



Reading Counts

Volume 8, Issue 2

Spring 2009

Inside this issue:

The Nuts & Bolts of Being a Successful Tutor	1
Fourth Grade Brain Drain	1
Why Shouldn't It All be Fun and Games?	2
Using Prediction in Reading	3
Proper English vs. Slang	3
Team Leader Openings	4
Contact Information	4

You are Invited to the *Final Reflection and Brunch*

To show our appreciation for your dedication to the America Reads & America Counts program and to reflect on our achievements and experiences, we invite you to join us for brunch on:

Wednesday, May 6th

At 11 AM

College Union 322-323

The Nuts & Bolts of Being a Successful Tutor

David Kellet
Livonia Primary

As a tutor, it can sometimes be difficult finding your niche in the classroom community. You spend only a handful of hours a week working with students, and the students that you *do* work with can unexpectedly change. There are also sudden scheduling changes, unforeseen absences, and several other variables that frequently occur. With such a unique role, being a tutor can be tough!

The inconsistency and unpredictability that comes with the territory are plentiful, but the resulting experiences are incredibly rewarding. To counteract the adversities of the classroom, a tutor must create an optimal learning environment for his/her students. Here are some helpful hints for success with your "tutees":

Be flexible! As future educators, we understand how busy a classroom can be. Sometimes it feels like there are a million things happening at once! Do your best to accommodate the teacher and provide support and assistance whenever possible. This means that you may work unexpectedly with the entire class or individually with a student who has never worked with you before.

Know your students! In order to help students, you need to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. It is important to know under what circumstances he/she learns best. Not everyone is the same. Usually, students that need extra help do not learn quite the same way



as most. Knowing their strengths can allow tutors to find methods or strategies that are more beneficial.

Be professional! As much as I may want to be, I am not the students' friend. I am not there to fool around or talk about how cool those light-up shoes are (or the ones that have those cool wheels).

Continued on Page 2

Fourth Grade Brain Drain

Kristin Ververs
Mt. Morris

Brain Drain--We all know the feeling after pulling an all nighter writing our mid-term paper and studying for that test we put off to the last minute. But did you ever experience this when you were in

elementary school? Being in a fourth grade classroom this year I believe I have encountered the 10 year-old equivalent of our college brain drain.

After spending many weeks working non-stop on review for the fourth grade state math test the students in my

classroom looked and acted like they had hit the wall. They had reached this point just days before the exam. While some showed great improvement throughout the review period, for some the weeks of practice test after practice test proved to be too much.

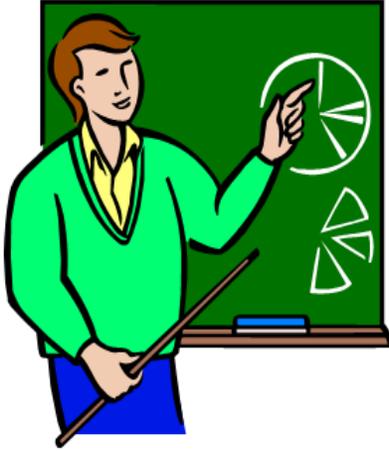
Continued on Page 3

The Nuts and Bolts of Being a Successful Tutor

Continued from Page 1

It is important to have rules and expectations for the students to follow. Working with a tutor does not translate into play-time for a third grader. But at the same time....

Have fun and be positive! Struggling students may feel frustrated all



day. School can be tough, so be sure to provide encouragement and support. It is important that a child *wants* to learn. Using fun activities is a great way for students to improve as readers and mathematicians. ■

If you would like to tutor again next year with the same teacher talk to him/her as soon as possible! You will want to exchange contact information. Also, let Andrea know if you are planning on staying at the same placement next semester.

Why Shouldn't It All be Fun and Games?

Erica Kresh

Livonia Primary

We have all heard that children can learn through play. In fact, children can learn skills even more effectively when it is through hands-on games and activities that they truly enjoy. School doesn't have to be all textbooks and worksheets, which we all know can bore students very easily.

Through my experiences in the kindergarten setting I am currently tutoring in, I have seen the students obtain math skills through various games and fun activities. The students not only learn the skills but they have fun doing it! Below are some of the games and activities that have been implemented in the classroom I am working in and are just some suggestions for you future teachers out there! While they were used in a kindergarten setting, almost all of them can be used at various grade levels or they can even be modified to make them appropriate for a specific grade level. Now, if we can only get college professors to make all of our

"Children can learn skills even more effectively when it is through hands-on games and activities that they truly enjoy."

work fun and games!

Some fun activities for you to try in your future classroom:

***Number Twister** – Materials: Index cards with numbers 1-20 printed on them (one number per card) and a spinner with numbers 1-20 printed on it. The spinner also has each corner of the spinner dedicated to the right hand, left hand, right foot, or left foot. The cards get placed on the floor and one person is in charge of the spinner. The person spinning the spinner will say for example, "right hand on 13."

The students then have to put their right hand on 13. This activity is great for number recognition, especially with numbers in the teens which younger students tend to have difficulty with. You can break the students up into groups or set it up however you would like.

***Barrel Ball Mathematics** – Materials: A small garbage pail size container, 10 soft balls (baseball size), and worksheets. The students (one at a time) throw ten balls into the container. After each student throws, all the students together count how many balls made it into the container and how many didn't. The students then write on their worksheets the number of balls in the container, the number out, and the total. Each total will be ten and this is a great way for students to see various methods for reaching the sum of ten. It also helps students with number writing and the

Continued on Page 4

Fourth Grade Brain Drain

Continued from Page 1

They started to be irritable, tired, and lackadaisical.

In the students defense their workload had been pretty intense for fourth grade and I come into the classroom in the afternoon after most of their lessons have been taught for the day. Also, I know after I have two or three hectic weeks I am not the world's cheeriest person so I felt these students' pain.

I am thrilled to report that the review, no matter how cumbersome it was for the students, paid off

in the long run. The grades in the classroom were higher than expected and all students showed some growth.

It was through watching these students go through their review weeks that allowed me to realize that at the end of the day we aren't so different after all. We are both still students and feel the pressures of the tests and never



ending homework assignments. So next year when your students seem a bit restless and complain of exhaustion, just remember how you feel after an all-nighter or two and find some sympathy or at least some common ground. ■

Using Prediction in Reading

Evelyn Hambrecht
Mt. Morris

Prediction is a very useful reading skill. This activity can be used with any book. It can be organized a number of different ways: Most teachers read a book to the class, and this is an ideal opportunity for the children to predict. When you reach the end of a chapter (or an exciting part in the story), stop reading and discuss what might come next. Ask the children to justify their ideas. The children could write down their ideas, so that they can refer back to them later, if you wish. Continue

reading, and discuss the children's predictions. Were they correct? Working in small groups, ask the children to read a story together. At the end of each chapter, they should discuss the story so far, and predict what they think will happen next. They should then read the next chapter, and look back at their predictions. Were they correct? Before reading on, they should refine their predictions in light of what they have just read. Do they still think the same thing is going to happen? This process should be repeated at the end of each chapter,

until the children reach the end of the book, when they can discuss the story itself, and their predicting skills. The above activity can also be carried out individually, with each child making short notes about what they think will happen next, and then reading on. ■



Proper English vs. Slang

Tracy Wangelin
Mt. Morris

A prevalent problem in today's classrooms is the increasing usage of "slang" by students as the main form of communication with both their peers and their teachers. This is a cultural issue and is not only seen in the schools but in most of the American population. Language has evolved over time with the changing of society. This modified version of

proper English is NOT wrong, however; students need to be taught that there is a time and a place for "street talk" and the same for proper English.

I teach in the Rochester City School District, and to convey this concept I introduced the terms: "Cafeteria Talk" and "Classroom Talk." I was able to influence them to come to the realization themselves that it is important to use proper English during some situations, and recognizing what these situations are.

*For the point of the activity, I had them help me define "Classroom Talk" as:

The way we should speak when we are talking to our teachers in the classroom.

"This is a cultural issue and is not only seen in the schools but in most of the American population."

Continued on Page 4

Proper English vs. Slang

Then we defined “Cafeteria Talk” as:

The way we can speak when we are with our friends during times like eating in the cafeteria.

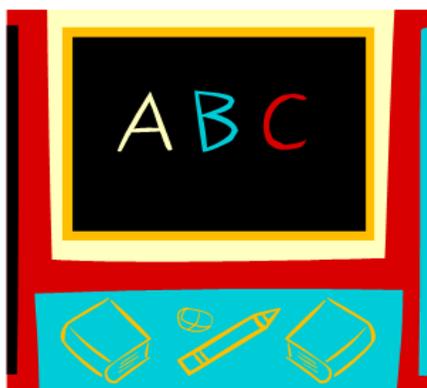
Together, my class took quotes from the book: The Gun, by Paul Langan and TRANSLATED the quotes into proper English. I emphasize the word TRANSLATE because many adults are quick to point at students and say the way they talk is *wrong*, and that we must change it. However, I encouraged the point with my students that “cafeteria talk” is not wrong, just not appropriate for all situations. So instead of *changing* their language, we will just translate it (making the word have the same meaning) into proper English.

*An example of our translations: “Nobody dissed me. But this little

punk snuck up on me and caught me off point. Now everybody’s dissin’ me bad.” (The Gun, 27)

Translation from “Cafeteria Talk” into “Classroom Talk”:

“Nobody had ever disrespected me before. Then this little kid snuck up on me and caught me off guard. Now everybody is disrespecting me a lot.” ■



Openings for Team Leaders!

Both Caylin and Megan will be unable to tutor next semester, therefore both team leader positions are available.

Responsibilities include:

- ◆ Organizing Activity Circles
- ◆ Sending email reminders to tutors
- ◆ Putting together a newsletter
- ◆ Answering tutors’ questions and addressing concerns
- ◆ Planning a Final Reflection
- ◆ Being a liaison for tutors

Please contact Andrea, Caylin, or Megan if you are interested in a

Why Shouldn't it all be Fun and Games?

Continued from Page 2

students find this game extremely fun! Tip: Tell your students not to clean up the balls right away so they can count how many were in and out of the container.

* “Color by Number” – Materials: One huge number grid with numbers 1-100 printed on it, crayons, and a copy of the same number grid for each student. Have certain numbers you want students to color in with their crayon so that it forms a picture at the end. For example, it was Dr. Seuss week at school when I was there. My teacher read various numbers out loud and the students colored the box with that number in it on their copy of the number grid. After my teacher read all of the numbers she had previously chosen, the numbers that she chose and that the students had colored in created the hat from “The Cat in the Hat.” This can be easily modi-

fied to any book or theme. The students have a great time trying to figure out what the picture is before all of the numbers are read and it also helps them with number recognition.

Hope these suggestions help give you some ideas for ways you can make learning fun in your future classroom! ■



Contact Information

Andrea DiGiorgio, Coordinator
(585)- 245- 5734
digiorgi@geneseo.edu

Caylin Clark, Team Leader
Avon, Dansville, Mt. Morris
cmc1@geneseo.edu

Megan Rothstein, Team Leader
Geneseo, Livonia
mer10@geneseo.edu

We are on the web
through Student
Employment Service!
<http://ses.geneseo.edu>