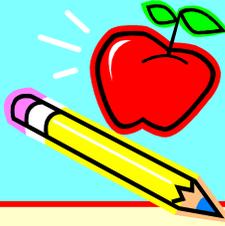




FALL 2009 NEWSLETTER



America Reads
America Counts

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America Reads/America Counts

Tribes Learning at Livonia

Primary School

The Livonia Primary School is piloting a new program this school year in order to fully include students of all abilities and backgrounds. The 'Tribes Learning Communities' program is a school-wide curriculum that focuses on creating positive learning environments through four social agreements. These agreements are the right to participate or pass, ability to share appreciations with the inability to use put downs, attentive listening, and mutual respect. Teachers are collaborating to create lessons and units that encourage the practice of these agreements while conveying crucial content area information. This program is implemented gradually and heavily involves student input.

At this point in the school year, students are forging ahead in their creation of lasting learning communities in due thanks to the dedication of teachers and administrators. One teacher at Livonia Primary School has shared that, "All students are now working together in every lesson, across classrooms, to learn and grow together." Therefore, it is clear that the hard work and dedication of teachers and students is allowing the 'Tribes Learning Communities' program to flourish and benefit the Livonia Primary Community.

- Lindsey Lattin - Livonia Primary

Where is everyone?

How sickness affects our classrooms

Bronchitis, pneumonia, seasonal flu, swine flu, strep throat, and the common cold are all things that we became acquainted with while tutoring this semester. It seems as if everyone was sick this semester. Out of the fifteen students in my classroom, I would have been surprised if thirteen of them were in class at one time during the month of November. During this time so many students were coming down sick and being out of class for a week at a time. Since the class cannot stop for one student, the student or students who are out of school because they are sick get behind in their studies. The teacher also feels the pressure to be flexible because they may have to move tests and units around because not every student is in class.

Although it seems as if the only things that can come from students' absences due to sickness are negative ones there are some positives. For example, with fewer students in the class the more individualized attention and help they can receive from the teacher. Also with fewer students the easier it is for the teacher to monitor struggling students.

Sickness strikes every year. It is important to be informed about what is going around and to take the necessary steps to prevent you from becoming sick. Sickness is also something that you have to adjust to and for us tutors that are becoming educators it is important to remember to be flexible and patient.

- Natalie Templeton - Mt. Morris

Why can't we be friends?

It is difficult in elementary school to have all students in the classroom get along. Forget difficult, it may be downright impossible for everyone to get along all the time. While tutoring this semester I have had a few instances of two students who just don't get along and I've found it best to follow some simple procedures. First, if there is an argument, don't just assume what happened; listen to both sides of the story and sort out the information.

While the students might want you to react immediately you may have to take a minute or two to figure out what to do. That is fine. The more you think about it, normally, the better the action you will end up taking. The action I have normally ended up taking is to have both parties apologize to each other and explain why they are sorry and then transition right into an activity. Secondly, if it seems to be a pattern that these two students don't get along just simply separate them especially during small group activities. Even having just one student between them can sometimes be enough of a barrier to help them not notice what the other is doing. This should also be the case for lining up in line as a class or doing group projects. If the two students can't seem to get along just keep them as separate as possible.

My last hint is to talk to the teacher to see if they have any better suggestions. They may have a different way for you to deal with the arguments or have a different way to keep the students busy with activities besides arguing. Of course if the problem gets too severe let the teachers know immediately. While it isn't the best part of the job, student arguments happen. Just smile and brush it off and tomorrow who knows, they could be friends again.

- Kristin Ververs - Kidstart



A Mini Spanish Lesson

This semester I had a student in my class who only speaks Spanish with very little English. Seeing as I haven't taken Spanish since high school I found that my vocabulary was very limited. I found working with this student one-on-one was quite difficult but a few key phrases were very helpful to me. So I thought I might pass them on as they may be beneficial for other tutors as well.

How do you say _____ ?
¿Como se dice _____?

Do you need a pencil?
¿ Necesitas un lápiz?

Good work
Buen trabajo

We need to read the book.
Nosotros necesitamos leer el libro.

- Kristin Ververs - Kidstart

Strategies Galore!

With so many important things being taught in classrooms throughout a student's elementary years, it is crucial to teach in a manner that engages students and assists them in retaining important information. Classrooms such as Mrs. Lewis's second grade at Avon Primary use a variety of tools which serve as a constant reminder for students to recall what they have learned in class. One way which Mrs. Lewis provides tools for her students was to print important reading cues on bookmarks so that the students are constantly reminded of what to think about as they are reading. On the opposite side of the bookmarks is a list of steps concerning how to figure out unknown words. Both strategies assist students in "self-questioning" as well as "self monitoring."

Below is a strategy I thought reading tutors would benefit from called the INFER strategy which can help students answer questions they may have about something they are reading. It assists with reading comprehension and making inferences.

Steps in the Inference Strategy: INFER-

- Step 1- Interact with the passage and questions
- Step 2- Note what you know
- Step 3- Find the Clues
- Step 4- Explore more details
- Step 5- Return to the question

- Amber Kelly - Avon Primary



Once Again...

Thank you to all the tutors that were involved in America Reads/America Counts tutoring program this semester! If you would like to continue your experience in the program, please contact Andrea DiGiorgio at digiorgi@geneseo.edu.

Team Leaders for Fall 2009:

- Kristin Ververs
- Amber Kelly
- Kaeliegh Hendrickson

Letters to Friends

The third grade at Livonia Primary is experiencing a hands on lesson with mail and delivery in a very unique and interesting way. The Bulldog Express - that's what the District has named their mailing service. What's unique about the Bulldog Express is that it circulates within the primary and middle schools, giving the students the chance to send and receive letters from both students and faculty.

Each classroom within the primary and middle school has small wooden boxes outside their doors where the mail is received. They also have been given an address within each wing of the building. A short and informative lesson was given to a rowdy and eager group of third graders in an inclusion classroom. Students were given the opportunity to write to either one friend or a teacher. Once the students had made their decision, they were able to begin their letters. All students were also taught the basic functions of mail delivery.

Second grade students were taught the simple letter-writing format. Writing these letters in third grade, they are reviewing the letter-writing format as well as incorporating their writing skills that they have inherited throughout the semester.

The inclusion classroom consisted of students with many different learning styles of students so this activity was a great way to get every student involved. Each student had a fun and exciting time while writing their letters to a friend or teacher.

For the older students who are now in the middle school, it is very common for them to write letters to their past teachers through the Bulldog Express in hopes of receiving something in return. This is something that has definitely been successful with all students within the district.

-Kaeliegh Hendrickson - Livonia Primary

A Word of Advice

For one of my America Counts placements, I was placed with a highly respected and experienced teacher at Geneseo Central. Three weeks into my placement my teacher asked if I had any idea where I was going to be placed for student teaching the following semester, and I told her that I didn't have a clue. That same day she placed a call to the student teaching placement office, and this past week it has been confirmed that I will be with her for one of my placements.

Every semester before we are sent out into the field, we are told to act professionally, show incentive and be enthusiastic. As an experienced teacher who has supervised many student teachers over the years, she will only accept those that she believes will be energetic and enthusiastic, and I am honored to have been selected. My placements for America Counts have resulted in a student teaching placement that I know will allow me to grow tremendously as an individual and a teacher, and will greatly benefit my career.

A piece of advice that I have taken away from this development is simply to give every placement your all and get the most out of it; you never know what opportunities might arise from the experience.

-Mary Ann Parkes - Geneseo Central

Final Reflection Pizza Party!

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 a pizza party on December 15th at 6pm in the College Union room 322 & 323. We hope to see you there!