

Title 1 Parent Involvement Monthly Newsletter

November 2011

Book club in kindergarten? Definitely!

Book clubs are enormously popular with adults these days. But in kindergarten? What could young children--some of whom can only read a few words--possibly have to contribute to a book discussion?

Plenty, it turns out. Teachers who have tried this approach with their students say book clubs are great for engaging students in good books.

To get started, have students sit in a circle. Begin reading a book that you know will engage them. After a few pages, stop and ask a few questions. Then have students to turn to a partner and begin talking about the book.

You'll find that even your shyest students are comfortable talking in a one-on-one setting. They'll make predictions about what they think is going to happen next. They'll talk about how they think the character is feeling at this point.

After the students have talked with their partners, it's time to have them report to the class. A clever kindergarten teacher will not only ask, "Sally, what did you think about the book?" Knowing that kindergarten students are sometimes better at talking than they are at listening, the teacher will also ask, "Sally, what did your partner think about the book?"

That will engender even more discussion. "No, I didn't say that," a student may reply. So you can probe further, asking the student to tell you what he actually did think about that part of the story.

You can make this a special activity if you call it "Book Club." Students will love the grown-up feeling of having a real conversation about a book.

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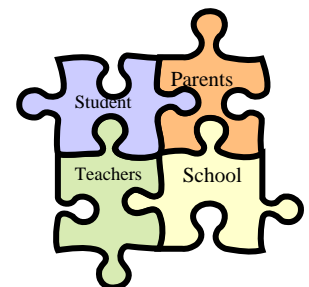
There's a lot of material to cover in one school year. And while many students will either keep up with or exceed the pace, others will have difficulty. Robyn R. Jackson and Claire Lambert's *How to Support Struggling Students* (ASCD) offers strategies to help students before, during and after instruction, as well as ways to provide ongoing support.

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Renner *Reminders*

It is hard to believe that one quarter of the school year is complete. Kudos to all of the building liaisons who have turned in paperwork from the first meeting, and a big THANK YOU to buildings that are doing the required parent responses after meetings. Please continue to send those. Thank you and have great Thanksgiving.

Pat



Plan a great parent-teacher conference

This is conference time at many schools and a great opportunity to form partnerships with parents. Email is convenient, but even in this technological age, nothing beats "face time" for getting to know parents.

As you plan your conferences:

- Offer schedules outside normal school hours. If possible, schedule morning conferences as early as 7 or 7:30 a.m., and pick one evening when you can stay till 7 or 8 p.m. Tell parents well in advance of the scheduling options. This may make the difference between meeting with a parent and not.
- Check language needs. Find out whether interpreters are available at your school for parents with limited English skills.
- Communicate availability. For some parents, one conference a year is plenty, but others may want or require more time. Make sure parents know the best way to reach you, and what they need to do to schedule a conference with you.

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Three simple factors lead to success

There are some teachers who seem to be able to help all students succeed. The more those teachers are observed, the more evident it becomes that they share three essential ingredients for success. Successful teachers:

1. Create positive relationships with their students. This involves listening to them and paying attention to what they like--and don't like. It doesn't mean starting to wear Silly Bands on your wrist, for example, but it does mean understanding why your students love them.
2. Believe their students can succeed. They say things like, "You'll need to know this when you get to college." If you really believe your students are college-bound, they will pick up on your attitude.
3. Love what they're teaching. The most important success factor for most students is a teacher who is passionate and energetic about teaching. That's not always easy to do--but why not look for a fun new way to begin a lesson on adding fractions or different ways to create the sh sound?

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Use INCLUDE strategy for learning needs

Students come to your class with a wide variety of learning needs. But you can reasonably accommodate most of those needs if you follow this strategy. It spells out the process to follow in order to INCLUDE all students:

I Identify classroom demands. Be sure to include the demands of the curriculum and any constraints imposed by the environment. (A student with a visual impairment needs an adaptation to see the board.)

N Note the needs of your students. Successful adaptations meet each child's specific needs.

C Check for areas where students can be successful. Tailor your teaching to target those strengths whenever possible.

L Look for potential problem areas. Be aware of a student's reading level, for example, so you can adapt a reading assignment if necessary.

U Use the information you have gathered to consider a variety of instructional adaptations or modifications. Consult with other professionals to see if they can suggest other options.

D Decide which adaptations to implement. Assemble the tools and supports you will need.

E Evaluate students' progress.

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