A multiage learning project for primary students

Linda Darlene Rector
A MULTIAGE LEARNING PROJECT FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Reading

by
Linda D. Rector

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ABSTRACT

In this project I have focused on the power of student choice in the classroom. I have stressed the importance of a classroom environment that makes the students feel safe from failure, take pride in learning and realize the value of progress. The main components of the program are educating and involving the parents, opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning, teachers team teaching, curriculum that relates to the students, and assignments that assess what the students can do.

In the Literature Review section three models of reading that form a continuum are discussed; the decoding model, the skills model, and the whole language model. Reading should begin with natural uses of language. Environments that encourage reading are those rich in words and print found in good literature.

This project contains a series of multicultural lessons based on a multilanguage environment, utilizing whole language and authentic assessment. This nongraded classroom is structured to capitalize on student choice and students as tutors. I have also proposed parent involvement and education to enhance the learning program.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank collectively, all the instructors I have had over the last fifteen years as I made my way from high school drop out to Master's Degree graduate.

Next, I would like to individually recognize three special instructors. Monica Ford was more than my instructor as she offered her support. She gave of herself so freely and always with a smile. I will always remember an instructor named Marianne Hussey. She made me feel like we were on a journey together, a journey of learning. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Klein. She was always there even when she was away. She called from home and work, making time for my many, many questions. Thank you Dr. Klein for your unlimited time and kindness. I will carry all three of you with me when I walk up to receive my degree.

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When I started my career in education five years ago, I began as a long term substitute. I was fresh out of the university and had just finished my student teaching. The teacher I was substituting for had been teaching the same grade level for eons. When I entered the classroom that first morning I was so excited. I envisioned myself practicing all the lessons I had planned in my courses. Instead I found myself reading lesson plans that directed me to see the Teacher's Edition-page 106. And so it went, day after day, page after page. The students were all seated in assigned seats in rows. I soon learned that it was very important that all the desks be carefully lined up at the end of the day. By the end of the week the newness had worn off and I was bored. By the end of the first quarter I knew I had to make some changes. I told the students that they could move their desks anywhere they wanted to during the last week of school. At first they moved their desks around in the same rows. However, by the end of the quarter they had abandoned rows completely. I have never again had rows in my classroom.
The next quarter I began to make the lesson plans. I allowed for more student choice. At first students could not even choose their own journal entries. Eventually they chose their own topics in all the classroom writing assignments. I have learned gradually, to allow the children even more choice and I am very comfortable with it. I have discovered the power of student choice.

During the following years I began to experiment with what felt good and right for myself and for the children. One year I had the opportunity to co-teach with a friend. Although we did not have a true multiage program, we did have many of the components of a multiage program. We had students from first through third grade. I found that the practices that I enjoyed, Whole Language, Math Their Way, problem-solving, student choice, and authentic assessment worked very well in a multiage setting. The primary purpose of this project is to develop a classroom environment in which children will be safe from failure, experience pride in learning, and learn to value their progress. The secondary purpose is for me to sort through all that I have encountered and been exposed to in the last five years. It seems to me that I have been
asked so many times what I believe in. I had such a hard time answering that question. Now I am ready.

In this project, I propose to develop a multiage program for teachers to use in the classroom. I will include information for teacher organization, theme plans, assessment forms, a parent component, and resources. The first question I have is where do I start. In trying to answer that question I realized that I have already started. I have taught first and second grades for the past five years. I have had a first-second combination class. Several first grade parents requested that their students be in the class for a second year. Several parents asked if I might teach third grade the following year. A number of these same parents have younger siblings of those students starting first grade this year. I believe that this is the year to start. I have requested a first-second grade class for this year.

During the year I will educate parents about the programs in the classroom. I will provide information about developmental philosophy and organization of the classroom. I plan to invite them into the classroom and include them in their child's education.
always have frequent communication with my parents and this is a natural extension.

I have used themes in planning instruction before. I enjoy including the students in deciding what we will study. I find that the students are interested in learning things that I am interested in teaching them. I discovered this by accident. I was given an assignment to do theme cycles, based on a what we know, what we want to know and what we have learned. I was confused and offered no parameters so the students told me about everything they wanted to learn about. What they wanted to learn was what I wanted to teach. I was amazed. Now I believe it is because children are constantly trying to assume adult roles. I trust the students to assume responsibility for their learning. I know that with ownership and choice learning knows no bounds!

One element of organization for multiage teaching is the concept of team teaching. Teachers that have not had experiences with team teaching may need training in this area. I have been working with other teachers at my school on various theme studies. Although I have not had very many experiences with team teaching,
I will continue to seek training as opportunities arise.

Frequently, when other teachers hear about a multiage program their first comment is "I don't have enough materials to do one grade level never mind two or three!" I thought about that comment and decided that I should take an inventory of my classroom resources. I have organized them in the classroom according to subjects. I have all my math games, manipulatives, and math literature together. I have gathered reading materials, fiction and nonfiction of different levels. I have children's magazines and newspapers. I have arranged with the school librarian to have books related to theme studies. I find that I have enough to begin. I realize that once I start the multiage program I may find that I would like more materials but who wouldn't like more, even in a single grade program.

I plan to focus on the Language Arts program to support literacy development for this project. I will develop a unit of lesson plans based on multicultural literature. Today's classrooms include many different cultures. Studies show children learn best from curriculum that relates to them. Multicultural literature
should be part of the multiage classroom literature.

I will also include a number of assessments for use in the classroom that support the thinking curriculum. I have not been comfortable with the progress reports and report cards used in our district. I was recently reminded of this by a little boy I will call "Robert". Robert was put in my classroom because he was not quite ready for first grade. His mother begged for another year for Robert. It was decided to place him in a kindergarten-first grade class to give him a chance. We are past mid-year, and mother and administration are pushing for retention. I am concerned because Robert is just beginning to open up to me. I believe that being retained is the worst thing that could happen to Robert. When I choose assessment forms to use in my program I choose forms that report what students can do. When I evaluate Robert on these forms Robert, his parents and I realize there are many things he can do.

Theoretical Foundation

There are currently three recognized models of reading. These three models form a continuum: the decoding model, the skill model, and the whole language model. In reading courses (Gray,
I learned that "... as a result of understanding how each model views the basic elements and the principals that govern them, one can create a definition of reading that upholds the belief system within each model."

When I learned to read over thirty-five years ago I sat in my seat in my row and tried to remember what sound went with what letter. I tried to make sense of all the little pictures (on worksheets) that I was suppose to write beginning or ending or middle sounds underneath. Many times I was not even sure what the picture was suppose to represent. I tried to make sense of it all when I was called on to read aloud. Real reading occurred at night, in my room, under my covers, with my Mom's True Story books.

It took the reading courses to help me understand how reading was being defined. Reading (Gray, 1990, Class Notes), was defined in the decoding model as:

... a precise and perfectible process which used the mechanical skills of changing/recoding print into speech. Meaning was obtained through sound, either orally or sub-vocally. The correctness of decoding symbols into sounds
resulted in the production of words which in turn produced comprehension. Deviations from print were considered errors. The basic of reading was, sound. Oral language was prime. Print was secondary, an appendage to speech.

Now the year is 1995, and my daughter is learning to read. She has been given a list of words to learn and we have put them on 3x5 cards. Every night we practice our reading words. To her, when she grows up reading will (at least in part) be words. She is very good at recognizing words in text from her list. She is looking forward to mastering this list and wants to "get the next list".

Reading (Gray, 1990, Class Notes), is defined in the skills model as:

... a precise and perfectible process utilizing a system of three skills: de-coding, vocabulary, and comprehension which play various roles of importance when reading. Deviations from print are considered errors. Comprehension is the resulting product of applying skills which string together words and match the literal statements of the author. The basic of reading is, words. You begin by introducing sight
I am currently at the university, working on my Master's Degree. I am being exposed to the most up to date information on reading theories. I love reading the exciting literature that is available today to my students. The language is enriching and the illustrations are beautiful. The children enjoy the story line and I enjoy sharing the stories. In the Whole Language model (Gray, 1990, Class Notes) reading is defined as:

... a natural process, neither a precise nor perfectable process. Deviations are considered miscues since reading is a transaction between the background a reader brings to the text and the writer. There will be deviations between what the reader understands and what the author wrote which results in an approximation of meaning. The process is called comprehending. The basic of reading is, meaning. You begin by drawing on the natural uses of language a child uses.

I do not believe that reading is a precise or perfectable process. Deviations are miscues not errors. The background that a reader and the writer bring to the text is the framework on which
meaning is hung. I also believe that children need exposure to the use of decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension, which play various roles of importance when reading. I believe that reading should begin with natural uses of language. I also believe that a child needs to hear lots and lots of stories. I believe they need an environment rich in print. I also believe a good reader predicts, confirms and integrates. I have heard that it takes 3,000 hours of involvement with print to become a proficient reader.

I have been exposed to all three reading models. My own educational background is from the decoding model. Through my four children I have considerable experience with the skills reading model. Finally all my training to prepare me for teaching has been in the Whole Language model. However, I believe children that love to read are from this last model. This places me somewhere in between skills and whole language on the reading continuum. My goal is always to be working towards becoming a Whole Language teacher because I believe that is what is best for the children.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction
Multiage classrooms are as old as the one room school house. It has only been the last two hundred years that we have had single graded classrooms. Single graded classrooms did not come about as a concern for students. According to Joan Gaustad (1992), "Age-graded instruction originated in the mid-1800s, when the idea of mass public education created the need for an efficient, economical system capable of handling large numbers of students" (p. 96). Grant and Johnson (1995) state "The graded system in which children pass or fail each year was a factory model that was accepted as appropriate in the nineteenth century. But it is inflexible" (p. 23). The effects of an inflexible system are reflected in research that indicates "Retained students who are otherwise matched by background, sex and achievement level with promoted students are more likely to drop out of school by ninth grade by as much as 30 percent" (It's Elementary, 1992, p. 43). The personal cost to children is evident in that "... children who are retained show lower self-esteem and poorer attitudes toward
classmates who were promoted but also they do less well academically after the experience, which is the crucial point in discrediting the retention strategy" (It's Elementary, 1992, p. 43).

Multiage Classroom

One change that is gaining attention is the non graded or multiage classroom:

In 1993 the Elementary Education Office of the California Department of Education conducted a survey of the schools in the California Alliance for Elementary Education to discover the topics that most interested teachers and administrators on Alliance schools. Multiage learning was the number one priority among the respondents to this survey (Multiage Learning Source Book, 1993, p. vii).

Today's educators are considering moving back to the concept of the multiage classroom out of concern for students. "We've made remarkable breakthroughs in understanding the development of children, the development of learning, and the climate that enhances that," says Erenst Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Appalachia Educational Laboratory,
Kentucky's Hargan concurs; "We have a sound research base about how young children learn. What we lack now is a change in our practices to match what we know" (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1991).

Anderson and Pavan have found that (1993):

Research studies published between 1968 and 1990 most frequently favored nongradedness on standardized measures of academic achievement and mental health. The results on academic achievement demonstrate that 58 percent of the studies have non graded students performing better; 33 percent, the same; and only 9 percent worse than graded students. As to the mental health and school attitudes, 52 percent of the studies indicate non graded schools as better, 43 percent similar, and only 5 percent worse than graded schools (p. 53).

It is easy to see why students feel so positive in a multiage setting. Louise Wroblleski (1994) describes three girls sitting together reading The Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown. The two older girls, ages six and seven, read "I will become a fish in a
... in a ..." As they struggle to decode the unknown word, a younger classmate, five years old, "chimed in with 'trout stream.' " The readers nodded in agreement and read, "I will become a fish in a trout stream" (p. 1). This continues through the entire story, with the younger child, alertly waiting for the chance to participate. All three students were successful.

Parents that see this kind of interaction in a multiage classroom believe that younger children are benefiting, but question the benefits for older students. Older students will end up as tutors for the younger students, they fear. Other concerns are "What is this multiage? Won't my child repeat a lot in her second year with you? Why do you do it that way? Is my child being retained for some reason? Where's the research on this multiage teaching" (Rathbone, Bingham, Dorta, McClaskey, & O'Keefe, 1993, p. 95)? However, in a multiage classroom students are educated as individuals. The individual's needs determine the program. According to Chase and Doan (1994) "... the best way to offer children the opportunity for supported growth at an individual pace is in a classroom where children are at different levels and where
all the differences are valued" (p. 29). Furthermore, "As they move from being first-year students to third-year students, they see their roles in the group expand and change. They are very aware of their growth as they move along the continuum of time in the program" (Chase & Doan, p. 30).

Many educators encounter parent or administrator's resistance. As Barth noted (1990), "... the prevailing school culture seems preoccupied with caution. ... If we're serious about learning, for ourselves and for others, then we must become serious about risk-taking. When the risks are high, and when a safety net is in place, the learning curve goes off the chart" (p. 513).

Doris Smith (1993) also found support for mixed age classrooms with respect to cognitive development, social behavior, academic growth, and discipline problems.

Mixed age classes make sense from the point of view of cognitive development. ... Non graded classrooms offer a better social setting. ... Furthermore in classes where one teacher stays with the same students for several years the relationship often becomes so personal that both academic
and disciplinary problems lessen (Multiage Learning Source Book, Research XI-1).

**Whole Language**

Another change that is based on sound educational instructional strategies is the Whole Language movement. Whole Language is suffering from popularity. According to Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores (1992) "Lately we have seen Whole Language misrepresented by a whole word perspective . . ." (p. 22). Teachers have many misconceptions about the Whole Language movement. In speaking to several teachers everyone *thinks* they know what whole language is about. However, when they begin to discuss the whole language philosophy it soon becomes evident that they are misinformed. Whole Language is not ignoring phonics, it is not giving children books and expecting them to read, and it is not just reading a bunch of stories. Finally, "... whole language isn't an orthodoxy-there's no one right way to do it-but rather that it's an invitation to inquiry, an invitation for teachers to take charge of their classroom once again" (Watson, Burke, & Harste, 1989, p. 6). "Whole language is first of all a lens for viewing, a framework that
insists that belief shapes practice" (Altwerger et al., 1992, p. 12).

According to Ken Goodman Whole Language is (1986) "... a way of bringing together a view of language, a view of learning, and a view of people, in particular two special groups of people: kids and teachers" (p. 5).

Multicultural literature should be part of the whole language literature program. "To capture the breadth of human experience, a strong literature program offers the language and literature of many nations and perspectives of racially and ethnically and culturally diverse societies" (English Language Arts Framework, 1987, p. 7).

Assessment

A third change has come about in the area of assessment, as a result of recent breakthroughs based on current research in child development and learning. Short and Burke (1991) maintain:

Traditionally, evaluation has been seen as an outside force that is imposed upon the curriculum generally and the learner specifically. It has been externally imposed because of several assumptions-that the questions which drive the
curriculum must be supplied by outside recognized experts, that the vast majority of what is to be learned is already known, digested, and organized, and that there are acknowledged correct responses to the curricular questions which are to be asked (p. 60).

For me the hardest part of transitioning from the decoding or skills model to the whole language model is this concept of evaluation. With the decoding and skills models the publishers gave the teachers a test, an answer key and a grading scale. With the whole language model there is no publisher, no test, no answer key, and no grading scale. I gave the students uninterrupted reading and writing time. I listened to them read and I evaluated their writing with the instruments I used in Reading Clinic. I kid-watched and made anecdotal records. I filled portfolios. However, I did not see this evaluation as influencing my instruction. Something was missing and I was concerned. This, more than anything has hindered my ability to grow as a whole language teacher.

Short and Burke explain (1991):

As our beliefs about learning and curriculum change and new
models for curriculum are developed, our beliefs about evaluation also need to change. Evaluation is part of the curriculum, not separate from it, and therefore needs to be guided by the same beliefs that guide our thinking as we work with students to develop curriculum (p. 61).

"While not inherently unique to multi-age instruction, virtually every report on such successful instruction includes descriptions of continuous assessment and parent involvement" (Harp, 1994, p. 100). I was pleased to read the directive in It's Elementary (Elementary Grades Task Force Report, 1992). Recommendation 21 reads "Continue building a system of authentic, performance-based assessments that measures the full scope of the thinking curriculum" (p. 71). Still that is a far cry from just what and exactly how.

Amidst all this confusion, as I was trying to create my own instruments, I discovered an article by Lynn Rhodes and Curt Dudley-Marling entitled Planning Instruction. Rhodes and Dudley-Marling maintain (1991):

These observations, however, are useful only if they influence
instruction on a daily basis. It's possible for teachers to observe children's literacy development regularly and yet fail to use this information effectively when planning instruction, often because they don't see the relevance of the information they've collected (p. 180).

Rhodes and Dudley-Marling (1991) note that "The problem for us is to provide alternatives to behavioral goals or objectives for teachers committed to holistic approaches to literacy learning but justifiably concerned with accountability and with fulfilling their legal responsibilities" (p. 183). They suggest a four step approach for planning language instruction. First the teacher develops summaries based on reading and writing observations. "These summaries are a collection of brief statements that describe what the student does as a reader and writer-statements of effective and ineffective processes and products" (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1991, p. 183). Next the teacher writes learner objectives based on the summaries. "Learner objectives refer to what teachers hope will happen as a result of their teaching interactions" (Rhodes Dudley-Marling, 1991, p. 185). Then the teacher records teaching
goals intended to help the learner achieve the objectives. "Teaching goals will include general statements about instructional strategies, suggested materials and resources, and so on. These goals represent an overall plan or a road map for literacy instruction" (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1991, p. 186). Finally the teacher provides ongoing evaluation of the student's learning. Rhodes and Dudley-Marling (1991) write:

... developing individual goals or objectives does not make sense unless these goals and objectives are routinely reexamined and revised in light of a student's daily reading and writing instruction. Thus, ongoing evaluation is a necessity in instructional planning if instruction is to meet the needs of students and respond to what they are currently trying to learn and do.

In order to conduct ongoing evaluation, teachers must routinely record their observations of students' reading and writing performance. This needn't take more than a few minutes each day (pp. 186-187).

Including Parents

21
The English-Language Arts Framework, adopted by the California State Board of Education in 1986 recognizes the importance of involving families in supporting classroom instruction in reading and writing.

Parents and families, too, must invest in the growth of students' facility with the language arts by being willing to read to them, support and model the need for reading and writing, provide access to books for pleasure and learning, . . . and create time in a hectic family schedule for reading and writing and talking about books and ideas (p. 37).

An important component of any successful program is the inclusion of parents and families. "There is need to educate parents as well as administrators and colleagues about why and what we do" (Rathbone et al., 1993, p. 119). Furthermore they describe a distinct disadvantage of not including parents in the classroom:

Teachers undermine themselves by keeping information to themselves. Hours of preparation cannot possibly be appreciated or noticed if the results are misunderstood or overlooked. We are obligated to explain or live with what
gets discussed at the supermarket by an uninformed public. Myths are created that way! 'Noise' and activity level can stand out first to a parent rather than the learning taking place (Rathbone et al., 1993, pp. 118-119).

Bingham (1993) indicates more than one benefit of communicating with parents, "Dependable parent help not only benefits me, but brings family and school together in a meaningful way" (Rathbone et al., p. 67).
GOALS AND LIMITATIONS

Goals

One of the goals of this project is to develop a multiage classroom program. A multiage program is a more developmentally appropriate education program for children. Children are born learning; our job is to avoid interfering with their learning. Children learn what is important to them. There have been several times in the last five years when I have designed a lesson to teach students one thing, only to discover that the learning I had intended was not what one or more students valued in the lesson.

It is also the goal of this project to develop a series of lessons based on the whole language approach. In a multiage classroom the teacher is forced to use improved instructional practices such as whole language. I believe that children need uninterrupted blocks of time to read and write.

Another goal of this project to collect assessment for use in a multiage, whole language classroom I believe that children learn at their own rates. I believe that the best way to offer children a chance to grow at their own pace is in a multiage classroom where
differences are not only accepted but valued. Classroom assessment should reflect the program. A child will progress at a rate that is appropriate for them, not in what is termed the "lock-step manner" of the traditional graded classroom.

Finally it is the goal of this project to propose a program to involve parents as partners in literacy. Parents want their children to do well in school. They are concerned about their children's progress. Successful programs are programs that involve parents. Involved parents become educated parents. Educated parents become supportive parents.

**Objectives**

1. Teachers will be able to teach a unit based on multiculture, whole language literature.
2. Teachers will be able to assess students with holistic instruments.
3. Teachers will be able to involve parents in their children's reading program from home.

**Limitations**

The major limitation to establishing a multiage program is
the teacher's educational philosophy. The teacher must believe in the power of the learner. The teacher must believe in students taking ownership of their learning. They also have to believe in the value of authentic, continuous assessment and self evaluation.

Another limitation is time and stress. The time commitment is greater for each grade added. Jim Grant stated the more ages and grades, the greater the work load, stress, and the greater the chance of missing students.

Another limitation is grade level. Multiage programs are more suited to primary grades. Also a teacher that has not had experience with teaching multiple grades may have more success starting with two grade levels and gradually working in other grades until the program is functioning smoothly. Jim Grant proposes the concept of looping as a way to ease into the multiage program. Looping is when one teacher keeps the same children for more than one year. At the end of two years she returns to the lower grade to begin again with a new group.

Parents and administrators that have not had experiences with a multiage program may have objections to the concept. If
the parents or administrators object the teacher must move slowly and above all else educate, educate, educate. If everyone involved is informed and given the power of choice the program will have a much greater chance of success. The most important aspect for success is that everyone involved must have a choice.

Another limitation is the budget concern. This is always a concern even in a single grade classroom. If a single grade classroom does not have a range of abilities represented in materials for students it is not servicing all the students. I do not see it as a greater concern in a multiage classroom. I believe that it would be vital to choose materials carefully.
Appendix A
Introduction

For a long time I have wanted to plan a unit of study that would teach children about the world and various countries while also teaching them to be accepting of others. I want to expose them to key works of literature. I want to develop a background of oral language to support them when they begin to read. The more I learned about the frameworks and teaching, the more overwhelmed I became by the thought of all that would have to be included in such a unit of study just to accomplished those goals.

I decided to approach the unit from the perspective of children from various countries, all belonging to a club that meets under a tree- perhaps in a club house. The complete unit will use that base as a starting point. I thought about naming the unit Under the Learning Tree. I would start the unit on the first day of school and continue it throughout the entire year. It would apply to all grade levels, depending on how I wanted to use the lessons. One of the first things I would do at any grade level is read a book to introduce the unit. A book I might read is No Girl’s Allowed by Stan and Jan Berenstain. I would have one club and do the activities as a
class in the lower grades. This book lays the groundwork for many cooperative group activities. In the upper grades I would have students, in small groups, sign up for a country to represent. They would create a character to represent them. We would have a meeting once a week and in a Reader's Theater format they would report on what they had learned. My group might be responsible for Mexico. We could decide to have a little girl named Jasmine represent us in the club. This week we are going to read legends. Our group would find a legend we liked. We could script our report as a story our great-great grandmother told us. Other groups of students would share legends told to them by members of their family. I like this plan very much because it allows me to cover any material I want to.

For the sake of this assignment I am going to focus on a multiage classroom because next year I am hoping to teaching this level. One of the suggestions in the History-Social Science Curriculum Guide is for students to play with toys or tools from earlier historical periods and act out scenes from selected stories depicting cultures of the long ago, such as Nadia the Willful, Hansel
and Gretel, and the video program Strega Nona. One of the children in our club would be an German child. At a club meeting this child would (in Reader's Theater) act out the story he heard about Hansel and Gretel from his great-great grandmother. He would involve other children from the club in acting out his story. At another meeting we would bring shell beads, apple dolls, toy hatchets, and small-sized historical costumes to share with each other.

There are many projects that can be done for this unit, but the one I favor is the final one for the unit. I would have an International Day. I would establish a station for each country that we had studied. I would include items made during the lessons by the students. We would design passports and stamp each country as we serve food, explain customs and give information about each place. We would invite parents or other students to travel to the countries.
The Day of Amhed's Secret

Written By Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland

Illustrated By Ted Lewin

Introducing the Book

Read Aloud Suggestions—Discuss with the children what their special roles are in their families, their jobs, their responsibilities. Talk about what would happen if they forgot to do their jobs. Continue by talking about how in many parts of the world children must help their families by working to earn money. Show the cover of The Day of Ahmed's Secret. Look at a map or a globe and point out Cairo, the city where the story takes place. Read the book and at the end look closely at the way Ahmed writes his name. Give each child a sheet of paper and ask them to write their names in large bold print or cursive handwriting. Reexamine the illustrations and read again some of the descriptions of the sights, sounds, smells and the sand of the desert city.
Language Arts

Writing Process (Life Experiences)

Discuss the story and ask the children about some of the ways they help their families. Have the children write about a typical weekend at their home and some of the ways they are helpful, both with routinely assigned chores and without being asked. Have the children illustrate their writing with materials of their choosing. Display.
Math

Market Day—Look again at the scenes in the story that show the bazaar, the busy streets of the marketplace. Talk about our American equivalent, the sidewalk sale or the flea market with small stalls. Discuss ways family members sell items, such as a garage sale, yard sale, a community or church bazaar or rummage sale. Let the children tell about some of their experiences at these types of sales, either as sellers or customers. Plan a class bazaar or market day by asking the children to bring in items they would like to sell. Decide how to keep track of the items contributed. Discuss pricing and bartering, counting money and keeping track of the amount sold and inventory. Place desks around the room and let the children make posters and signs advertising their bargains. Schedule an afternoon of shopping and invite several other classrooms to come to shop. After the bazaar, have the children evaluate their pricing, bartering, effectiveness as sales people, proficiency at counting money and what they will do with any leftover merchandise.
Fine Arts

Art

Sand Painting—Using scraps of paper, brush on some paint, then sprinkle it with sand. Let it dry briefly, then lift the paper, stand it on its end and let all the loose sand shake off. Show the children the texture that remains. Use the sand technique to emphasize the feeling and give texture to paintings of the streets of Ahmed's city.
Introducing the Book

Read Aloud Suggestions-Announce to the children that today is a wonderful day, a celebration day. Tell them about something that happened today which was unexpected. Perhaps you saw a beautiful little bird or two scampering squirrels or someone did something special for you which was totally unexpected. Write a key word or phrase on the classroom calendar to remember the unexpected event. Show the children the cover of *I'm in Charge of Celebrations* and tell them you will be reading about the Southwestern desert. Point out the Southwestern states on a map. Read the jacket information about the author and show the children Texas. Byrd Baylor's birthplace, and Arizona, where she lives now. Read the story. Have the children tell about special days they remember.
Language Arts

Writing Process (Journal Writing)

Reread the section from the story where the author says that she keeps a notebook and writes down the date and notes about the celebration. Write your own journal entry about a special day you want to remember the rest of your life because of some unexpected event. Describe what happened, how you felt, and how you celebrated. Read the journal entry to the children and elaborate on what happened. If your special celebration reminds the children of something that happened to them, let the students share their recollections. Read your journal entry a second time and have the children listen for the main ideas, what happened, how you felt and how you celebrated. Ask the children to write about one of their days that they want to remember for the rest of their lives. They can use your outline or they may write in story form.
Math

Ask parents to send in any excess calendars and date books they have at home. Collect and display all the different types of calendars: school calendars, eighteen-month calendars, daily planners, weekly planners, month-at-a-glance, electronic calendars. Select a large calendar to use as the classroom calendar and copy smaller versions for each student. For first and second graders copy only this month. Mark school holidays, children's birthdays and any recent events that the class wants to be remembered, as well as any that are planned. Let the children use their calendars to count days and answer questions about time. For example, How many days until the next school holiday? How many days until the next student birthday? Mark, on the calendar, celebration days of the unexpected type. Record them for the month. Also, younger children can add and subtract using the calendar as a number line. Older children can use days of the week to solve problems. For example, if there are nine months of school, how many days of those nine are spent in school?
Science

Talk with the children about how scientists take field notes, which are their observations. Write a sample field note, including the date, time location and an observation of an insect, a plant, an animal or the weather. Plan a hike to a natural area on the school grounds or in the neighborhood. Pair children as hiking partners. Have parent volunteers or older elementary students involved in the hike. Explain to them about the field notes exercise. Enjoy the hike until you are surrounded by trees and plants or if you live in an arid area until you are out of sight of the school and in a more natural setting. Have the children stop and select one specimen that they want to observe. Ask them to observe for several minutes without talking. The length of the observation time will vary depending on the age of the students. Let the children tell their partners what they saw. Have the students write key words and any sketches they need to help them remember their specimen. Back in the classroom, divide the observers into teams, according to the specimen they chose for field notes. Have an insect team, a plant team and an animal team. Let them compare notes on what they saw.
Fine Arts

Art

Painting-Look again at the illustrations from the story. Notice particularly the cover with an enlarged sun, and the inside illustrations of an exaggerated green parrot and very large triple rainbow. Discuss these events as unexpected happenings. Have the children tell about one of their special days when an unexpected event happened, a day they want to celebrate. Decide what drawing might represent what happened on their special days. Let the children paint with the Southwestern colors the illustrator used or with any which fit their pictures. Encourage the children to write titles or captions for their paintings. Display the pictures in or near the classroom library.

Music

Have the children sit on the floor. Tell them that you are impressed with the way Byrd Baylor writes, particularly the way she tells about movement. Read the scene of the seven "dust devils or whirlwinds." Ask seven children to demonstrate what those movements might look like. Continue the reading and select
different children for each scene of the story. With younger children, let them improvise each scene, but you lead the whole class in the movements. With older students, consider adding rhythm band instruments, like drums and tambourines, to express the movements.
Nathaniel Talking

Written By Eloise Greenfield

Illustrated By Jan Spivey Gilchrist

Introducing the Book

Read Aloud Suggestions—Poetry is meant to be read aloud.

Before reading any of the poems aloud to the class, rehearse them.

Try the rhythmic pattern Eloise Greenfield suggests for "My Daddy."

Select several poems to read at one sitting. Begin with "Nathaniel's Rap" and read it at least twice. Teach the children the repeated verses and let them join you. Continue by reading "Nine" and "Knowledge." Turn to the Illustrations of "Missing Mama" and "Mama," and set the mood for the poems by asking the children what the pictures tell us Nathaniel is feeling. At another read aloud session, share the poems about Nathaniel's family and neighbors. End the session by reading "Nathaniel's Rap" again and "Nathaniel's Rap (Reprise)."
Language Arts

Writing Process (Creative Writing)

Read "I See My Future." Ask the children how they visualize themselves when they are growing up. Let the children talk for a while, not about the things they want to own when they are grown-up, but the kind of people they want to be. Read "I See My Future" again and ask the children to write about what they want to be like as adults. They can write a poem, compose a song, write a letter, draw a picture and write captions, or write descriptive phrases. Develop the writings through the Writing Process. Encourage the children to illustrate their writing. Ask the students to place a copy of this writing in their writing folders. At the next Parent's Day have the students share their compositions with their parents.
Fine Arts

Music and Movement

Read the author's note on how to feel the beat in "My Daddy."
Make a chart like the one in the author's note. Mark the bars to fit
the four beat in the twelve bars of the poem. The first verse is
already charted, so continue the pattern. Read the poem aloud to
the children with the rhythm that sounds like a blues song, as
indicated by Eloise Greenfield's chart. Show the children how to
tap their feet or pat their thighs to the beat as you read the poem a
second time. Have the students join you in reading "My Daddy" with
the rhythm that the poet suggests. Ask a music specialist to play
some blues music and help the children tap or clap the beat.

Art

Look at the silhouettes Jan Spivey Gilchrist used to illustrate
several of the poems, "A Mighty Fine Fella," "Who the Best," "Aunt
Lavinia" and "Education." Have the children draw a picture and
completely shade in the figures of the people. Or as an alternative,
shade a building in the background or an object they want to
highlight. Make another type of silhouette by having the children
draw figures on black construction paper, cut them out and glue them onto their pictures.
Lord of the Dance: An African Retelling

Retold By: Veronique Tadjo

Introducing the Book

Read Aloud Suggestions-Show the cover of the book and discuss the illustrations. Read the poem twice. Enjoy the rhythm of the language. Compare the poetic meter of this poem with the poetry from Eloise Greenfield.
Language Arts

Writing Process (Poetry in Motion)

Have younger students grouped with older students in the multiage classroom. Give each group of students a copy of *Lord of the Dance: An African Retelling*. Have them reread it several times. They are to mark the poem with a different color of highlighter pen. They are to mark words or expressions that strike them or confuse them. They also mark words or phrases that gain significance on a second or third reading. When the students have finished reading the poem three times they will write a short narrative responding to the poem. They should tell what the poem means to them.

Students share these narratives with one another and discuss the strategy of rereading and rethinking to deal with other text. They will also discuss their reading process and changes in it as they read and reread the poem.
Fine Arts

Art

Arrange for the "Man's Many Masks" exhibit to visit the school if possible, if not view the film strip. Discuss the materials used and the designs on the various masks in the exhibit. Complete several of the mask activities included in Appendix A. I would use as much of this material as possible.

Drama

Direct the children to find their personal space. Ask them to find another personal space. Practice;

- finding another personal space.
- stop/start movements.
- moving in different pathways-curvy, straight, zigzag.
- following one other person's pathway.
- changing speed-fast, slow, gradually faster, gradually slower.

After making the various masks I would have the children create a dance after listening to the poem and interpreting the mood of the poem. I would also like to have them use instruments of their choice to put music to the sound of the poem.
Introducing the Book

Read Aloud Suggestions- Show the children the cover of Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's. Discuss the illustrations and color of the cover. Note The Caldecott Medal and discuss its importance. Have the students predict what the story will be about. Read the tale through from start to finish. The children will begin to repeat the recurring phrases and the animal noises with you. Encourage them to read with you.
Language Arts

Writing Process (Life Experiences)

Discuss how the various animals might have been affected by the other animal's actions. Ask them when someone else's actions affected them. Using the Writing Process have them write a story telling who affected their actions, how, and what happened.
Fine Arts

Art

Let children cut green or brown construction paper or paint with green or brown paints to construct the animals. If they made the animals of construction paper, have them glue it onto manila paper. Have the children create the grass and glue it in front of the animals.
Annie and the Old One

Written By Patricia Miles Martin
Illustrated By Tani Brooks Johnson

Introducing the Book

Read Aloud Suggestions—Before reading the book ask children about older relatives who are important to them. How are these people special? Invite students to bring in photographs of their grandparents to share with the class. Prepare students for the sensitive topic of death, which is presented in the book. Discuss how people are affected by the death of a special person or pet. Let students express their feelings about death and share any meaningful personal experiences. Explain to students that Annie and her family are Navajos who still follow some of the traditional ways of their ancestors. Point out on a map the southwest region. Most Navajos live in the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Tell students that one of the things Navajos are well-known for is their magnificent weaving. Have students listen for examples in the story that show both the traditional and the modern lifestyles of Annie's family.
Language Arts

Writing Process (Sentence Frames)

The Navajo are widely admired for their craftsmanship in silver jewelry making. They often work with turquoise in their creations. Turquoise is regarded by the Navajo as a "piece of the sky." Inspire students to think about how they would describe the colors of their natural world. Then give each student paper for making a poetic book. On each page, tell students to write a sentence using this pattern:______ is a piece of _________. (Example: Yellow is a piece of the sun.) Students can finish each page with an illustration and assemble the pages to make a book. Allow students to share their books in small groups.
Fine Arts

Art

Give the students a rectangular piece of construction paper. Have them fold the paper in half. Using a ruler draw cut lines by drawing a line down each side of the ruler. Cut on the lines. Give each student five strips of paper. Help them weave a strip in and out. Weave another strip under the first part. Finish weaving all five strips. Paste the ends down. Older children can do the same project on a cardboard loom with yarn for weaving. The first time or two that they weave, the children have a hard time, however, after practicing several times even the young children do a fine job.
Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance

Written and Illustrated By Ian Wallace

Introducing the Book

Read Aloud Suggestions—Have the children discuss the cover of the book. Predict what the story will be about. Notice the use of color. Ask the children if they have ever been afraid. Read the story through without stopping.
Language Arts

Writing Process (Creative Writing)

Begin by writing on the board, "Have you ever had a frightening experience?" Immediately, the students will respond with scary tales. As the class members listen to their peers they will respond with tales of their own. For those stories that produce the most response from the listeners suggest, "That would be a good story to write."

Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to select an example from the events previously recounted and to write it as the beginning of a whole day of episodes that might take place at school. Have the students illustrate their stories and publish them. These books would make good home reading. Have students in each group sign their book out to be taken home and read to their family. Once everyone in the group has had a chance to check out the group's book, groups could check out each other's books.
Math

The story mentions the red envelopes and the money they contain. This is the perfect time to introduce or even review money. Stamp various coins on paper and put them in numbered, red envelopes. Give each child an envelope and have them count the money in it. They can write the amount of money next to the number of the envelope. They can pass the envelopes around the room as many time as is appropriate for the age level.
Fine Arts

Art

Have younger students work on making a class dragon, out of various art materials. Once completed, parade through the school to show off the dragon. Have older children paint watercolor dragons and display.

Dance

Remind students of the movements done in an earlier lesson. Practice the various movements with bells attached to children's ankles. Create a dance and practice in small groups.
Appendix B
Introduction

Evaluation should be ongoing and gathered over a period of time. It demonstrates growth over different levels of development. Evaluation directs and guides instruction. It is unique for each student and focuses on what students know.
Portfolio Evaluation: Writing

Have child select several pieces of writing from the Author's folder.

1. Which piece do you think is the very best?

2. Why did you choose this piece?

3. How has your writing changed this year?

4. How do you think you could make your writing better?

5. How do these pieces show how your writing has grown?
Portfolio Evaluation: Reading
Have child select several favorite books from around the room.

1. What makes these books your favorites?

2. How do you choose a book?

3. Do you have other ways of choosing books to read?

4. Why are these your favorite books?

5. Can you think of any other books that are your favorites?
* Field Test Progress Report

Student________________________Date________

READING

Title__________________________________________

___ The Reading Book (Basal)
___ The Library Book (Literature)
___ dependent ___ transitional ___ independent
___ sight vocabulary (words recognized within five
seconds)

Comments______________________________________

WRITTEN/ORAL LANGUAGE

Title__________________________________________

___ Prewrite ___ Rough Copy ___ Final Copy
___ Phonics ___ Journal Writing
___ Invented Spelling ___ Conventional Spelling
___ Spelling Test ___ Daily Oral Language
___ Speaking ___ Listening

Comments______________________________________

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MATH

Math Their Way (Hands On Program)

Concept____________________________________

___ Not Yet     ___ Working On     ___ Completed

Math Textbook-

Skill________________________________________

___ Needs Help     ___ Improving

___ Satisfactory     ___ Excellent

EFFORT

Art______

Science/Health______

Computer______

Social Studies______

Music______

Homework______

Physical Education______

Comments________________________________________

________________________________________________

Student Signature________________________________

Parent Signature__________________________________
### Individual Anecdotal Record Form

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Introduction

This handout is to be given to parents at a meeting early in the year. All parents are to be invited to attend the meeting. At this meeting the Parents as Literacy Partners program is explained and parental support elicited. The handout "Some Tips to Help Parents with Beginning Readers" is distributed. Emphasize that people other than parents could read with the children. As a group, teachers discuss the ideas.

A demonstration is given to illustrate questioning techniques, strategies for decoding, and appropriate discussions about the story.

The requirements for the parents are simple:

1. Read with your child nightly.

2. Respond to the book in the Literature Response Log provided.

3. Every weekend review the materials that are sent home in each child's folder.

4. Communicate with the teachers through notes and/or conferences any insights, observations, or concerns about their child's reading progress.
The children will choose a book each morning and return the book from the night before. There should be time allowed for children to share a book if they want to, opportunities for them to recommend a book to classmates.
Parents As Literacy Partners  
(at home reading program)  
Some Tips to Help Parents with Beginning Readers

The greatest benefits of reading are obtained when the child is an active participant, engaging in discussions about stories, talking about meanings of words, predicting outcomes, and relating the story matter to his/her own life.

1. Always read with expression.
2. Talk about the book as you read with your child and after you have finished.
3. Identify the title, author, illustrator, and copyright date.
4. Focus on what each child can do and how much progress each has made.
5. If your child comes to a word he or she does not know and asks for help, you could ask these questions;  
   - Does the picture give you a clue? (It usually does!)  
   - What word makes sense here?  
   - What letter does the word begin (or end) with?  
     If these strategies fail and your child wants you to say the word, go ahead and do so rather than labor over it.
6. Remember my focus is always on the meaning of the story. If a child reads something that doesn't make sense, often he or she will self-correct (go back and try again). If this doesn't happen I often stop and ask "Does that make sense?" The important part is to allow children the opportunity to self-correct first.
7. It is not necessary to correct every mistake. If a child makes a mistake but the story or sentence still makes sense, let it go.
8. It does not matter if your child memorizes a particular phrase or story. That is an early stage in this process.
9. Encourage your child to point to the word with his or her finger as he or she reads. This shows him or her that there is a one-to-one correspondence between what words are being said and the individual words on the page.
10. Some questions which are helpful:  
   - What happened first, second, last?

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- What do you think will happen next?
- Why do you think the character did that?
- What would you have done if you were that character?
- What was the best thing about the story? The worst?

11. Make sure children see you as a reader—reading a newspaper, enjoying a good novel, etc.

12. Give books as presents so that they become pleasurable and special.

13. When reading with a child always sit beside the child with the book between you so that you can both see the text and enjoy the pictures.

Some of these suggestions are meant to help you to become more comfortable with the reading process and to maximize the learning that comes with shared reading.

Parent handout taken from Parents as Literacy Partners—by Christine Walters-Crowther, Ann Hohman, and Beth Groleau, Staying focused on the children: Creating child-centered classrooms where all children learn, all children succeed.
MULTICULTURE UNIT RESOURCE LIST


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