

Building Community in a Kindergarten Classroom

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Overview

If you are responsible for teaching literacy in a kindergarten classroom and want to incorporate more writing, this curriculum is for you. We are living in a time when there is so much to teach and so few “teachable moments.” Every minute is valuable and how we spend time with our students is critical. We know the end result we’re looking for, but often feel puzzled by how to get there, so we rely on our “old ways” of teaching and are faced with the question: “Am I really doing enough?” Some of us have been teaching the same way for many, many years. But sometimes our teaching needs new life breathed into it. Sometimes we need to be inspired. It is my intention to inspire you. But, I realize that that is not enough. Our inspiration comes and goes, and can easily wane and be diminished because we don’t know what to do with it. If you know the product you’re looking for, but can’t figure out the process, read on.

My curriculum will take a primary teacher step-by-step through a literacy block. The literacy block will include a morning meeting, and a reader’s and writer’s workshop. We will discuss how time should be spent, what your space should look like, what kids should be doing, and the product we should expect to see. The daily activities of this curriculum are geared specifically for the youngest of readers and writers – kindergartners, but can be adapted or extended to sustain the development of students in all primary grades. This curriculum will meet the needs of all of your students from the below-basic achiever to the advanced student because students work on their own instructional level. Classmates will become a part of a community that shares its work and rejoices in its achievement of literacy.

Rationale

Many primary teachers are faced with the challenge of how to create a classroom of literate students. We know the product we're looking for, but what is the process we need to go through to get there? Standards are rising, expectations increasing and the stakes are high: We have to produce young, confident, proficient readers and writers. Teachers are often disappointed with the quality of their professional development, feel frustrated due to lack of support, or simply feel that what they are expected to do just won't work with "my type of student". Yes, it is not easy, it also does not happen overnight, and not *every* child will meet the standard. **But**, it is possible, and with a little hard work, it can happen, and most students will achieve success in both reading and writing.

Teaching in a self-contained classroom in the primary grades is a gift. We have the good fortune of really getting to know our students as learners. We develop satisfying relationships: teacher-to-student and student-to-student. We also have the flexibility to spend a little more time on something we know our students are struggling with and a little less time on concepts that they acquire with ease. But most importantly, this gives us a real opportunity to build a classroom community. Within the four walls of a classroom, we have the power to build a family, making a love of literacy the tie that binds us all together.

A community is a place where people reside and feel a comfort level with their surroundings. A community is a living, thinking, ever-changing group. People who participate in a community generally feel a sense of membership and belonging. A classroom can also act as a community. When you're in trouble or need support, your community is looking out for you. When you reach milestones or achieve success, your community is celebrating for you. The community is an extension of the family - a place where we plop down, curl up and feel at ease. A community is a place where we can hopefully be ourselves, and a place where people thrive.

This mentality is not a new concept, but one that is foreign to many teachers. Some teachers feel uncomfortable with the thought of running a workshop type of classroom and therefore, they stick to what they know, and years go by with the same cookie cutter writing as the end product. Yes, it is comfortable. But are our students really becoming the kinds of readers, writers and thinkers that we want them to be?

We have to relinquish some control. An authoritative teaching style with traditional alignment of desks in rows and grammar worksheets are not images I conjure up when I think of a community of learners. Prescribed paper and pencil

tasks during writer's workshops are not the learning tools, copying words from the board is not the inspiration and perfect conventions are not the goal.

Imagine a classroom where students are collaborating in groups, discussing writing and conferencing with one another. Imagine a classroom that is child-centered, but facilitated by a teacher who has enough trust that the students who are lying on the floor and talking are really working at something. Imagine a classroom where noise is actually productive and meaningful! Close your eyes and imagine a living, thinking, ever-changing group of young writers.

Implementing a Writer's Workshop in your classroom is something that can begin in Kindergarten and continue to develop through all grade levels. The earlier you start, the quicker students become accustomed to the rituals and routines that are involved in the Writer's Workshop. This creates a self-assurance that is one of the most important qualities of a good writer. Both the teacher and students know what their roles are inside this community, people feel secure and this promotes healthy development. Students are never forced to guess what their responsibilities are. They are at school to be a learner, period. Student expectation is reinforced everyday until it becomes an involuntary act. The student is at school to join his/her classmates in a love affair with reading and writing. Even the most skeptical students tend to comply. Even the most skeptical teacher will be pleasantly surprised by progress that is made because each day the community is at work. I am going to take you through the process so that you can help your students develop the product you desire. Together, we will build a writing community in your classroom.

This curriculum will be based on the work of Lucy Calkins and her experiences with teaching writing in New York Public Schools. Lucy's work revolves around these key concepts of "workshop" and "community". My goal is to use her expertise to guide our mission of making these terms come alive in a realistic way, and making them work on a day-to-day basis inside our classrooms.

I will take you through three steps to help you achieve a community-based classroom that incorporates a reader's and writer's workshop:

- 1) **Setting up the classroom.** This will include classroom environment and scheduling.
- 2) **Activating the Reader's and Writer's Workshop.** This section will discuss what happens during the Reader's and Writer's workshop. I will explain the rituals and routines of the workshop time and how this time is spent.
- 3) **Making the Personal Connection.** This portion of the paper is based solely on my experience of why some classrooms work and why others don't. I will discuss teacher motivation and passion for writing and how this relationship is just as important as the two preceding, yet more "mechanical" steps.

Objectives

For students to “learn” how to become writers, they must practice the habits and processes of successful writers (New Standards 32). Students need to begin these routines in the primary grades so that a foundation is in place. As New Standards states,

To some degree, writing is an idiosyncratic process. How students learn to write, the tools they prefer to use, the style they ultimately develop, the strategies they routinely use to revise and edit – all of these vary from student to student. Fortunately, however, researchers know a great deal about how many famous writers have developed their craft – the habits and processes of recognized wordsmiths... [Teachers need to uphold] standards that incorporate this research, requiring them to practice the habits and processes of successful writers. To do the kind of writing that the modern world requires, students need to build a foundation beginning in the primary grades. (31)

My goal is to focus on the habits and processes of the writer. As New Standards declares,

The secret to good writing in the primary grades is a rich literacy program that requires students to read a lot and write a lot...Just as students learn to talk and read, swim or jump rope by imitating people who already know how, they learn to write by mimicking the habits and strategies of real writers. Teachers play a valuable role in this process. By modeling good reading and writing habits, they show students that reading and writing are important activities deserving of their time and attention. (41)

In order for students to achieve as writers, the appropriate tools must be in place. The classroom needs to be a place that is set-up for success. Standards must be in place to promote rigorous work and expectations must be raised. Rituals and routines lay the groundwork for writer’s workshop, and the expectation is that students will write daily. Students will generate topics for writing, then write without resistance when given the time, place and materials. Students will use whatever means are at hand to communicate and make meaning: drawings, letter strings, scribbles, letter approximations and other graphic representations. Students will make an effort to reread their own writing and listen to that of others, showing attentiveness to meaning (New Standards 68).

Strategies

1)Setting Up The Classroom

Environment

First and foremost a classroom has to be a place that is conducive to learning. Unfortunately, I have been in many classrooms where the room is in utter chaos. Papers are disheveled, books are strewn about without care, and when kids are asked, “Where are the pencils?” they simply don’t know. There isn’t a system for anything. This is the first breakdown of the community. The classroom should be set up in an organized way. Kids rely on this and so should the teacher. When kids feel secure and comfortable in their environment they tend to be better learners and thinkers. When kids can anticipate how their day will unfold, they are not left with the anxiety-driven question: What do we do next? Kids know what their role is inside this room. They understand where the paper fits in, where the books fit in, where the writing fits in, and most importantly – where they fit in. A teacher’s responsibility is to have a classroom laid out in those days before the kids enter the room. If you’ve taught before, you learn quickly what works and what doesn’t and you remedy the mistakes to make your room run smoothly.

In my first year of teaching I had two available pencil sharpeners. Sounds harmless, right? I learned very fast that students getting out of their seats and sharpening pencils at a constant and rapid pace was distracting. It wasn’t working for our classroom community. The pencil sharpener became the work aversion area or the social corner, the destination you were allowed to venture to and make noise at without consequence. It drove me crazy. The next year I came to school with a screwdriver in hand and took up the pencil sharpeners. I decided that each day kids would be greeted with pre-sharpened pencils. If a tip broke, there were extras. No interruptions. No parties at the sharpener. Problem solved. It was that easy. What took me a couple of extra minutes each morning, made a world of difference in this classroom. This is the kind of simple thought and planning that goes into establishing a classroom environment where kids feel safe. Sounds small and inconsequential, but it’s all these little pieces that make up the larger puzzle.

Lucy Calkins describes one of her favorite anecdotes about teaching writing that comes from a story Nancie Atwell tells at the beginning of her book *In the Middle* (1987). Donald Graves, one of teaching’s most respected authors, came to visit Nancie in her classroom. She writes,

At the end of the day, Don came and stood in my doorway with his coat on, smiling. “What are you smiling about?” I asked.

“I’m smiling at you,” he said. “You know what makes you such a good writing teacher?”

Oh God, I thought. Here it comes: validation, from one of the world’s greatest writing teachers. In a split second, I flipped through the best possibilities. Was he going to remark on my intelligence? My commitment? My sensitivity?

“What?” I asked.

And he answered, “You’re so damned organized.” (53-54)

The point is: successful classrooms are not accidents. They are the product of good organization and planning. Don’t underestimate the power of that pre-sharpened pencil!!

Let’s discuss the room arrangement. Classrooms should be set up so there are well-defined areas. In the primary grades tables are generally the furniture of choice, and if you don’t have tables I would suggest pushing groups of desks together to make a small group. Small cooperative seating works well for young children. Ralph Fletcher’s states in his book *The Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide* that writers should also have access to spaces in the room other than their own desks. He feels that comfort is key and some children prefer writing while being stretched out on the floor. Others like to be with their thoughts in a quiet corner. Observe how students move around this space and ask yourself a series of questions: Can students move efficiently without having to squeeze through a crowd of desks? Where are the quiet spaces in the room? Where are the places that talk can occur productively? Does the room have enough texture that individual students can find the sort of spaces they need to feel comfortable? (18-19) And also, consider how you fit into the classroom picture. Do you have a table where you can meet and confer with students? Or are you comfortable going to their writing spaces?

It is also important to have what is described as a meeting area. This needs to be a comfortable space in the room that is large enough for all students to meet as a large group. This space is usually carpeted and considered a quiet place. This is a place where mini-lessons occur and where authors share their work. The meeting area can be surrounded by books and teachers can usually do their read alouds from this area.

It is also important to consider places for “things.” Materials such as writing paper, drawing paper, pencils, markers, crayons, glue sticks, and scissors need homes. They should be put in the same spot daily and labeled. I use a shelf with many different cubbies. Students know this area to be the writing center and can come and go to this area getting the materials or tools that they need. Fletcher suggests a small table in the corner of a room or a cart that can be wheeled to the center during the workshop (17). Try to place the writing center in an easily

accessible area because students will be encouraged to get the materials that they need during the workshop.

By supplying materials and making them easily accessible you are building trust and self-reliance. The teacher models how the writer's tools are used appropriately and then they are turned over to the children. Nothing is hoarded or withheld by the teacher. This gives kids ownership in their classroom.

Calkins feels that the environment for writing is created with a library corner, with clusters of desks or tables, with a carpet on which the class gathers together. The environment for writing is created with areas for displaying children's collections. She's referring to the geographical aspects of the classroom. But she says that most importantly, the classroom environment is created with relationships and the structures that support them.

Scheduling

In order for children to become readers and writers they must have the opportunity or time for this to occur. I have found that by establishing a very consistent schedule or routine, students become highly functional in a structured environment. It is imperative that a teacher develop a literacy block. This is a chunk of time devoted to reading and writing. Sixty minutes of each is recommended but not always doable. I always aim for 45 – 60 minute blocks of each. Below is a sample schedule of a literacy block:

8:30 - 9:15	Morning Meeting (calendar, attendance, daily message)
	Bathroom
9:15 – 9:45	Phonics/Skills
9:45 – 10:45	Reader's Workshop*
10:45 – 11:30	Writer's Workshop*
11:30 – 12:15	Lunch

* This time can be flexible. Some days the class may spend more time on reading and less on writing, and vice versa.

I have found that using a visual schedule really helps young children. By posting pictures of what the students' schedule looks like, students learn the routine faster and are never "left in the dark" about what their day looks like. Teachers can choose icons or draw their own pictures that represent the blocks of time in their schedule. Students learn that these pictures represent the particular "subjects" and can refer to the schedule any time they want. Even as early as

kindergarten, I've overheard students talk about what they're doing next, and the excitement stirs when they realize they were right. Fletcher states,

It is crucial for students to have frequent, predictable time set aside for them to write. Plan to schedule a minimum of three days a week for about an hour each day. It's important that students know when the workshop is scheduled so that they are ready to meet it. (8)

He continues by saying,

The structure of the workshop helps teachers provide what young writers need. In the same way that a predictable schedule is important for your students, the regularity of the workshop structure also matters. Three basic components need to be present (I add a fourth below): (1) time for whole-group instruction, (2) time for writing, and (3) time for structured response. (9)

In structured classrooms teachers not only structured in predictable time for writing, they also gave a lot of time to writing. This is essential. The writing process requires a radically different pace than we are used to in society (Calkins, 185). Calkins also reminds us,

If students are going to become deeply invested in their writing, and if they are going to live toward a piece of writing and let their ideas grow and gather momentum, if they are going to draft and revise, sharing their texts with one another as they write, they need the luxury of time. (186)

2) Activating the Writer's and Reader's Workshop

Gail Tompkins writes,

The writing workshop is an innovative way of implementing the writing process. In this approach students write about what is vital and real for them, and their writing becomes the curriculum. They assume ownership of their learning and choose what they write and how they will write. At the same time, the teacher's role changes from being a provider of knowledge and writing topics to serving as facilitator and guide. The classroom becomes a community of writers who write and share their writing. Self-selection, ownership, self-monitoring, feedback, and individualized instruction are the hallmarks of writing workshop. Classrooms are social environments, and children are active participants as they

choose the direction their writing will take, consciously monitor their writing processes, and turn to classmates and the teacher for feedback and guidance. These characteristics define the workshop environment, whether students are writing, reading, or spelling.
(42)

There are four components of the writer's workshop: reading aloud to students, the mini-lesson, writing time, and share time. Consistent and constant management of this schedule limits student confusion and frustration and encourages stability, security and confidence in the classroom. When students know and understand what lies ahead of them, they establish confidence and ease with the writing process.

Reading Aloud to Children:

This is the portion of the workshop where teachers read picture books or chapter books to students. Usually the reading is above the students' instructional reading level and demonstrates good writing and language usage, and a rich vocabulary. Tompkins points out "as the teacher reads aloud, children have the opportunity to enjoy the literary experience and learn about authors and how they write" (48). Reading aloud to children helps students feel part of a community of writers.

Read Alouds are imperative to the development of writing. Read Alouds are stories, picture books, chapter books, poems, plays and songs that the teacher reads to her students. Read Alouds beautifully deliver the language of skilled writers. A teacher (no matter what age group she teaches) has to read to her students aloud at least once each and every day. Published authors are perceived as good writers, naturally, because they are published – they wrote real books! Students can be hypnotized by the spell that authors cast, and then try to follow their lead.

The Mini-lesson:

This is the instructional piece of the writer's workshop. This is the 5-10 minutes that most resembles traditional teaching. It is not long and drawn-out; it is a focused, direct and brief discussion that can touch on a variety of topics. Good teachers are able to assess the needs of their students and choose what the focus of that day's mini-lesson will be. The mini-lesson can differ depending on the needs of the students, but typically falls into one of the following categories. Some examples of mini-lessons follow:

Writing Workshop Procedures:

- Setting up routines
- Scheduling
- Rubrics
- Conferencing
- Sharing work
- Rituals

Example of a mini-lesson starter:

Teacher: *“I’ve noticed that lots of students are having difficulty figuring out what to do when they are done with their writing. Let’s make a list of activities we can do when we are finished with a piece.”*

Information About Authors

- Writing styles
- Author studies
- Genre studies

Example of a mini-lesson starter:

Teacher: *“I’ve noticed that when we read non-fiction material those authors leave out words like, “I think” and “I like”. Let’s try to leave those words out of our writing and write only what we see and know to be true. Let’s write facts, and not our opinions.”*

Literacy Concepts

- Beginning, Middle and End
- Plot
- Characters
- Setting
- Theme
- Problem and Solution

Example of a mini-lesson starter:

Teacher: *“Every fictional piece of writing has a beginning, middle and end. After reading Arthur’s Tooth let’s discuss what the beginning, middle and ending was. Now let’s write about a time we lost a tooth and include a beginning, middle and end.”*

Writing Strategies and Skills

- Capitalization
- Punctuation
- Spaces between words
- Word choice
- Adding details
- Proofreading
- Selecting a title

Example of a mini-lesson starter:

Teacher: *"I want you all to look at a piece of my writing."*

Thecatwasamean
catHeateallthe
foodanddidnt
sharewiththe
othercats

"It is difficult for others to enjoy my writing because I forgot to put spaces between my words. I'm going to fix my writing by putting spaces between words."

The cat was a
mean cat
He ate all the
food and
didn't share
with the
other cats

"Now I can easily read it and so can others. Let's try to remember that writing is to be shared and it is important that an audience can read it."

Writing

This is the bulk of the writer's workshop. It is the 30-60 minutes used for writing practice. Graves emphasizes that children must write about things they know well so that they can be successful. Tompkins adds,

Teachers help children learn to identify their own topics for writing. Instead of suggesting trivial story starters, teachers encourage children to develop topics about things that interest them, stories they have enjoyed, ideas they might want to share with classmates. Out of these conversations, topics emerge. (45)

Graves agrees that children come to school wanting to write, but too often teachers ignore children's urge to show what they know.

During writing, students choose projects, topics and word choice and create their own needs for writing. Kids are moving through the writer's process at their own pace: rough drafting, planning, rereading, proofreading, or conferring. The teacher acts as a facilitator and moves around the room as she confers with students.

As children are writing, children stop to think of ideas, reread their piece, or ask a classmate a question. Sometimes they decide to make changes or start over if the piece is not working. The teacher walks around the classroom stopping to say, "Tell me about your piece". Through brief conferences, teachers provide support for young writers (Tompkins, 45).

At the kindergarten or first grade level, students may need an extra push or purpose for writing. Students may be given topics or themes to write about, however there is no prescribed writing. The words still flow from the tips of their pencils.

Sharing

This occurs during the last 5-15 minutes of the writer's workshop. While this is a whole-class experience, the whole class does not have to share. Some students may not have completed a piece of writing, some may be suffering from "writer's block," and some students may just not feel like sharing on a particular day. The author should never feel forced to share work that he considers below the standard. This time is not set aside for condemning nor criticizing someone's work. Some authors may feel that their work is private and something that is not appropriate to share with the whole class. No one is ostracized for choosing not to share. Share time is intended to be a comfortable forum.

Students may sit in a special chair, known to some as the "Author's Chair," or a class may sit in a circle to share work. The attentive audience is encouraged to provide feedback to the author. As Fletcher notes: "Students are coached over time in how to give and receive response to each other's writing" (13). In the kindergarten and first grade writer's workshop, students are often

eager to share their work and at times the whole class can have a finished piece ready to recite. No one is ever denied their right to share.

Although not the lengthiest portion of the workshop, we can't infer that brevity equals less importance. The sharing aspect of the workshop is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. This is the reward for authors to be heard. As Francois Mauriac was quoted in Calkins book, "Each of us is like a desert, and a literary work is a cry from the desert, or like a pigeon let loose with a message in its claws, or like a bottle thrown into the sea. The point is: To be heard- even if by one single person" (15). Sharing our work is really the purpose of writing. As *The Art of Teaching Writing* reminds us, "The overt purpose of these sessions is to share and support work in progress" (180).

What happens in many classrooms is that a writing assignment is given, written in one draft and then put into solitary confinement in a folder. The assignment sits alone – and unread. Much writing is not even displayed on a wall for outsiders to peer at. What message does this send to a child? I believe it says: You aren't writing to anybody. There is no purpose to writing because there is no one to receive your word. We aren't listening to your stories about the frog you found, the tooth you lost or the grandma who died. Write about it –yes! Tell about it, NO! Sorry, we don't have time for that. I believe that this is why the sharing time of the workshop is critical. This lets children know: Your writing matters to me. Your stories are interesting to me. I want to hear what you have to say. You fascinate us. Thank you. There is nothing my students love more than when an unsolicited adult, saunters into our classroom and declares how much they love the writing that we produced that is now hanging on the hallways of our school. So even if you don't have the "time" to share daily writings, or sit in a circle and share, hang student writing and let others provide the peer conferencing. It reiterates to children that what they wrote will be read by someone, even if it's not directly read *by* them to a live audience. When students are sharing their lives

...all of a sudden the curriculum and manuals and kits and workbooks and programs recede and what comes forward is the relationship between one child and another child, between a child and her teacher. In the workshop, children write about what is alive and vital and real for them – and other writers in the room listen and extend and guide, laugh and cry and marvel. (Calkins, 18-19)

The reader's workshop is used in conjunction with the writer's workshop. It emphasizes the fact that reading and writing are cross-curricular. The components of the reader's workshop are similar to those of the writer's workshop except that the focus is on reading. Many of the mini-lessons used

during the writer's workshop can make their way into reader's lives as well. Reading and writing connections should be made when both the reader's and writer's workshops are in place and working together. Tompkins outlines the components of the reader's workshop:

1) *Mini-lessons* – The teacher spends 15 -30 minutes teaching brief lessons on reading workshop procedures, information about authors, literary concepts, and reading strategies and skills.

2) *Reading* – Children spend 30-60 minutes reading and responding to books and other reading materials.

3) *Sharing* – The class gathers together to share books children have finished reading and projects they have created.

4) *Reading Aloud to Children* – The teacher reads aloud high-quality literature that children cannot read themselves to increase their understanding of literature and to provide children with a shared literature experience. (50)

Just as the writer's workshop promotes and fosters independent writers and thinkers, the reader's workshop aims to do the same thing for reading.

3) Making the Personal Connection

Teaching reading and writing to young children is the part of my life as an educator that I am the most passionate about. Unlike most moments in my life, I can recall exactly the time that I realized this. I was assigned to teach first grade for the first time. I had absolutely no idea how difficult this would be. I guess I assumed that kids just “magically” learned to read and write, or I don't remember what I thought. But I do remember that my instruction lacked confidence, was messy (not systematic), did not provide authentic experiences, used basals and curriculum as the only means of instruction and our writing revolved only around responses to literature. My students struggled. More than half of them were not proficient readers, let alone did not know their letters and sounds, and here I was asking them to decode words with long vowel patterns. It simply didn't make sense. The lack of success became frustrating and negative behaviors escalated. I looked at the end result and I knew that I had failed. My students were not the kinds of readers and writers that I wanted them to be. I had followed the curriculum and I had done what I thought I was supposed to do. Boy, was I wrong. The curriculum made assumptions about my students and I went along with it. I gave the authors of the curriculum more credit than they deserved. I assumed they knew what my students needed better than I did. My kids could not have possibly succeeded because I set them up for failure. I still see some of those students, and most of them are doing just fine. Gaps have been closed and connections made along the way, but I on the other hand still wear the scars from that first year of teaching, and each time I look at those scars they are a reminder

of why I have chosen to voraciously pursue “The Art of Teaching Reading and Writing.”

I wouldn't be honest if I said I always thought this way. I had to fail before I could succeed. I used to hate teaching writing. I dreaded that 45 minutes a day when I pulled my hair out and obsessed over conventions and neatness and quantity. I hated that my kids so obviously hated writing also. Hmm...I wonder where they got that attitude? I felt confined by a curriculum. I ignored the fact that primary students led exciting lives and had stories to tell. I was not listening to my students and what they had to say. I was stifling their creativity as learners because I, myself, felt stifled.

During that summer of my disaster year, I read and read and read some more. I learned that students learn to read and write in a very systematic way. I learned that teaching isn't all about standing in front of a room full of children and lecturing. Kids must be given instruction, but then they need to be given the time to practice what they've been taught. I learned that curriculums are not the ‘end-all, be-all’ of classroom teaching. Teachers have instinct and it's important to go with it. Nobody knows your kids or what they need better than you. I learned that I must take chances. I knew there would be more failures ahead, but I knew I had to try strategies and lessons that just felt right - things that couldn't be found in the pages of a curriculum. And most importantly, I learned that kids must feel that they “belong” to a group of people who think and feel the same way about reading and writing that they do, with the teacher being the main influence.

The next school year I implemented and did all the things that this curriculum talks about, except that I did it with kindergarten children. And do you know what? I was surprised to discover that ninety percent of my class became readers and writers that year! I set up a classroom where reading and writing were not an option, it was what we do. Over time, the kids became each others mentors, facilitators and teachers. If a student wasn't quite “on-board”, the peer pressure alone would make him succumb to learning. I took those students places I never could have imagined. In fact, the quality of learner I produced my second year (with kindergarten) exceeded the work of my previous year with first graders. I am convinced it's because the group of first graders learned in a rote way, relying on memorization and inauthentic strategies only. Those students could identify with **only** what was familiar to them, nothing more. Their learning was very two-dimensional. My kindergarten students learned how to learn. They learned how to apply prior knowledge to make sense of new situations. These kids had the strategies in place to guide and facilitate their own learning. But most importantly, they really loved reading and writing – and I'm convinced that love was the main motivation. What a difference a year makes!

What I found in all of this is if you choose education as your profession, you must force yourself to self-reflect and take a look at what you are doing. It's not easy. Lots of teachers want to blame their students, throw their hands up and say, "Oh well." I felt that I needed to take full responsibility for their learning. I needed to ignite a fiery passion within myself of reading and writing in order for my students to buy into it. I needed to examine the way that I was doing things and provide a more meaningful delivery and experience. I decided that I must declare to my class: "Writing Matters!" My students learned that it is important simply because I told them it is, and then I lead by example.

I focused on the processes that students went through and learned that all achievements, big or small, can be celebrated among the group. Calkins recalls,

...when [a director of a New York City Schools Writing Project] went into a classroom to select several pieces of early writing to duplicate, a small boy came running after her as she was leaving. He waved his piece and called, "Here, take mine, I'm an author too!"

Calkins thought,

What a wonderful teacher that boy must have! His drawings were wobbly and sparse, and he seemed unsure whether lollipops or letters were preferable for the writing, but that youngster knew he belonged to the world of authors. What a gift! (70)

How wonderful that this child has confidence. In a nation filled with standards, rubrics, "proficiency vs. below-basic", this child has mastered one of the most difficult of writing skills and that's belief in his own work! The teacher wasn't being damned because the student had a scribble and not a letter; she was being praised for instilling the value of writing upon her students. How refreshing! The skills will come. Maybe later rather than sooner, but as long as this writer truly believes that he is an author, that's more than half the battle. Calkins continues by saying,

When we respect children's early writing, we create a mood of appreciation in the classroom. It is a beautiful sight to enter these rooms and see the clusters of children sharing their writing. I want teachers to delight in what youngsters do and to respond in real ways to what they are trying to do. I want teachers to have a wonderful time watching and admiring and working with young writers. (70)

I have tried to instill that writing is the most powerful form of communication. When children come to school with stories, I tell them, "Wow!

Why don't you write about that during workshop time?" When kids are having a bad day, I encourage them to write their thoughts down on paper. Writing can be healing. You can say on paper words your mouth might be too cowardly to say. When kids are dealing with issues that are personal and maybe should not be shared with the entire class, you can use that as a teachable moment to show students just how powerful writing is. Children can create notes or letters finding that the pen flows from the heart, reveals truths, and uncovers those stubborn strings of words that were just too difficult to convey verbally.

This also personalizes writing. Sometimes writing can appear very "mechanical" to small children. The workshop allows us to think that writing can be about relationships. You are writing to *someone* and for *someone*, hoping that *someone* will love the words that you created. That *someone* will accept the message you send. That *someone* will understand the feelings you are putting down on paper. And although sometimes difficult, the purpose of writing is to be heard as an author. Calkins agrees,

As writers, what we all need more than anything else in the world is listeners, listeners who will respond with silent empathy, with sighs of recognition, with laughter and tears and questions and stories of their own. Writers need to be heard. (14-15)

Classroom Activities

The goal of these initial activities is to establish community, rituals and routines. By starting in September, students quickly recognize that their environment is safe and secure, a place that has clear expectations and rules, a place that has a set schedule and follows a predictable pace. The following activities will begin the first day of school and take us through the first two weeks (or 10 days). The activities are geared toward kindergarten, but can be adapted to other primary grade levels. The daily activities should be incorporated during the morning literacy block.

Because kindergarten students are just emergent readers and writers, the workshop activities start out very basic. Don't be discouraged by the lack of understanding or what one might consider "quality" writing at first. With daily practice, student writing will become more proficient. I have had groups of children that couldn't even trace their names, let alone write letters independently. Everyone starts somewhere. These activities should meet the needs of all students, allowing them to begin at their individual starting points. As we know, not all learners are the same, so you can expect that their learning pace will also differ.

Week 1

Day 1

Morning Meeting – This day sets the tone for the rest of the year. Do not be fooled. Those shy smiles and quiet voices will become the mischievous and roaring children that begin emerging around October! This is the time to establish rules and consequences. At this first classroom meeting, I have a large piece of chart paper and a marker. The kids and I come up with 3-4 class rules. They help me develop the rules by generating ideas for good rules. This process allows children to take ownership of the rules. Many of their responses will be duplicated so it is the teacher's role to combine similar statements and make the rules as succinct and brief as possible. The rules that I usually aim for are the traditional ones: *raise your hand when you want to speak, stay in your seat when the teacher is teaching, listen to the teacher and your classmates (one person talks at a time), and keep your hands, feet and unkind words to yourself*. I have found that these rules are not unrealistic and that the kids can respond to them because they make sense. I explain that without these rules, students can get hurt. We have rules to keep us safe.

We then discuss what happens when someone breaks a rule. I have a very simple behavior management system that works. I have three paper plates. One is green, one is yellow and one is red. At the start of every day, a clothespin with the child's name on it is clipped to the green light. If a child makes a bad choice they are given a verbal warning. If I have to speak to that child again, they "move" to the yellow light and there is a consequence. Usually, I hold students from recess or "center" time. If the student continues to make bad choices and disrupt our learning, they are moved to the red light. At that time, I tell them that a phone call will be made (in addition to losing their free time). If the child continues to misbehave they are sent to the office. I have to say that in the five years that I have used this system, I have sent three kids to the office. This system really works. The trick is that **you** have to be consistent. If you say you are going to call somebody's mother, you better follow through.

Reader's Workshop – Read the book *Things I Like* by Anthony Browne. Discuss how everyone has things that they like. Have students discuss something that they like by starting their sentence with "I like _____". Encourage everyone to share.

Writer's Workshop – Tell the students that you can write messages that tell what people say (Just that statement can be considered a mini-lesson!) Write on chart paper the responses that the students gave. Say the words as you write them. Write the person's name next to their response.

I like cars. (Derrick)
I like books (Whitney)
I like Chuck E. Cheese (Tevin)

Give each student a piece of drawing paper. Have the students go back to their tables and illustrate a picture to match the words they just said (and you just wrote). When students are done encourage them to come back to the meeting area and share their picture. When it is their turn to share, have them come to the hanging chart paper, find “their” words, and track the print with their finger as they read what they like. Invite the students to share their picture with the class. Model feedback by saying, “*Wow Tevin, I really like your drawing. I like Chuck E. Cheese too!*” or “*Derrick, I really like the way you read your words, you didn’t tell me you could read.*”

Day 2

Morning Meeting – Today we will discuss classroom helpers. Helpers are people who are assigned jobs within the community to help our day run smoothly. I usually have about five or six helpers a day and they are rotated daily.

The helpers are:

- Line leader – safely leads our line to our destinations throughout the day
- Door holder – holds the door for our classmates as we walk through the hall
- Teacher’s pet – my “right hand man” who will run errands, pass out papers, collect materials etc.
- Library helper – collects library books that we look at during our homeroom period
- Green thumb – takes care of our plants

You can add helpers as you need them or change them depending on the needs of your community. Perhaps you have pets that need to be taken care of, or chairs that need to be put up at the end of the day. Assign children these jobs. It makes them feel important and necessary.

Reader’s Workshop – Read aloud the book *I Like Me* by Nancy Carlson. Discuss how every student is different and special. Students will learn that everyone has a name. Their name is the most important word that they will ever learn to read or write. It makes them special. Have each student’s name written on a sentence strip piece (I usually write these names twice each and have them laminated. They will be used again and again for different activities). Explain that when you hold up their name, they will go to a table and practice putting the letters of their name together. Manipulatives will be put out on the tables (link-n-

letters, magnetic letters, letter beads with strings) and students will explore putting their names together.

Writer's Workshop –Have students re-group on the carpet. Continue talking about names. Chart students' names in ABC order. Ask, "*Does anyone have a name that starts with A?*" and continue through the alphabet. I write all the /A/ names with the same colored marker, and all the /B/ names with the same colored marker, and so on. It doesn't take as long as it might sound. After everyone's name is on the chart paper, we make observations: *Who has a long name? Whose name is the shortest? How many students' names begin with the letter /D/? Let's clap the parts in Donasia's name.*

Day 3

Morning Meeting – Students will learn how attendance is taken. Explain to students that it is important that they come to school everyday and that when they enter the classroom in the morning, they will put a picture of themselves into their own pocket. Pass out library pockets for them to decorate. Encourage them to write as much of their name on the pocket as they can. Go around the classroom and take their picture with a camera. Have students glue their pockets to a piece of poster board. The next day the teacher should bring the pictures to school so the students can begin this routine.

Reader's Workshop – The students will be introduced to the Big Book *I Like Me* by Mitchell Anderson (published by The Wright Group). Tell students that just yesterday they heard a different book with the same title. Point to the words /I/, /like/ and /me/. Show them that these same words are on the book cover from yesterday. This book is repetitive in nature or what we call a pattern book. Read the text from the story while tracking the print with your finger:

(Page 2) Look at my hands.
(Page 3) Look at my feet.
(Page 4) Look at my ears.

After reading page 4 encourage the students to try to read along with the rest of the story.

(Page 5) Look at my hair.
(Page 6) Look at my mouth.
(Page 7) Look at my nose.

Before reading page 8, tell the students that there are going to be three words that they've seen before. They are the same words from the title. Ask them to read along if they remember what the words are.

(Page 8) I like me!

Praise the students for their performance and tell them that they've just read their first book!

Writer's Workshop – Have a body pre-drawn on a piece of chart paper. Encourage the students to think back to the body parts that they saw in the story. Ask them to name them. As the students name the body parts, draw them onto the body and label them. While writing the labels, invite the students to help you with the sounds that they hear in the words.

For example:

Teacher: *Who can tell me a part of the body that they remember seeing in the story?*

Student: *I saw a mouth in the book.*

Teacher: *Yes, she was pointing to her mouth in the story. Our person needs a mouth too. I'm going to draw a mouth [draws mouth] and now I'm going to write the word /mouth/. Can anyone think of how that word might start?*

Student: *With a /t/?*

Teacher: *No, /t/ makes the /t/ sound. Let's stretch mouth and listen to what we hear at the beginning. Say slowly /mmmmmouth/. Does anyone hear the beginning sound?*

Student: *I hear /m/!*

Teacher: *Yes, /m/ is the letter that starts /mouth/. Very good.*

Continue labeling body parts and questioning students until their interest wanes. Hang the body chart on a wall where students can see it. This starts the development of a print-rich environment.

Day 4

Morning Meeting – The students' pictures should have been developed. Pass out the pictures and give each child a compliment. Call the students one by one to place their picture in their pocket, which is attached to the poster board and is located on the inside, front door of the classroom. When the classroom door is open (which mine almost always is) other students and teachers can walk by and see the faces of our community. Explain to students that they will not put another person's picture in a pocket. Not even as a favor for a friend. Each person is responsible for checking in each morning by placing their picture in their pocket.

Reader's Workshop – The students will play the name game. Put all the names (written on sentence strip pieces) into a large can. Students will pick a name out of the can and hide it in their lap. Once everyone has picked a name, the students will stand up and try to find their own name. Once the student has found their own name, they sit down. Once everyone is sitting, we check to make sure that everyone has the right name by holding up their name and then putting it back in the can. You can play this two or three times.

Once the game is completed, tell the students that their names are so important that they are going to go on a special wall, called “The Word Wall.” Call students in ABC order by their first name and staple their name under the corresponding letter it starts with. Again, we are adding to our print-rich environment.

Writer's Workshop –Reread the big book *I Like Me*. Show the students the body chart that the class created yesterday through shared writing. Ask them to recall some of the labels on the body. Tell the students that you want them to draw a picture of themselves and then try to label three parts of the body. Tell them that they can look at the class chart to help them spell words they might want to write, or they can use sounds and/or letters they hear or know to write words.

This activity usually generates a very wide spectrum of ability, so it's an excellent starting point to gather information about what students know. Some kids will copy words directly from the chart with no problem, which is telling that they can copy environmental print accurately. Some will rely on their own sounding and put down accurate beginning sounds or chunks of sounds they hear. Some will write random letters for words. Some will be unable to form even a single letter and may scribble, or write nothing. It gives the teacher a good idea of what knowledge these writers are coming to school with. Once everyone is done, the teacher will hang the writing near the class body chart.

Day 5

Morning Meeting – This activity comes from *Phonics They Use* by Patricia Cunningham. The students begin “Special Person” interviews. This is an activity that will continue during the daily morning meeting time for as many children as you have (23 students = 23 days for interviews).

Put all student names in a large can and pull one out for all of the class to see. Talk about the name: *Is it long? Short? How many parts? Clap them. What letter does it start with? What letter does it end with?* On chart paper, write the words “Special Person _____” (The student's name goes in the blank). The special person for the day can sit in a special chair and wear a crown and name tag that distinguishes them from the other students. Have the remaining children ask 4-7 questions directed at the special person in order to get to know them better. The first couple of days you'll have to do some modeling.

Examples of interview questions are:

“What is your favorite animal/movie/color/place to visit?”

“How old are you?”

“Do you have any brother or sisters?”

As the child answers the questions, the teacher writes down the answers using predictable language and the high-frequency words, especially /like/. A special person chart looks like this:

Special Person Donasia Donasia likes red. Donasia likes zebras. Donasia likes chicken nuggets. Donasia likes Shrek. Donasia likes winter. Donasia likes the book <i>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</i> .
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After the questions have been asked, and the teacher has written what the special child says, go back quickly and draw rebus pictures over the words (example from above: draw a picture over the zebra, chicken nuggets, Shrek, winter and *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*) to help emergent readers. Then have the students go back and re-read the person’s chart as you track the print with a finger or pointer. When you are done reading ask the students comprehension questions about the chart: *“Duane, what is Donasia’s favorite color?” “What movie does Donasia like best?” “What does Donasia like to eat?”*

This does several things. First, it checks for comprehension. Can the students recall information quickly that they just learned. Second, it checks to see if the students can locate the answer they are looking for. An extension of that is to have a child actually come up to the special person chart and point to the answer. Third, this teaches children that print carries meaning. The string of letters that are put together to make the word /zebra/ actually symbolize something. After we do all of this, the special person is applauded and gets to wear their crown and special name badge for the rest of the day. Like I said before, this continues daily for each student until the entire class has had their turn. This is a commitment!! Do not start it if you cannot finish it. That is absolutely unfair to the students.

As more and more charts are done, comparisons and contrasts can be made. Hang the charts as they are completed. I usually run a clothesline across a wall and clip the chart as it is completed. This encourages ongoing discussions about

the charts and the students can use the charts to find words that they might want to write during writer's workshop.

Reader's Workshop –The students will be directed to look at the pocket chart that has all of the sentences from *I Like Me* cut-up word-by-word and scrambled at the bottom of the chart. Tell students that you are going to read the words from *I Like Me* to them. Read all the words in their scrambled form. Students will most likely start to laugh because it sounds silly. Ask them what they are laughing about. Hopefully a student will be able to tell you that it doesn't make sense because the words are all jumbled up. Tell them that it is their job to put the words in order so it makes sense. Hold up the big book and start at the first page. Encourage a student to come to the pocket chart and find the words that match the words on the page and put them in order on the first line of the pocket chart. Once the child has completed that, have that student lead the class in reading the words. Continue until all the words have been put into correct sequence.

Writer's Workshop – The students will listen to the read aloud *I Like Books* by Anthony Browne. Students will be given a piece of paper with three lines drawn on the bottom. The teacher will model the writing process through guided writing. On a large piece of paper that looks just like the student paper (only bigger) the teacher will start with the first word /I/ and write it on the line. Have the students copy what you just did. On the second line the teacher will write the word /like/. Again, have the students copy what you did. Encourage the students to go back and re-read the two words that they have written by touching the words as they read. Next, the teacher will write what she likes in the next space. This is what the teacher might say: *I really like flowers, so I am going to write the word flowers in this space. What letter do you hear at the beginning of flowers? Does anyone hear anything after /f/? Let's stretch it like a rubber band. /FFFLLLLLowRRRRRRRRZZZZZZ/. Does anyone hear anything else?* If someone hears another letter, write it on the paper. If not, just the letter /f/ will suffice.

Now encourage the students to think about what they like and to write the sounds they think belong in their word on the blank line. The teacher will walk around and help writers. After the students write, they may illustrate their picture. Take the last five minutes to share their work.

Week 2

Day 6

Morning Meeting – Special Person Interview and related activities

Reader's Workshop – The students will be introduced to the big book *In The Mirror* by Joy Cowley (published by The Wright Group). Have a book talk with the kids. Ask them what they think the character might see in the mirror. Ask them what words we might expect to see inside the book. Read the big book to the children by pointing to each word as you read them:

(page 2) See my fingers.

(page 3) See my toes.

Ask the students: *Who sees a word that looks just like a word we saw in the book I Like Me?* If no one is able to answer /my/, tell the students that the word /my/ was in the book we read last week and it's in this book also. Point to the word /my/ and say it again. Encourage students to read along with the rest of the book stopping at the last word on each page to hear student guesses. Encourage students to look at pictures and beginning sounds to guess what word might come next.

(page 4) See my tongue.

(page 5) See my nose.

(page 6) See my elbow.

(page 7) See my knee.

(page 8) See a monster – that's me!

Give a copy of *In The Mirror* to pairs of students and encourage them to re-read the book to each other. The teacher should walk around and observe reading behaviors (left to right progression, one-to-one correspondence, checking pictures, etc.)

Writer's Workshop – Read aloud *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes. Discuss how everyone has a name and how that makes them special. Refer to the name chart that was made last week. Again ask students to make observations about what they see. Explain that some names are long and some are short. Remind them that the character Chrysanthemum had 13 letters in her name! Give the students paper to practice writing their names. If the students are having trouble, draw dashes to represent each letter of their name. Invite the students to write on top of each dash by putting a letter in their name. Give the students time to work on their names. Some years I have had students that can all write their names immediately and some years it takes until October. For the students who are

ready, invite them to write their last names. Once the students have had practice, have them come back to the carpet and talk about how many letters are in their names.

Teacher: *Our names are so unique and different. My name has 6 letters and 2 parts. Listen while I clap them. Who else has 6 letters in their name? Let's clap your name as we say it. Who has 7 letters in their name? Wow! That's long. I wonder how many parts it has. Can someone clap it and tell me. Who has the longest name in our class? Who has the shortest name? How many claps is the longest name? Let's listen for the sounds in /Thomas/. I hear a /T/ at the beginning. Does anyone else have that same sound at the beginning of their name?*

Continue this discussion until interest is diminished.

Day 7

Morning Meeting – Special Person interview and related activities.

Reader's Workshop – The students will re-read the big book *In The Mirror* during a shared reading. However, the teacher will put little post-it notes to cover the last word on each page, leaving the beginning sound visible.

Teacher: *We are going to re-read the book In The Mirror, except this time I am being a little tricky. I have covered up some words in the book so that you can only see the beginning sound. If you don't know your sounds, that's okay, because you can still look at the pictures to get a clue about what the word might be.*

Model the first page:

(page 2) See my f_____.

Teacher: *Can anyone guess what that word might be?*

Guide their thinking so they arrive at the right answer, and continue through the book.

Give each pair of students a copy of the book and encourage them to re-read the book to each other (for a maximum of 5 minutes). Walk around and observe. Watch to see if children are using these new strategies and comment on what you see.

Writer's Workshop – Have the students gather together in the meeting area. Ask students, “When you look in the mirror, what do you see?” Write their responses through a shared writing experience. Use predictable language and the two high-frequency words that are repetitive in the text: /see/ and /my/.

I see my hands. (Stacy)

I see my hair. (Rashawn)

I see my face. (Javon)
I see my nose. (Aleah)

Discuss: *I noticed that each one of these sentences has the words /I/, /see/ and /my/. Can someone come up to the chart and show us what the word /I/ looks like? Can someone come up and circle the word /see/? Who can tell me the letters in the word /my/? These words must be very important because we keep seeing them. I am going to add these to our word wall. In case anyone ever wants to write one of these words, all they have to do is look on our word wall.*
Attach the words in front of the children to the word wall.

Day 8

Morning Meeting – Special Person interview and related activities.

Reader's Workshop – The teacher will write out the words to In The Mirror on a piece of chart paper. Tell the students: *We have been reading the book In The Mirror so well by checking pictures to get clues. Today we are going to use just sounds to try and read words.* Have the students look at the chart paper.

Teacher: *Can anyone read the first sentence they see?* Call on someone who is raising their hand and appears confident.

Student: See my fingers.

Teacher: *How did you know that was the word fingers?*

Student: *I saw that it started with an /f/.*

Teacher: *Excellent! You looked at the word, saw an /f/ and said fingers. Good reading! Who would like to do the next line?*

Student: See my feet. (The student should have said toes).

Teacher: *You read /see/ and /my/ exactly right, but the last word was tricky for you. You said /feet/. How do we know that this word cannot be feet?*

Continue this dialogue with the students as they read through the sentences.

Writer's Workshop – First read aloud *The Body Book* by Shelly Rotner . Tell the students: *Yesterday I asked you what you saw when you look in the mirror. People gave some really good answers and together we wrote down what they said. Today I am going to ask you the same question, except you are going to help me do the writing.* The students will be asked the question again, “When you look in the mirror, what do you see?” As the students raise their hands, encourage them to come up to a new piece of chart paper. Students will be given a marker and told that when the students AND teacher write together it’s called “sharing the pen.” When the student tells the class what she sees when she looks in the

mirror, tell her that she is going to write her answer using words that we know. Encourage the student to write and discuss the process.

Teacher: *You said that you see your nose when you look in the mirror. Let's write "I see my nose." How do we write /n/? Yes, that's easy, it's just an /n/. How do we write the word /see/? Does anyone remember what that looks like? Maybe we can go to the word wall and check. How do we write the word /my/? I also hear an /m/ at the beginning. Maybe we can check our book to see how it's spelled. I am going to write the word nose. What do we hear at the beginning? Let's stretch it and listen for any other sounds. I hear an /o/ and an /s/ at the end. There is also an /e/, but we don't hear that. Let's go back and reread what Sarah and I just wrote.*

Continue with 3-4 other students. Tell students that we are going to trace their bodies to go with these words. Trace the students on large pieces of butcher paper. After they are traced, have the students illustrate their body parts. While students are waiting to be traced, give them a blank piece of paper and encourage them to write the words that they've learned. Hang the interactive writing and the life-sized, illustrated bodies in the hallway for visitors to see.

Day 9

Morning Meeting – Special Person interview and related activities.

Reader's Workshop – The teacher will print the sentences from *In The Mirror* and cut them up so that they are separated by words. Put the words in a mixed-up arrangement at the bottom of a pocket chart. Tell the students that you are going to read the words from the story. Read the words in the mixed-up way.

Encourage the students to help you unscramble the words and put them in the right order. Show them the pictures of the book to guide their sequencing. Call on students one at a time to put the words together so that they make sense. If having difficulty, show students the words along with the picture so that they can match the words and put them in correct sequence. After each completed sentence, give a child a pointer and encourage them to read the sentence by touching each word. Then have the class re-read as the student points to each word.

Writer's Workshop- Read aloud the story *Here Are My Hands* by Bill Martin Jr. Explain what the students are to do for writer's workshop by modeling the activity. The students will trace their hands (the teacher will probably need to trace most children's hands) and the students will decorate their hands. The students will write/tell what they use their hands for. Encourage students to write letters and words on their paper to symbolize what they are saying. The teacher

will go around and write their dictation on a post-it and stick it to their paper. When all the children are done, the students will have an author's chair. The students will sit in a circle and learn and the teacher will conduct a mini-lesson on the author's chair (or share circle).

Teacher: *When we share our work as authors, it's really important to be a good reader of our work, but it's even more important to be a good listener when others are sharing. When someone is sharing, everyone else's work should be on the ground and in front of your lap. You should not be touching, waving or reading your paper at that time. When it is your turn, you may then pick up your paper and share your work with the class. If you do not feel like sharing, you do not have to. Sometime writers have bad writing days and they don't want anyone to read their work. That's okay! If you are having a bad writing day, just say "pass" when it's your turn and we will skip over you. Okay, who would like to his/her work today and tell us what hands are used for?*

After students share, hang their work. These first few weeks are critical for hanging work and getting print up on the walls. Children will quickly see that their work is celebrated and appreciated.

Day 10

Morning Meeting – Special Person interview and related activities.

Reader's Workshop – Tell the students that they have done such an incredible job reading words this week. Remind them of the strategies they have learned. Congratulate them for remembering sight words, checking the picture, looking at the beginning sound and touching words as they read them. Give them a copy of the book *In The Mirror*. You can either copy the book on a Xerox machine or make the books yourself. Tell the children that they are going to each get a copy of this book to take home. Give them the books and invite them to read at their seats for 5-10 minutes. If they finish early, ask them to go through the book and circle the really important words that are also on our word wall. Walk around and have brief conversations with the students while jotting down any interesting observations. Make comments to the students about what you see.

Writer's Workshop - The students will be given blank pieces of paper stapled together. The teacher will tell them that they are going to make a book with words that they know. The teacher will have a larger version of blank paper stapled together and then the teacher will also model writing for this guided writing lesson. This is not a creative writing lesson. The students will copy the teacher's words in this lesson. The teacher will write in big letters at the bottom of the page:

/I/

Tell the students to copy the word /I/.

/see/

Tell the students to copy the word /see/

/my/

Tell the students to copy the word /my/

Then ask the students what they want to put next. Take a suggestion from a student. Write the word and have the students copy the word.

Continue for two more pages. After everyone has completed their words, invite the students to illustrate their pages to match the words that we just wrote.

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Appendix-Content Standards

Content Standards for the Pittsburgh Public Schools

Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

C2 All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.

C3 All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.

C4 All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform, persuade, in all subject areas.

C5 All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.

C6 All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.

C7 All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure and use.