



Reading Counts



Volume 4, Issue 2

December 2004

Get Your Students Moving

Laura Amidon

Team Leader - Livonia

My attention was caught during the Urban Symposium last month when Andy McGowan mentioned that motor skills highly correlate with school failure and achievement. He mentioned that if you wanted your students to improve their reading, then they needed to get in the gym. At first I thought, "Wow, this is magic," but then I really began to think about it some more.

It all really does make sense.

Students spend way too much time sitting in the classroom. Even if it's not straight lecturing, working in groups or silent reading doesn't lend itself to much physical activity. The attention spans of most of the students we work with is between 10-15 minutes. Increase in physical activity actually helps people focus more because it stimulates their brain and bodies. More exercise also leads to longer brain vitality. This is a very important concept that is being overlooked in classrooms today.

Think of when you go into the schools to tutor. Are the students shifted to another area of the room where they will sit for another 20 minutes while working on a lesson? Although the lessons may be interesting and stimulating in themselves, the students should be given opportunities to revitalize themselves with a little physical activity.

continued on page 2



Emily Tatar with students at Livonia

Book Review - Monster Math

Emily Tatar

Team Leader - Avon/Kidstart

Monster Math, written by Anne Miranda, is an excellent book aimed for students in 1st or 2nd (maybe even 3rd) grade. It deals with adding and subtracting mostly one-digit numbers and some two-digit numbers towards the end. The basic theme of the book is that there is a birthday party and more and more monsters keep coming and adding to the number of party guests. The fun part of this book for the students is that it can be used as an interactive book. The teacher can read this book out loud to the students and plan stopping points throughout the book to check for understanding. Questions can be posed such as "How many students are at the party now?" or "How many students just left the party if there were 50 and now there are only 40?" etc. A cute follow up activity that the teacher could implement could be that the students will write their own story similar to this, adding and/or subtracting characters or items. This can later be shared with the class for reflection and fun. I strongly recommend this book and recommend some other books that are similar to this style of learning math through literacy. Some other books that are comparable to Monster Math are *The Doorbell Rang*, by Pat Hutchins, *One Hundred Hungry Ants*, by Elinor J. Pinczes, *Each Orange Had 8 Slices*, by Paul Giganti Jr, *10 Black Dots*, by Donald Crews. Any of these books practice math skills at early levels and provide an interactive fun way for students to engage in math and literacy all in one.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 **Get Your Students Moving**
- 1 **Book Review - Monster Math**
- 2 **Dear Stacy: Advice for Tutors**
- 3 **Winter Wonderland Activities**
- 3 **Theatre in the Classroom**
- 4 **Teachers' Corner**

Get Students Moving, *continued from page 1*

I tested this theory during my last tutoring visits. I had the students get up and play a miniature game of Simon Says. They had fun with the game, but were moving about-working up a good heart rate. I then pulled out a ball, which I passed between the students, and had them answer questions when they caught it. I would ask questions that led up to the lesson or activity we would be working on and even gave the students some chances to ask questions of their own. This time took only 5-10 minutes, but was the wisest time I had ever spent. The students were eager to get into the lesson; they displayed a new kind of energy I wasn't used to seeing at the end of their school day. They enjoyed the informal approach and definitely the option to get up and move about.

I encourage all of you to try to adapt some sort of physical activity in your lessons. Even if it may be difficult to transition in the middle of the lesson to a physical activity and hope to get them back on focus, try an activity out in the beginning.

These moments of revitalization will make all the difference.



Dear Stacy: Advice for Tutors

Stacy Jusianiec

Team Leader - Dansville

Dear Stacy,

I work with groups of students, usually I get through the whole class and I am going to play a game as my activity. I want to give the students some type of award or gift at the end of the day, but I'm stuck.

Any ideas?

"Award Ideas"

Dear "Award Ideas",

Awards and gifts are great reinforcers and can be a great motivation for the students. Depending on the grade level you can modify any of these choices: sticker, pencil, fun eraser, piece of candy (be careful with allergic students), a certificate, or a handmade paper/sticker simply saying 'great job'. Basically, anything you give the students will excite them and they will be thankful (hopefully at least). Remember to always consult your teacher to see if the awards are appropriate and especially to see if there are any candy or foods that students are allergic to. Hope this helps!

Dear Stacy,

My last day of tutoring is coming up soon. What can I do for my students or class to say thank you or goodbye?

"Last Visit"

Dear "Last Visit",

It's a great idea to give your students something on your last day or at least express your thanks and give your farewell. You can possibly make little certificates for each student. Make sure to get a list of the class names, so you spell them correctly. Make the certificate colorful and simply write- "Congratulations on a great job", "Thank you for being a great student or class" or "Have a great winter or rest of the year". Choose to write what you think is appropriate. The students will enjoy something made from their tutor and will have something to remember you by! This is just one idea, but you can modify it to your grade level and to exactly how specific you want it. Good Luck!

Ideas and Activities

It's a Winter Wonderland with Reading and Math

Jennifer Joseph

Team Leader - Mt. Morris

Here are a few fun ways to incorporate the winter holiday season into your tutoring sessions. The holidays are just another way to motivate and excite your students for their tutoring session! You and your students will love these activities because they are engaging and the students can actively participate all while you both are having fun and getting work done at the same time!

Reading/Language Arts:

Acrostic Holiday Poem: Use holiday or winter terms
ABC Holiday Book: Make a holiday or winter alphabet book with your students. Each page of the book should have a letter of the alphabet and a holiday or winter picture that starts with that letter. You could have pictures provided, have students cut them out of magazines, or draw them themselves. For example, Aa is for angel, Bb is for bells, Cc is for candles, Dd is for decorating, Ee is for elf, etc.

Polar Express your way to sequencing: Read the book, *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg with your students. Use train templates with the main ideas of the story written on them to work on sequencing. Have the students arrange the pieces of the train in order of the events in the book! After they put the train together, they'll be well on their way to being better sequencers.

Winter wonderland theme: Use any of the following winter/holiday books to read with your students and have students create a new ending for the books that you/they have read.

Froggy's Best Christmas by Jonathon London

The Mitten by Jan Brett

Puppies in the Snow by James Young
(Good counting book too)

Iggy Pig's Snowball Fight by Vivian French

continued on page 4

Using Theatre in the Classroom

Noelle Rich

Team Leader - Geneseo

Do you still remember all the lines from the play that you were in when you were a second grader? Why is it that that information stuck with you after so many years, and yet you forget a phone number right after looking it up? The answer is simple. The *play* was fun and interesting! Using theatre to teach can increase a student's ability to understand abstract concepts because it actively engages their imaginations. So how can theatre be incorporated into teaching and tutoring? The possibilities are endless!

Some may think that Math is one of the less "theatrical" subjects, but it doesn't have to be! Younger students can perform skits where they pretend to be in a store, and have to correctly count out their money. They can create dances or movements that help them remember how to count by 5's or 10's and present them to the class. Older students can make believe that they are in a fancy restaurant and must carefully calculate what foods they may order when given a budget. They can also invent characters that give personalities to mathematical operations (such as "Selfish Subtraction", who's always taking away, but never giving back) and present these personas to younger students.

Language Arts is especially compatible with theatre. When working with students in lower grades, something as simple as slipping a puppet onto your hand as you read a story can completely enrapture the most uninterested student. A regular story read in a small group can immediately become a skit when each student is assigned the dialogue of a certain character. Students in higher grades may enjoy writing monologues that depict the thoughts of a character in the novel that they are reading, and then perform them for the class. These students may even wish to create their own plays during writing time.

Theatre can help students build up their self-confidence, especially when they are able to present their work to others and receive positive feedback. However you choose to incorporate theatre into your lessons, you can be sure that the students will take a great deal from it, and any experience that allows them to be creative.

Winter Wonderland, continued from page 3

Mathematics:

Holiday Math Mystery: Fill paper bags with Holiday clues (numbered in chronological order for the students to follow) in which the clues are math problems the students must solve to get the next clue. When a student completes the clue they show you and if correct they receive the letter that corresponds to that clue. The letters from all the clues tell the students where the holiday presents are hiding! When the mystery is solved it will lead them to their "holiday present (or prize)!" (Clue examples: Tom had baked 10 Christmas cookies. Liz baked 24 cookies. How many more Christmas cookies did Liz bake than Tom? OR Jen made 3 snowballs and Andrew made 3 times as many snowballs as Jen. How many snowballs did Andrew make?)

Holiday Graphs: Math and the holiday season go together...you can *count* on it! Have students survey the class and use their *counting and graphing* skills to find out everyone's favorite holiday food, holiday tradition, or favorite thing to do in the winter and have them create a picture, bar, or pie graph to illustrate their results.

Shop 'Till You Drop: Here's a great money skills activity! Have students write a wish list of all the gifts that they want. Price the items with them. Give the students play money to go "Holiday Shopping" with. Have them see how many of the things they wanted they could afford to buy. Have students figure out the bill and the change they get back. You could bring in toy store flyers and magazines for toy/gift ideas for the kids to "shop" through!



Miss Sackett and Mrs. Debell's 1st-2nd-grade class performs their own version of Piggie Pie by Margi Palatini at Geneseo Central School.

Teachers' Corner: Spring Semester Information

Spring Semester is almost upon us. SUNY Geneseo students will be finishing their fall semester classes on December 13th and will be taking finals from December 15th - December 21st. Classes will resume again on January 18th.

If your tutor is able to stay in your classroom next semester, there is no need to fill out a request form. The tutor will report back to the school with the days and times s/he will be tutoring for you.

If you need a replacement tutor (many of our fall tutors will be student teaching in the spring), or if you did not receive a tutor for the fall semester, but would like one in the spring, please fill out a request form.

Hard copies of the forms will be distributed to your America Reads/Counts liaison, or you may fill out on-line at <http://ses.geneseo.edu/teacherneeds.html>

All requests should arrive at Geneseo by January 10th. We will make every attempt to accommodate as many requests as possible.

As always, please keep in mind that our tutors should be working individually or in small groups with tutors on reading or math. They should not be left alone with children and their work should focus on tutoring rather than on being teacher aides.

Thank you for a wonderful semester and we look forward to working with you again in the spring!

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Andrea DiGiorgio at digiorgi@geneseo.edu or 245-5734.

