities to read and listen to various literary genres in order to make connections to these genres through their own writing.

## Lessons

The value of a kind deed is the love that inspires it. Author unknown

### Story One      *Market Day* by Carmen Parks

Story summary: The story is a description of what a family does during the entire day, from preparation to clean-up when they sell

their fruits and vegetables at a market day in the city. It stresses how they all have to work together to make the market day a success.

### Workshop Day One

**Mini Lesson:** The children will discuss going to a flea market as a seller. They will brainstorm a list of things they would need to do to go if their family was going to sell things. These things are similar to what the girl in the story needed to do to help her family get ready for market day. It was important that the whole family helped out because this was how the family made a living and everyone had to lend a hand.

**Work Time:** List the things that the girl in the story did for market day. Divide your list into three parts—what she did before the family left, what she did to help out at the market and what she had to do to get ready to come home from the market. Students may add things that she could have done that were not said in the story.

**Sharing:** Together discuss the lists by using chart paper to make a big list together using as many ideas that the students have. Let the children evaluate the importance of these tasks together.

### Workshop Day Two

**Mini Lesson:** What are the differences in being a buyer and seller at market day? Make lists on the board to show the differences. Whether you are a buyer or seller you still need to lend a hand.

**Work Time:** Write about which you would rather be at market day and why. Be sure to include how you would lend a hand either way.

**Sharing:** Use the author's chair to read responses and get the group consensus as to which, buying or selling, requires the most work.

### Workshop Day Three

Additional story: *The Rag Coat* by Lauren Mills

Story Summary: Minna is a poor girl who does not have a coat to wear to school. The quilting mothers of the community all work together to make her a coat from scraps of material. The message of love and friendship is captured in the Appalachia community.

**Mini Lesson:** Talk about the ways the women helped Minna get a new coat. Draw a huge hand on the board and write in each finger the ways the community lent a hand to finish the coat for Minna.

**Work Time:** Trace your hand. In each finger slot write one way you can lend a hand to someone. Cut the hands out when you are finished.

**Sharing:** Have the children bring their cut out hands to the carpet. Let them pin theirs on the bulletin board and talk about the ways they help people.

The best place to find a helping hand is at the end of an arm. Elmer Leterman

Story Two     *Carmen's Star* by Claire Daniel

Story Summary: A girl is making stars and trading them to others for different things. It takes her quite a while to finish the stars because so many people like them. She finds if her friends help her, they can make the stars together and give them away.

Workshop Day One

**Mini Lesson:** Ask why the other children decided to help Carmen. List together the (procedure) steps the children went through in order to make the stars.

**Work Time:** Pair the students and using the materials necessary from the supply table, make some stars together. Together write what each of you did when making the stars.

**Sharing:** Show finished products and tell why it was easier when you both worked together.

Workshop Day Two

**Mini Lesson:** Make a web of things that would be easier to make if two people did them together, stressing that lending a hand makes things easier and more fun.

**Work Time:** With a partner discuss what you will make and list your steps in making what you decide on. Give some time to work on the project they decide on.

**Sharing:** Talk about everyone's ideas and bring items finished or partially finished to the carpet to share.

Workshop Day Three

Additional Story: *Chester's Way* by Kevin Henkes

Story Summary: Chester and Wilson were best friends. They did everything together. When Lilly moved into the neighborhood they didn't think they would like her because they thought she was strange. They learn that if you are nice to people and try to make them happy you can discover that they may not be like you first thought after all.

**Mini Lesson:** Ask the students if they know what a nursing home is or if they know anyone who is in a nursing home. Many of the students will be able to relate stories of their experiences about grandparents, etc. in nursing homes. Tell them that people in nursing homes often need cheering up. Talk about what they could put in a note or in a picture to make an older person feel happy. Tell the students that they are going to write a couple sentences and make a picture that we could send to the local nursing home.

**Work Time:** The students will write the notes and make pictures using any of the supplies on the table. Stress that doing something kind to make someone feel happy is lending a hand too.

**Sharing:** When finished the students will bring their completed work to the carpet. The teacher will provide a large envelope and address it for the students so they can put their notes in to be delivered

The love we give away is the only love we keep. Elbert Hubbard

Story Three *Chuck Gets Stuck* by Linda Clifford

Story summary: Chuck, the woodchuck, gets stuck in his hole from eating too much. When he wants to get out he can't. His friends come up with the idea of forming a chain and tugging and tugging until he can get out.

Workshop Day One:

**Mini Lesson:** Why did Chuck get stuck? How did Chuck's friends help him? They may have needed to ask him some questions in order to help him. When we write questions we must use question marks. Let's together write some questions we might have asked Chuck so we could get him out of the hole.

**Work Time:** Write five or six questions to ask someone in the class. Make sure you use the correct mark at the end of the sentences.

**Sharing:** Have various students address their questions to specific children and let them respond. Have everyone proofread his or her paper to make sure the proper stop mark is at the end of each sentence.

Workshop Day Two:

**Mini Lesson:** Discuss the phrase from the story, "getting in a jam." Did you ever get in a jam and need someone to help you out? Call on some of the students to share. As the teacher, tell them about a jam you have been in and how someone has lent a hand to you. Model your example on the board by writing at least three sentences about your jam. Illustrate the writing by dividing an art paper into three parts and show yourself at the beginning of the jam, in the middle and at the end.

**Work Time:** Think about a time you were in a jam. Tell what your problem was and how you got help. Remember to try to write at least three sentences. After you are finished get art paper and illustrate your work by drawing beginning, middle and end.

**Sharing:** Children who would like to share their writing and illustrations may sit in the author's chair and do so.

Workshop Day Three:

Additional Story: *Brave Irene* by William Steig

**Story Summary:** Mrs. Bobbin has made a dress for the duchess to wear to the ball. She becomes ill and can't deliver the dress. She was definitely in a jam. Her daughter, Irene, puts her mother to bed and then walks through a winter snowstorm to deliver the dress. The story stresses Irene's determination to help her mother and get the dress to the castle in time for the ball.

**Mini Lesson:** Talk about how we help each other daily in the classroom. List all the things that that class does together to make the classroom work. Talk about how we just do these things and don't always think we are helping someone out but we really are. We are all working as a community to make our room a better place to be.

**Work Time:** Make a friendship award for someone in the room. Let the children all pick names out of a hat. Remind them that they may not get their best friend's name, but that each person in the room has things about them that makes them able to get a friendship award. Tell the children to get the materials they need from the supply table. Make sure they include the person's name and write a sentence or two stating something nice about that person and why he/ she is a friend.

**Sharing:** All the children sit in a circle and one at a time each child reads what is on the award that he/she made. The children take turns sharing and taping the award on the person it was made for.

Happiness is the by-product of helping others. Denny Miller

Story Four     *Alvin's Home* by Susan DeStefano

**Story Summary:** Alvin, the owl, has lost his home in a storm. Alvin's friends help him out by finding a new tree stump and they all pitch in to make a new home for him.

Workshop Day One:

**Mini Lesson:** Discuss why it is easier to solve a problem when you have help. Discuss the three parts of the story: Problem, Why he needs help, Solution

**Work Time:** Give the students an outline paper with the three parts of the story (Problem, Why he needs help, Solution) written on it. Have them fill in the blanks by answering each part. Work with a partner. Since this is a problem let's see if working together makes it easier to solve it. Also on your paper write why it was easier when Alvin got help.

**Sharing:** Pairs of students may share their outlines with the class.

Workshop Day Two:

**Mini Lesson:** Review the story again and why lending a hand made Alvin's job a lot easier.

**Work Time:** Write a different ending for the story showing what might have happened if Alvin's friends did not want to help him. Why would the ending probably have been different?

**Sharing:** The teacher will read the story up to the part where Alvin's friends decide to help him. Let a student read his or her new ending of the story. Discuss why or why not this would have been a better solution.

Workshop Day Three:

Additional Story: *Let's Make Lunch* by Julie Verne

Story Summary: Anton and Carmen's parents leave them alone for the morning while they go to do some chores. The children decide to surprise mom and dad with lunch. By working together they come up with some ideas and they cooperate to make a wonderful lunch for their parents.

**Mini Lesson:** Let's think of times when things have happened in our classroom and were easier to solve when we had help from each other. List things such as when the room is a mess after a party, someone loses lunch money, our library book shelves get all out of order, the blocks from lunchtime get in the wrong containers, etc.

**Work Time:** Give the students the same outline as the first workshop day. Let them work in pairs. Choose one of the classroom problems that we have listed or come up with a different one and fill in the outline paper.

**Sharing:** Take turns presenting the problems and solutions. Tell why the solutions were easier when everyone lent a hand.

The miracle is this – the more we share, the more we have. Leonard Nimoy

Story Five     *On the Way to the Pond* by Angela Shelf Medearis

Story summary: Two animal friends are going on a picnic; one of the friends gets sick on the way there and the other helps him out.

Workshop Day One:

**Mini Lesson:** Vic and Tess talked throughout the story. Let's find some examples of when they are talking. What do you notice about the sentences when they are speaking to each other? Discuss about when to use quotation marks in sentences. Have children talk directly to each other in the group and on chart paper show how those sentences would be written as conversation.

**Work Time:** Let the class work in groups of three and write some sentences that they would say to each other remembering the use of quotation marks that were talked about. The teacher should circulate around the room helping each group as needed.

**Sharing:** Any of the groups that wish to share their conversations may come up to the front of the group and do so.

Workshop Day Two:

**Mini Lesson:** Talk about the ways Tess helped Vic in the story. Talk about situations where you had to do something alone and how it would have been better if someone were to help you. The teacher should give a couple examples his/her own. Discuss that usually it would take longer or the end result may be different if you have help versus doing it alone.

**Work Time:** Write a few sentences about how the story *On the Way to the Pond* would have been different if Tess wouldn't have been so kind to Vic. Begin with the part right after Tess does not feel well.

**Sharing:** Let someone read the story to the part designated and then have students share their new endings. Make sure the children understand why the ending in the book is the best ending.

Workshop Day Three:

Additional Story: *Amos and Boris* by William Steig

Story Summary: Amos the mouse needs help when he falls off his boat and is drowning in the sea. Boris the whale comes to his rescue. Later on Amos returns the favor to Boris when a storm washes him to shore. It is a simple matter-of-fact story about friendship and helping each other.

**Mini Lesson:** Let's think of some people in our school and how they help us, especially when we are in jams. List may include custodian, nurse, bus driver, lunch aide, secretary, classroom aide, etc.

**Work Time:** Let's write a note to one or more of these people and thank them for something they have done. You may illustrate your note also. Get material you will need from the supply table.

**Sharing:** Students may read their notes to the class. Proofread to make sure you have included to whom the note is for and have signed your name.

Words are plentiful, but deeds are precious. Lech Walensa

Story Six

*Digger Pig and the Turnip* by Caron Lee Cohen

Story summary: Digger Pig wants to make a pie but needs help. She asks various characters to help her but no one will. When it comes time to eat the pie they all want some but she only gives the pie to her children who had helped.

Workshop Day One:

**Mini Lesson:** Together list the reasons that the animals said they could not help Digger Pig. Discuss how this story about friends is different than the other ones that we have read. (this story shows how not to be a friend rather than how friends should work together to help each other)

**Work Time:** The whole story would have been different if the animals would have helped Digger Pig with the pie. Think about how the story would have changed. After the first couple of pages of the story the changes

would have happened. Write as much as you would like. Since most of the story will be completely different, you may use paper from the table and make your writing into a new version of Digger Pig. You may add illustrations. This project, of course, would not be completed in one workshop session. The teacher would have time to talk with each student about his or her “new book.” The teacher would take several workshop sessions to get to each student.

**Sharing:** During several sharing sessions children may want to share the status of their writing and some will want to share the completed project with the class.

Workshop Day Two:

**Mini Lesson:** Talk about what makes a good friend. Remind students that it takes both people to make good friends. Ask students if they would like Digger Pig for a friend, and why or why not.

**Work Time:** Write about someone who is your good friend. Make two columns on your paper. Remembering that it takes two to make good friends, list some ways you are a good friend to the person you choose and ways that person is a good friend to you.

**Sharing:** Let the children who want to share their lists do so. The students should see that many of their reasons are similar. Point out to them that this is because they all know what it takes to be a good friend.

Workshop Day Three:

Additional Story: *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney

Story Summary: When Miss Rumphius was a little girl her grandfather told her that besides doing all the things she wanted to do in life, she also needed to do something to help make the world more beautiful. So she did. And it made her feel very good about herself. When she was an old lady she passed this advice along to her niece.

**Mini Lesson:** Besides lending a hand to other people, sometimes animals need us to lend a hand to them. Let’s think of different ways we can help animals out, such as walking a pet, throwing seeds out to birds in winter, checking pets’ water dishes, giving a hug of affection

**Work Time:** Let’s see if we can make a picture book showing how to help animals. Get the materials you need. Think of a title for your book. Remember that this is a picture book. On each page write one sentence to tell how the animal in your picture is being helped. This activity will take more than one workshop session.

**Sharing:** As students finish they will take the author’s chair and share the books they have made.

### Additional activities

There are many other activities that can be used to reinforce the “Lend A Hand” theme. These could also be used in workshop time. Some of them include making pie charts to write and illustrate how we help at home, discuss how we lend a hand by taking care of the environment, making kindness coupons to give to family members to cash in at home, and writing “random acts of kindness” that can be done for members of the class. Have a kindness box in the classroom where the written acts can be put. Each day pull one of them out of the box and let the child who wrote it, help someone in the classroom.

As a concluding activity I recommend the rubric in Appendix G to have the students self evaluate themselves. I would expect positive results as a function of using the two curriculums throughout the month.

### Summary

By the end of this month’s writing workshop students will have in their folders many items that are requirements for the first grade Pittsburgh Public Schools portfolio. These include books that they have read outside the curriculum that they can include in their fifteen-book log, a response to literature, a narrative writing, an informational piece and a procedural writing. This collection may be used at the end of the year when the children are making decisions about what to include in their portfolios. In addition, students will have fulfilled many of the requirements of the reading/writing standards. (See appendix 1)

By reinforcing the theme throughout the month, the children will learn that these acts of kindness not only help others, but make the children who are performing them feel good in their own hearts. The repetition of the theme will help them to remember that “good feeling” and inspire them to want to feel that way again and again. I want each student to become someone he or she can be proud of. Let’s hope they can act with kindness because helping others is the best way for them to help themselves become better people.

## Bibliography

Bullard, Sara, Jim Carnes, Marie Hofer, Nancy Polk, and Rosa Sheets. Starting Small. Montgomery, Alabama, Southern Law Poverty Law Center, 1991. A discussion of how cooperation, equity and citizenship are taught in the classroom.

Calkins, Lucy McCormick. The Art of Teaching Writing. New Edition. Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Heinemann, 1994. A description of what writing workshop looks like in the classroom at various grade levels.

Farr, Roger C., Dorothy S. Strickland and Isabel L. Beck. Bright Ideas. Collections Reading Language Arts Program. Orlando, Harcourt. 2000. Level 3 of the Harcourt First Grade reading curriculum in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Kemper, Dave, Ruth Nathan, Patrick Sebranek and Carol Elsholz. Write Away, A Handbook for Young Writers and Learners. Wilmington, Massachusetts, Houghton Mifflin, 2002. A writing resource book for the primary classroom.

Parke, Elaine. Lend A Hand In January. Caring Habit of the Month Adventure. Zelienople, Pa. 2000. One of a series of idea books on the caring habit of the month.

Wittrick, Merlin C.. Handbook of Research on Teaching, Third Edition. New York, New York, MacMillian Publishing Company, 2000. A guide to establishing and maintaining good classroom environments.

[http://lesley.edu/academic\\_centers/hood/currents/v3n1Bukowiecki.html](http://lesley.edu/academic_centers/hood/currents/v3n1Bukowiecki.html). Bukowiecki, Elaine. *Lesley University: Hood Children's Literacy Project*. Lesley University, 2000.

Tips on how to encourage student writing to continue, flourish and expand.

<http://homepages.wmich.edu/~jbush/bp/sharedlearning.html>. Bush, Jonathan and Michael Johnson. *Teachers Can Help Students Get Started*. Department of English, Western Michigan University, 2002. Best practices to use to encourage student writing.

[http://www.donaldgraves.org/teach\\_writing.asp](http://www.donaldgraves.org/teach_writing.asp). Graves Donald. *Tips for the Teaching of Writing*. Donald Graves homepage, April, 2004. One of a series of monthly newsletters on tips for teaching writing.

□ HYPERLINK <http://www.kidsource.com> □□<http://www.kidsource.com>□.  
Maehr, Jane. Encouraging Young Children's Writing. Extensions: Newsletter of  
the High/scope Curriculum, Vol.4, No.3 Nov./Dec. 1989.

## Student Book List

- Cooney, Barbara. Miss Rumphis. New York, Viking Press, 1982.
- Henkes, Kevin. Chester's Way. New York, Greenwillow Books, 1988.
- Henkes, Kevin. Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse. New York, Greenwillow Books, 1996.
- Mills, Lauren. The Rag Coat. Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1991.
- Parke, Elaine. Lend A Hand In January. Caring Habit of the Month Adventure. Zelenople, Pa. 2000.
- Steig, William. Brave Irene. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988.
- Steig, William. Amos and Boris. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992.
- Verne, Julie. Let's Make Lunch, Harcourt, 2000.

# Appendix A



## READING/LANGUAGE ARTS Grade 1 COURSE SYLLABUS



This syllabus was designed to inform Grade 1 students and parents of the standards, achievement expectations, pacing schedule, course materials, and sample assessments required for success in the Reading/Language Arts class.

State Standards	Content Skills	Performance Benchmarks <i>At the end of Grade 1 students will be able to</i>
1.1 Learning to Read Independently	Phonological Awareness  Phonics  Print Awareness  Vocabulary  Reading Strategies  Purposes for Reading  Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ identify and isolate the initial and final sounds of a spoken word.</li> <li>▪ identify, segment, blend the sounds made by letters to form the spoken word.</li> <li>▪ recognize initial, medial, and final consonant sounds.</li> <li>▪ recognize short and long vowels.</li> <li>▪ recognize consonant blends and consonant digraphs.</li> <li>▪ recognize vowel diphthong (ow), vowel digraphs (ai, ay, ea, ee, oa), and vowel variants (all).</li> <li>▪ recognize and read inflected nouns and verbs (-ed, -ing, -s).</li> <li>▪ recognize and read contractions ('d, 've, 'll, n't, 've, 's, 're).</li> <li>▪ recognize, name, match, and reproduce all upper and lower case letters.</li> <li>▪ know the order of the alphabet.</li> <li>▪ know print concepts, such as letters, words, sentences, questions, paragraphs, capitalization, punctuation marks; track print.</li> <li>▪ recognize common sight words.</li> <li>▪ recognize selection and rich/concept vocabulary.</li> <li>▪ begin to use rich/concept vocabulary in oral language.</li> <li>▪ notice when difficulties are encountered in understanding text.</li> <li>▪ read independently using various strategies (rereading, predicting, connecting new ideas to prior knowledge).</li> <li>▪ describe new information gained from texts in own words.</li> <li>▪ participate in word building activities *</li> <li>▪ make connections between texts and between text and personal experience.</li> <li>▪ independently read 15 grade level appropriate books.</li> <li>▪ read to be informed and entertained.</li> <li>▪ read aloud any first grade book with accuracy and comprehension at the rate of 50 words per minute.</li> </ul>
1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas	Comprehension and Interpretation  Detail  Inferences  Comparison  Analysis and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ identify main idea of selected text.</li> <li>▪ discuss and note specific details of the text.</li> <li>▪ respond to open-ended questions to demonstrate understanding(text talk)*</li> <li>▪ retell the sequence of the text in the order in which it occurred.</li> <li>▪ make inferences within texts.</li> <li>▪ make comparisons within texts.</li> <li>▪ select the best response to informational text that shows understanding of the text and include it in the reading exhibit of the standards-based language arts portfolio.</li> </ul>
1.3 Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature	Literary Elements  Literary Devices  Poetry  Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ identify and describe story elements (character, setting, plot, point of view).</li> <li>▪ identify and discuss rhyming related to poetry.</li> <li>▪ read, discuss and role play dramatic texts.</li> <li>▪ select the best-written response to literature that shows understanding of a narrative text for inclusion in the reading exhibit of the standards-based language arts portfolio.</li> </ul>

State Standards	Content Skills	Performance Benchmarks <i>At the end of Grade 1 students will be able to:</i>
1.4 Types of Writing	Informational  Narrative  Procedural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ write for a variety of purposes.</li> <li>▪ use grade appropriate knowledge of letter and sound associations to convey meaning through print.</li> <li>▪ write an informational piece in the form of a news story, biography, science report, or any other piece of non-fiction material.</li> <li>▪ begin writing with a sentence that describes topic.</li> <li>▪ organize writing to include facts and details.</li> <li>▪ select the best informational piece for inclusion in the writing exhibit of the standards-based language arts portfolio.</li> <li>▪ write a narrative that includes a title, focuses on one topic and maintains that focus throughout.</li> <li>▪ choose the best narrative for inclusion in the writing exhibit of the standards-based language arts portfolio.</li> <li>▪ include relevant details that support the main idea.</li> <li>▪ include some interesting words.</li> <li>▪ write a procedural piece that describes the topic, lists materials needed, and describes steps explicitly and correctly sequenced.</li> <li>▪ choose the best procedural piece for inclusion in the writing exhibit of the standards-based language arts portfolio.</li> </ul>
1.5 Quality of Writing	Focus Content Organization Style Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ focus on one topic and maintain that focus throughout.</li> <li>▪ include relevant facts/details that support the main ideas and/or actions.</li> <li>▪ write with organization and follow a logical sequence.</li> <li>▪ include as many words and sentences as possible.</li> <li>▪ use all stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing).</li> <li>▪ share writing with classmates and/or teacher for feedback in order to rewrite.</li> <li>▪ edit writing using grade appropriate conventions of language (grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage).</li> </ul>
1.6 Speaking and Listening	Listening Skills  Speaking Skills Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ construct meaning orally in response to open-ended probes when being read to (text talk).*</li> <li>▪ participate in group discussion, speaking clearly and using complete sentences.</li> <li>▪ summarize and paraphrase information and ideas from text.</li> <li>▪ participate in group discussions by taking turns, linking comments, and asking questions related to the topic.</li> <li>▪ speak effectively using eye contact, appropriate volume, and pacing.</li> </ul>

\*HANDWRITING: The Pittsburgh Public Schools Handwriting System will serve as the model for manuscript handwriting.

By the end of first grade, students will be able to:

- print upper and lower case manuscript letters with one-finger space between letters.
- use Grade 1 Pad B1 paper (7/8" spaces with broken lines).
- hold the pencil in the correct position between the thumb and index finger, resting the pencil on the second finger with the back of the pencil pointing to the right shoulder when doing manuscript writing if the student is right handed.
- hold the pencil in the correct position between the thumb and the index finger, resting the pencil on the second finger with the back of the pencil pointing to the left shoulder when doing manuscript writing if the student is left handed.

## COURSE MATERIALS

### **BASIC TEXTS:**

\*Beck, Isabel. *Word Building*, University of Pittsburgh.

\*Beck, Isabel and Margaret McKeown. *Text Talk*, University of Pittsburgh, 2000.

Farr, Roger C., Strickland, Dorothy S., Beck, Isabel L. Harcourt Collections: *A Harcourt Reading/Language Arts Program*, 2001.

### **TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT:**

Waterford Early Reading Program, Pearson/Digital Learning

### **INFORMATIONAL WEBSITE:**

[www.harcourtschool.com](http://www.harcourtschool.com)

## Appendix B

Portfolio Requirements

# The Pittsburgh Public Schools Standards-Based Portfolio

## First Grade Portfolio Requirements

### READING EXHIBIT

ENTRY 1: 15 Book Standard (Reading Log)

ENTRY 2: 1 Response to Literature

### WRITING EXHIBIT

ENTRY 1: 1 Narrative Writing

ENTRY 2: 1 Informational Writing

ENTRY 3: 1 Procedural Writing

## Appendix C

Child \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

<b>WRITING CHECKLIST</b>	
<b>CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION</b>	
Expresses ideas, details, and topics; writes stories through dictation, pictures, and writing	
Aims for a purpose and an audience through pictures and writing	
Constructs several sentences on one topic in a logical order	
Uses a variety of prewriting strategies	
Publishes compositions in a variety of ways	
Uses personal experiences as source of writing ideas	
<b>CONVENTIONS AND MECHANICS</b>	
Writes legible manuscript letters	
Writes with left-to-right, top-to-bottom directionality	
Uses appropriate spacing between words, sentences	
Writes in mostly complete sentences	
Uses beginning capitalization in sentences	
Uses appropriate end punctuation in sentences	
<b>SPELLING</b>	
Spells using initial and final consonants; produces phonetically related approximations	
Spells some high-frequency words correctly in connected writing	

## Appendix D



### Literacy Enrichment Character Education **VOCABULARY WORDS-TO-LEARN** *that teach us to “LEND A HAND®”*

**N**ow is the time to encourage your students to recognize that “peace begins with me” and that every day, each one of us has the power to make life better for ourselves and others. We don’t have to be rich or have a lot of free time. All we have to do is spend our time wisely, and spending our time wisely means lending a hand.

Can you think of any more words that encourage “Lending a Hand?”

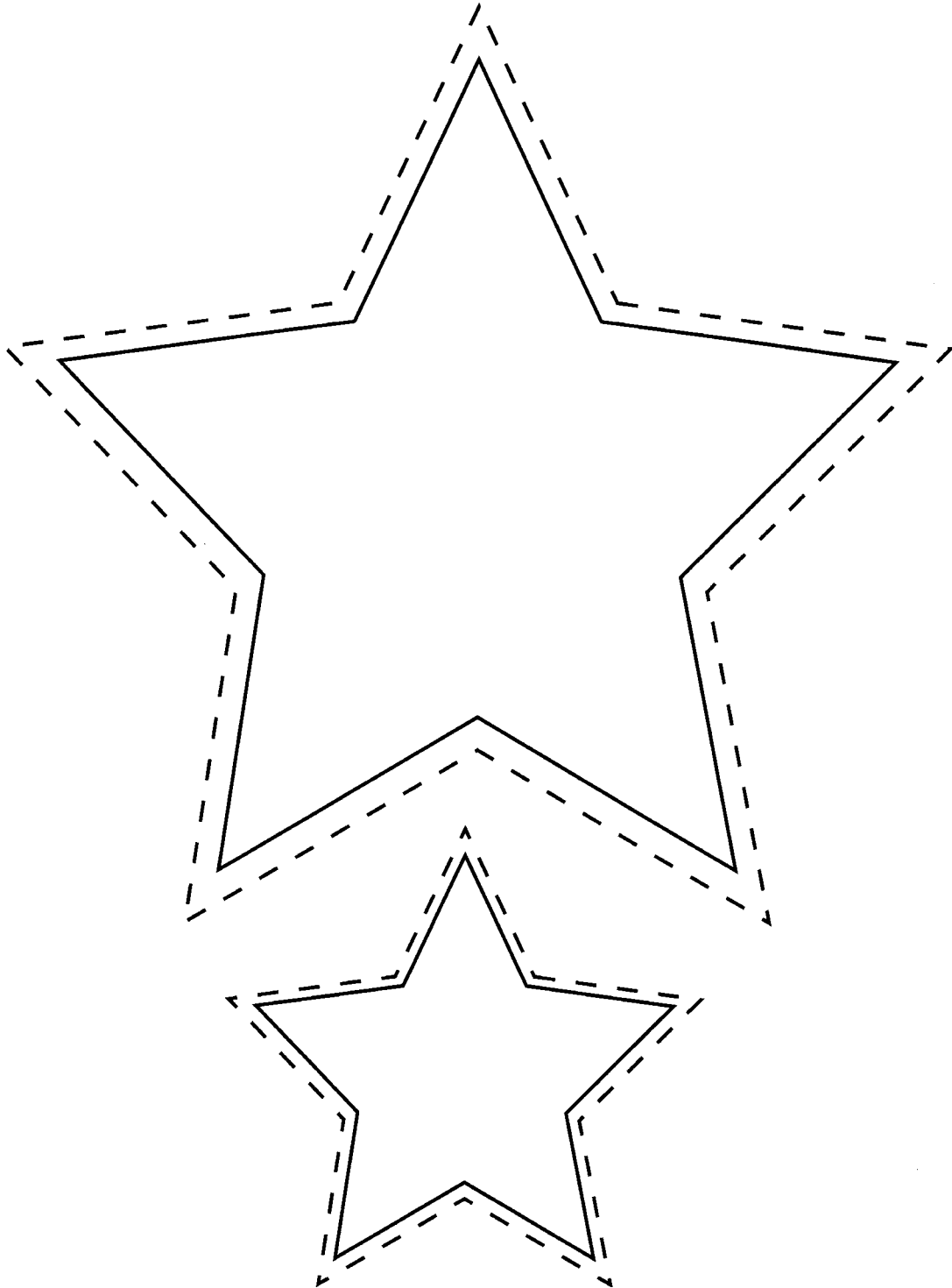
- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Benevolence</b> | <b>Hospitality</b>    |
| <b>Benevolence</b> | <b>Kindness</b>       |
| <b>Caring</b>      | <b>Responsibility</b> |
| <b>Charity</b>     | <b>Sacrifice</b>      |
| <b>Concern</b>     | <b>Sensitivity</b>    |
| <b>Contribute</b>  | <b>Service</b>        |
| <b>Compassion</b>  | <b>Sharing</b>        |
| <b>Generosity</b>  | <b>Unselfishness</b>  |
| <b>Giving</b>      | <b>Volunteerism</b>   |
| <b>Helpfulness</b> |                       |

**JANUARY**  
Health Focus: First Aid and CPR

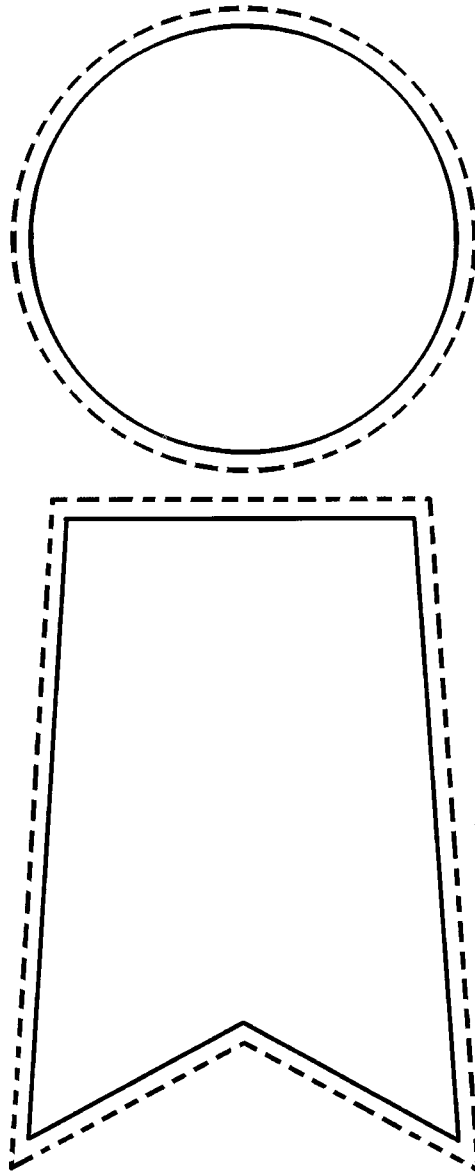
In January **LEND A HAND** Caring Color: Gentle Aqua



**Appendix E - Carmen's Stars**

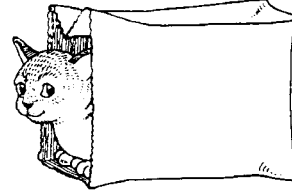


**Appendix F –Friendship Awards**















Appendix G

# I - Care Rubric



Name:

Date:

Keys to Caring	All Of The Time	Some Of The Time	Not Very Often
I Listen to Others			
I Use My Hands for Helping			
I Use I - Care Language			
I Care About People's Feelings			
I Am Responsible For What I Say and Do	