



Reading Counts



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The Importance of Playing in Preschool

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From a first glance as you walk into a preschool classroom you may only see the children playing. There are children building high towers with blocks, rocking a doll to sleep or squishing play dough between their fingers. As you look closer you can see the children using their imaginations and communicating with each other in various ways. According to the Preschool Planning Guide from the NYSED, play is a critical part of the growth and development of young children. Young children learn and discover through their everyday exploration and manipulation of materials. As an America Reads tutor in a preschool setting, your main focus should not be using flashcards or phonics drill exercises. Your interaction with the children and your observations of their play will give you clues as to what you can do to increase their level of play and thinking.

It is important to model language behavior by having conversations while the children are playing. You should not intervene in their play with too many questions though. Let them talk and express themselves while you take in what they say and acknowledge it with comments.

continued on page 2



Jennifer Sackett with Elizabeth Bondi

Making the Most out of Your Tutoring Experience

Katherine Ilardo

Team Leader - Mt. Morris Central

Although working with children can be one of the best experiences, there are many things tutors can do to make their time even more fulfilling and meaningful.

One of the best things to do is to know the resources that are available to you through the America Reads and America Counts Programs. The people involved in this program are some of the best resources you will find. Andrea DiGiorgio and Stephanie Dawson, the coordinators of Geneseo's America Reads and America Counts, are great to approach if you have any questions or need advice. Also, the teachers and faculty at the schools where you are working are always willing to help out. Never be tentative about approaching the classroom teachers with questions and advice. They understand that this is the first classroom experience for many of you, and they are willing to share their expertise. The teachers also know the needs, backgrounds, personalities, and the strengths and weaknesses of the students with whom you will be working. Of course there are also many materials, books, learning games, and resources located in the library, the America Reads website, the Volunteer Center, and Student Employment Service. These materials provide numerous ideas to enhance your lessons.

Basically, the best thing to do is to get to know your students and support them every way you can. You will make lasting relationships, and the experiences you have with this program will be some of the best ones that you will remember forever. Above all, be ready for challenges, new friends, a lot of good memories, and fun!

~ "You can't direct the wind but you can adjust the sails"

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 The Importance of Playing in Preschool
- 1 Making the Most out of Your Tutoring Experience
- 2 Tutoring Rewards
- 3 Activity Ideas
- 4 Teachers & Tutors: Tips for Success
- 4 Challenge Problem
- 4 Thank you!

Tutoring Rewards

Kim Dunham
Team Leader - Geneseo Central

Playing in Preschool

By using manipulatives in play such as play dough, blocks and crayons, children are able to strengthen their fine motor muscles, develop hand eye coordination and manual dexterity. These skills are all necessary for the development of writing. Finger plays and songs are also a good way to play with language while developing these muscles.

Dramatic or pretend play can increase language development and offer opportunity for encouragement of "playing" at writing and reading. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, this type of play can lead to a lifetime love of reading and learning. Items such as greeting cards, envelopes, stamps, paper, menus, checks, and a variety of writing utensils all lead the children to explore writing that is used in everyday life. As an adult, you may feel that you are interfering or disturbing a child if you enter into their play. However, you may actually increase their learning by modeling behaviors, asking higher level questions and including other children. Though the direction of the pretend play should come from the children, you could suggest a new element or take on a role that is missing from their scenario. It is important to remember to give the children choices and allow them to use their imaginations (Smilansky).

As you interact with the children, you will be surprised how much they are learning from their play. As a tutor it is not only okay for you to get down and play with the children; it is important. The children will love to play with you and see how you interact with the materials.

Resources:

New York State Education Department. (1998). Preschool planning guide [Online]. Albany, NY: Author. Available: www.emsc.nysed.gov/cia/

Smilansky, S. (1968). The effects of sociodramatic play on disadvantaged preschool children. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

www.NAEYC.org

For finer plays and songs:

<http://www.preschoolrainbow.org>

America Reads and Counts are federally funded work-study programs that provide reading and math tutoring to local elementary schools and preschools. Many of the tutors receive a biweekly paycheck for their efforts, yet any tutor can tell you there are many intrinsic rewards that outweigh the extrinsic reward of the paycheck. This program leaves the tutor with a sense of accomplishment and pride when a student finally grasps a difficult concept or performs a task they thought was impossible. Working in the schools offers the tutors an opportunity to build professional relationships with both the teachers and administrators they encounter on a daily basis. This provides them with the possibility of valuable letters of recommendations to allow them to have a competitive edge in the search for a job after college. The most rewarding part of tutoring is the daily contact with young children. The students we work with are filled with energy and a love of life. They offer many challenges and many smiles; they are what make being a tutor worthwhile. Here's what some past tutors have said about the experience:

"This experience was very enjoyable to me and it made me want to be a teacher even more - it was so much fun!"

"I did not think of it as a job...I just enjoyed the opportunity to have fun and help out."

"The program helped show me what teaching is all about and gave me more confidence in my skills as a teacher."

"I loved it! It was the best job I've ever had and I can't wait to work some more."

"It's a wonderful opportunity to work with children before you actually begin teaching professionally. Seeing the children improve in their reading and knowing that it is because of you gives you a wonderful feeling"

"The children were what I most loved about the program. They thought they were being taught by me...but I was learning so much more from them." ≈

**** Interested in becoming an America Reads or America Counts tutor in the fall? Check out our web page at www.geneseo.edu/~ses for more information! ****



America Counts

Allison Leckinger
Team Leader - Livonia Schools

Time (Grades 1-2)

This activity works on being able to correctly tell time (understanding the parts of a clock). You will need a model analog (digital too if you want) clock to work with, and the book, The Grouchy Lady Bug, by Eric Carle. Before you begin, you should review the clock parts with your student: big hand, little hand, and how each number on the clock represents a multiple of five. Explain that as you read the story, The Grouchy Ladybug, each time a time is mentioned the student should make their model clock say that time. Before reading on, check their clock and review if wrong. Once the book is completed, if they are still having trouble, work with them on some times that are familiar to them, i.e. their schedule (when they wake up, school starts, lunchtime, dismissal, etc.) You can also work on it with their favorite TV schedules (write out the names and times digitally together, then have the child make those times on their model clock). The point is to use times that are important to them, so they can begin to recognize them on an analog clock, when a digital clock may not be available (i.e. the classroom!)

Fractions (Grades 5-6)

This activity works on using and comparing fractions, and works best with a small group, although it will work with one student as well. Have a discussion about fractions in everyday life. Where can you find fractions? (cooking, measuring, etc.). Have each student watch a half hour-long show and record how much of the show was actually the program, and how much was commercial advertising. You will want to be able to compare at least two different shows, so if only doing this with one student, you will have to do it yourself. After you have done this and meet again, make a graph showing what was found about each show so that students can answer questions (i.e. how much time was used for commercials? What fraction of the whole show was that amount?), and compare findings (compare primetime shows with morning or afternoon programs, if possible). Look to generalize the information- if commercials appear that same fraction of an entire day, how long is commercial time in 24 hours? What percent would commercials be of an entire day? Extension: Students can also keep charts of their days - what fraction of the school day is spent on math, science, etc.? What fraction of the day is spent sleeping, playing? Students could use their findings to create a more efficient daily schedule.

Activities and Ideas

America Reads

Joelle DeMarco
Team Leader - Avon Central Schools



Wiggle Worm (Grades K-2)

What you will need:

- 1) Pringles can with lid
 - 2) Construction paper
 - 3) Markers
 - 4) Tongue depressors
 - 5) Vocabulary word list
- Decorate the Pringles can with construction paper, markers and whatever else you would like. Label the outside "Wiggle Worm."
 - On each tongue depressor write out a vocabulary word (lengthwise) and place it inside the can. Make sure that you write "Wiggle Worm" on a few of the tongue depressors and place those into the can also.
 - Now you are ready to play. Shake the can and have each student take turns pulling out a stick and reading the word. You can divide the class into teams and tally up the points on who read the most words.
 - When someone pulls out the stick that says "Wiggle Worm" *everyone* must wiggle in their seats! This keeps the students on their toes because no one ever knows when the wiggle worm stick will be drawn!

Tokens of Fortune (Grades 1-3)

What you will need:

- 1) Dry/Erase board or a chalkboard
 - 2) Dry erase markers or chalk
 - 3) Spelling list
 - 4) Tokens (anything)
- Using the students' spelling list or any other words that they need practice with, choose a word and write out the spaces on the board. (The spaces will pertain to the amount of letters in the word.)
 - Each person plays for himself or herself. The students will take turns guessing either a consonant or a vowel pertaining to the word.
 - If the letter that he/she guesses is correct, he/she will receive 1 token and will get to guess another letter that is in the word. The student will keep guessing until he/she guesses a letter that is not in the word.
 - If a student is able to fill in the final letters to the word and can read the word correctly, he/she will receive 3 bonus tokens.
 - Each time a letter is guessed, it will be written on the board so that the students will be able to see the letters that were used. If the letter a student guesses was all ready guessed, he/she will lose his/her turn for that round.
 - Throughout the game, if the teacher sees that a student is struggling for points, they may give the child the opportunity to earn extra points by having him/her use the word in a sentence. If a child can do this, they can be granted up to 3 tokens.



Teachers & Tutors: Tips for Success

- *Communicate* with your tutor regarding the children in your classroom. Let your tutor know what you would like them to work on and offer suggestions for how to achieve goals with individual children.
- *Provide Feedback* to your tutor. Remember that this is a learning experience for your tutors. They can benefit greatly from your knowledge. Let your tutors know what they are doing well and offer constructive criticism for anything that creates concern. Your tutors will appreciate the advice and guidance.
- Make sure your tutors are working only in *a tutoring capacity*. America Reads and America Counts tutors should not be expected to give lessons to the entire class. They should also not be used as teacher aides in the classroom. Make sure that Reads tutors are working on literacy only and Counts tutors are working only on math.
- *Consistency* of tutoring assignments works the best! Let your tutors develop working relationships with the same student or students each week. The program is most effective when the tutors work consistently with a particular child or specific group of children.
- *Trust your tutor* to prepare lessons. America Reads and Counts tutors do have the resources to prepare quality lessons of their own. You might be surprised at the creativity of some of our students!
- *Let us know how the program is working*. We hope that America Reads and Counts make a lasting impact in the lives of your students. We are always open for suggestions on improving the program!
- Our tutors have loved working with their classroom teachers. We hope that the experience is as beneficial to you as well!

Challenge Problem

-Submitted by Ellen Westerling - Team Leader Dansville

Alphabet Soup

Remove ten letters to make an important word.

ITMEPNORLETANTTTWOERRDS

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

The America Reads and America Counts committee would like to thank the following schools for their continued support and dedication to the program:

Avon Central Schools

Dansville Primary School

Dansville Elementary School

Dansville - Grow and Learn Program

Dansville Head Start

Geneseo Central Schools

Holcomb Pre-School Program

Livonia Primary School

Livonia Intermediate School

Mt. Morris Central School

Mt. Morris Head Start

St. Michael's Nursery School

GENESEO PARTNERS

The America Reads and America Counts committee would like to thank the following SUNY Geneseo employees for their dedication to the program and assistance in providing quality training:

Dr. Filiz Edizer - Reading Refresher

Dr. Susan Salmon - Math Refresher

Jeff Liles - Behavior Management

Barbara Clarke - Library Resource

Kelly Clark - Diversity and Stereotyping Workshops



Questions or concerns about the America Reads or America Counts Programs? Please contact Andrea DiGiorgio at 245-5734 or Stephanie Dawson at 245-5893. General information can be found at our web site at www.geneseo.edu/~ses.