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Parents and schools : making the literacy connection

Patricia A. Greguras
University of Northern Iowa

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Parents and schools : making the literacy connection

Abstract

Families can offer children many opportunities to read and write in their home. By being role models, parents demonstrate to their children the genuine functions of language. Letting children know that reading and writing are meaningful activities and are used for practical and enjoyable reasons fosters literacy.

A home/school literacy project was developed in a fifth grade class to encourage the home/school connection and to provide more parental support for the school program. Students wrote a monthly newsletter to their parents, read and journaled nightly with their parents, and invited parents to share their job experience, favorite book, vacation or recipe with the class.

Parents and Schools
Making the Literacy Connection

A Graduate Project
Submitted to the
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Patricia A. Greguras

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Making the Literacy Connection

has been approved as meeting the research article requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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Date Approved

Jeanne McLain Harms

Director of Research Project

10/27/99

Date Approved

Jeanne McLain Harms

Graduate Faculty Adviser

10-27-99

Date Approved

Rick C. Traw

Graduate Faculty Reader

10-27-99

Date Approved

Rick C. Traw

Head, Department of Curriculum
and Instruction

Abstract

Families can offer children many opportunities to read and write in their home. By being role models, parents demonstrate to their children the genuine functions of language. Letting children know that reading and writing are meaningful activities and are used for practical and enjoyable reasons fosters literacy.

A home/school literacy project was developed in a fifth grade class to encourage the home/school connection and to provide more parental support for the school program. Students wrote a monthly newsletter to their parents, read and journaled nightly with their parents, and invited parents to share their job experience, favorite book, vacation or recipe with the class.

Children model the literacy experiences observed in their home. As the first teachers of their children, parents have the primary responsibility for their children's learning. Children's ideas and attitudes about the importance of literacy begin with the expectations and beliefs of their parents. Since parents act as their children's first teachers, they are in a position to foster positive attitudes toward literacy (Warner, 1991).

Family literacy, then, is the language processes that family members incorporate into their daily experiences and use to receive and give information and pleasure both within the family unit and as members of the larger community (Unwin, 95). Family literacies differ from each other, but they share many common elements. They are informal and incorporated into the fabric of daily life (Smith, 1994).

Literacy Experiences in the Home Environment

Children's reading and writing abilities develop in much the same way as their oral language. For example, when children learned to talk, they were involved in oral language as it is demonstrated around them. Children who are exposed to print and see it being used in functional ways in their daily lives are encouraged to engage in the reading and writing processes. They do what other family members have learned: responding to signs, logos, and labels; sharing books; and scribbling notes (Goodman, 1986).

Children need relevant, interesting, and achievable experiences with language in warm, supportive environments in order to develop literacy. Reading aloud to children is a family activity that offers such support. This experience furthers literacy in several ways: It makes books attractive to children, teaches them the purpose of print, shows them how texts are organized, and introduces them to written language (Johnson & Louis, 1990). Rereading a book to children is also beneficial because each time they listen they hear new information and mesh it with other reading aloud experiences (Hill, 1989).

Reading aloud experiences in the home also can nurture children's personal-social development. It provides children with a sense of security and an opportunity for the parents to share a special moment with their children (Johnson & Louis, 1990).

Conclusions from a research study of parents reading aloud to their children suggest the value of continuing this experience with them even as they grow older. The study compared sixth graders who were active readers with non-active readers. In every case, active readers had been read to from age three. In some families, the children were still being read to in sixth grade (Sostrich in Huck, Helper, Hickman & Kiefer, 1997).

Children who come from home environments with books available to them for reading, who have been read to frequently, and who see adults

interacting with print material for their own purposes usually learn to read. Unfortunately, not all children enter school with the same awareness and knowledge about written language (Taylor, 1983).

The way parents talk to their children about literature works before, during and after they read influences the knowledge children will gain from the texts. Mavrogenes (1990) suggests the importance of discussing literature works with children: Children who achieve well in reading usually have parents who play an active role in guiding their emerging literacy. Their parents help select reading materials, set reading goals, and engage in discussions about books they have read. Family discussions of common reading experiences appear to enhance children's vocabulary growth, understanding and recall of stories, and language production as well as knowledge of print conventions (Morrow, 1995).

After books have been shared, parents and children can engage in related expressive activities: Stories can be retold. An interesting part of a story can be the focus of a drawing. A story or poem that has been prompted by the read-aloud experiences can be written. Children can be encouraged to keep journals of family literacy activities (Neuman, 1996).

Home/School Literacy Connection

School programs designed to foster reading and writing are far more effective when parents are involved. If parents can be enlisted as

allies by focusing on children's strengths instead of their weaknesses, communication between teachers and parents is more easily achieved. When parents believe that the school has their needs and those of their children at heart, they are more apt to become involved and supportive (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1991; Taylor, 1983).

Schools can suggest meaningful language activities for families. Parents can be advised to provide a time and place to read 15 minutes daily together with their children in a comfortable room with a variety of reading materials, such as books and magazines in the home collection and those from the public and school libraries. In these experiences, parents can model reading for their children (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1991).

Classroom teachers can use several strategies to enlist parents' collaboration: School functions for parents can be scheduled for Saturday morning to accommodate more people. Weekly letters to parents including an overview of the children's instructional program can be distributed to the home. Occasional phone calls to parents and parent-teacher conferences offer opportunities for informing parents about their children's school activities and achievements (Rosenthal & Young Sawyers, 1996).

Projects to Establish Home/School Partnerships

Many programs, publications, and public policies have been established to increase awareness and interest in the "family as educator."

These are designed to enhance family literacies (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Most family literacy programs are based on the view that improving parenting and their basic literacy abilities will foster their children's language abilities (Morrow, 1995; Nicksie, 1990). Conclusions from programs that encourage home/school partnerships suggest that the parents need to be risk-takers to help their children be successful in school. Parents want to help their children but often do not know how. Programs for improved home/school partnerships should promote intervention that is convenient, personalized, and non-threatening to parents (Unwin, 1995).

A project, Schools Reaching Out, a family support movement initiated by the Institute for Responsive Education in 1989, developed three themes to encourage parent involvement: (1) School success should be provided for all children, (2) schools should serve the whole child, and (3) educational responsibilities should be shared by school and home. A special feature of the program was the development of parent centers at school where parents could meet other parents. Volunteerism was encouraged and parent volunteers were recruited. Parent involvement grew as a result of the program (Davis, 1991).

Another example project, Families That Read, Succeed!, was introduced in an inner city school, Pulaski Elementary School, in

Savannah, Georgia in 1993. Minority students made up much of this school's population. Forty-five percent of the children had no home reading-aloud experiences on a regular basis. This data, along with the results of a parent questionnaire, indicated the need for literacy intervention in the school (Johnson & Louis, 1990).

Based on this information, four parent literacy workshops were held in which the leaders presented ways that parents could influence their children's self-esteem through literature. The specific objectives of the program were: (a) to increase students' reading achievement, (b) to improve parents' and students' attitudes toward reading, (c) to increase parental involvement in the school, (d) to increase the amount of quality times families spend together, (e) to foster home/school connections, and (f) ultimately to create lifelong readers who stay in school, become productive citizens, and believe in their own self-worth. The leaders of the program believed that the key to the program's success was the involvement of the parents in the planning.

The workshops were well advertised, and the attendance was excellent. Since parents are often intimidated by the school environment, the object of the first workshop was to make parents feel at ease. At the first workshop, a read-aloud demonstration took place using a predictable story to show how to involve a child in the reading process. Then the

parents met in small groups with their children's teachers to discuss the benefits of reading aloud to children, ways to select a book for reading aloud, and questioning techniques to use with their children in informal discussion after a read-aloud session. Each parent made a reading game to share with their child. Parents were asked to fill out a questionnaire that listed topics they could choose for future workshops. A drawing for free books, refreshments, and baby-sitting were also included.

The second workshop was the highlight of the literary program. A guest speaker, Cornelia Baily, a Native American of Ogheechee descent, told folk tales that her parents had passed down to her from their rich oral history. She pointed out that even though her parents could not read or write, they talked often to her and told her many stories of their culture and origins. She encouraged the parents in the workshop to share their family experiences with their children.

The third workshop featured a book by Margaret Wise Brown entitled, The Important Book (1949). Parents were asked to tell what was important to them and why. The leader listed their ideas on chart paper. These ideas became the bases of stories written by the parents during the workshop. Parents were encouraged to read those stories to their children. Bookmaking was the focus of the fourth workshop.

This project gave parents an opportunity to become more active in the emerging literacy of their children thus turning at-risk learners into empowered learners. It was particularly noted that the project was developed in cooperation with parents.

Developing a Family/School Literacy Partnership

My fifth grade class this year included 17 African-American students and six Caucasian students. The school is located in the inner city. So many students are at risk of not finding success in school.

As concluded from the Sostrich study reviewed earlier in the paper, older elementary children's literacy is enhanced by support from their parents. Based on these conclusions, I made plans to involve the parents of my fifth graders more in the classroom activities.

Letters to Parents

As the school year started in August, I sent a letter to family care-givers introducing them to my plans to foster literacy during the coming school year. I extended an invitation to families to come share a book, a vacation experience or a recipe. I mentioned plans for a student newsletter published each month. I encouraged parents to visit the library and read with their children and indicated that I would provide reading experiences for family sharing (see Appendix A). A second letter was sent to families in September explaining the Accelerated Reading Program.

The children would read daily in class and take tests on the computer at the end of each book to check for comprehension. A new box of books for student reading would be introduced every six weeks.

An important goal of the program was to extend the home/school literacy connection. Student responses to their reading were to be recorded in journals. Students would be encouraged to share their journals with their families, and their families could respond in the journals or write notes to me. Students were encouraged to read each night with their families, recording these activities in their journals. The notebooks and books would be sent in large plastic zip lock bags (see Appendix B).

Open House

At Open House this fall, I promoted family reading. As I went over the reading program, I explained the four units in the reading book. I gave the parents a handout of the books that extended each unit, suggesting they could find these at the public library or in the school library. I discussed the monthly Troll book orders and recommended quality book selections that I believe would extend the curriculum.

At Open House, the parents and students were directed to a bulletin board graph where they could place a sticky marker indicating their favorite pastime activity at home. The three categories were: watching TV, reading, and playing games (such as Nintendo or the

computer). Sixteen markers were placed on playing games, 12 markers were placed on watching TV, and eight markers were placed on reading. Also, on a table in front of the bulletin board display, small plastic stacking cubes were presented with these directions: Stack your cube on the tower stack if you own a library card, or place your cube in the basket if you do not have a library card. Fourteen cubes were stacked and nine cubes were placed in the basket. Another part of my survey was a Venn Diagram chart indicating preferences of nonfiction and fiction. The chart read: DO YOU READ FICTION, NONFICTION, OR BOTH? The tally was as follows: fiction—9, nonfiction—7, both—13. I had 41 students and parents sign the room registry at Open House. Not all the parents and students participated in each of the graphing activities. The responses to these activities indicated that the students would benefit from more involvement in reading activity at home.

Parent-Teacher Conferences—Fall

At the fall conferences, I again mentioned to the parents the importance of having books in the home. To facilitate this activity, I had picked up library card applications at the local library. They were offered to parents as they left. I gave them another list of the books that were related to the first reading unit. During the conferences, I again extended an

invitation to parents to visit the class at any time and to share an experience.

Parent Visits

One student's mother came after the fall conferences to read to the class. She arrived unannounced with her baby shortly after lunch and said, "I'm here to read." She read from the story, Shiloh (1991), by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, that I was reading to the class. It was a pleasant surprise, and the class enjoyed having both her and the baby. At Halloween, the class had another visit. As we were planning a Halloween party, one of the boys said his older brother worked at Pizza Hut and could get us a good deal on pizza. When his brother delivered our order, I persuaded him to tell the class about his job and how he became the assistant manager. He told the class he was a high school dropout and had worked for Pizza Hut for almost five years, first as a delivery boy, then a cook and counter help, and now as assistant manager. Although he liked his job, he said he always wanted to be a banker. He told the class to stay in school and listen to their teacher. The class really listened to this young man. He spoke so well on the spur of the moment. He has been back to check on his younger brother and the class from time to time.

Suggestions for Winter Reading

Just before Christmas break, I sent home with each child a bibliography, Picture Books to Enhance the Curriculum (Harms & Lettow, 96). In the accompanying explanations, I suggested that books would make a good gift. Also, the bibliography could be a guide for their children in selecting books at the public library during the holidays.

Newsletters

In January, our class started publishing a newsletter to inform parents what we were studying in the school program. Included in the newsletters were students' poems, stories and projects, recipes, math quizzes, and upcoming school events. I contributed a list of books for family reading. Students had the responsibility of acquiring information, writing, revising, and publishing the newsletter (see Appendix C). At first we planned to publish monthly newsletters but found bimonthly newsletters were a more realistic goal. The responses of the students and their families to this project were most positive.

In the February/March edition, the students wrote about the Reader Bowl, a school-wide reading competition to read the most pages in a month. The two winners could trade places with the principal and assistant principal for a day. I included a list of books that complimented our reading unit and suggested that the books from the list could be added to their

total for the Reader Bowl Contest. The section, Social Studies News, highlighted our study of the states. The students included a word search puzzle involving the names of all the states. Math News included the students' geometry quizzes. For our school's celebration of Black History Month, the class chose famous black Americans to research. Each student wrote about a life history of a famous African-American. Several of these reports were included in this edition of the newsletter. Students reported about upcoming events. Recipes were also included in this issue.

The April/May Family Link included Science News depicting a food web, an update on what the class had been reading, another recipe, a history test, graphing fun for math, and an update on what was learned this year in math class. Two students submitted poems. One student wrote about all the field trips the class had taken during the school year. Another student wrote about the visits Mrs. Carter, an employee of the Humane Society, and her dog made to our class to talk about animal safety.

Student and parent response to the newsletter was very positive. One parent sent me a note to say how much she enjoyed reading something that was published by students for students and their families. Another parent helped chaperone our end-of-the-year picnic. He said his son had never shown much interest in reading or writing until this year. He

was especially pleased to find his son's contributions in our newsletter. I simply replied, "They were reading and writing what had meaning and was important to them." I smiled silently to myself!

Parent-Teacher Conferences—Spring, and More School Visits

At the spring conferences, I extended another invitation to parents to share experiences with the class. Although many were still reluctant, four parents scheduled times to visit. Jesse's dad had just published his first book, entitled An Essay on Racism in America (Freeman, 1999), during Black History Month. Although Mr. Freeman believed the content of the book was not suitable for fifth graders, he did share his celebration of becoming an author. He said the book took about 18 months to write after many years of thought. The class was interested and asked questions about editing, finding a publisher, and how much money he would make as a writer. Mr. Freeman told the class he expected the royalties to be limited so he would not be giving up his day job. The topic of his book was racism.

Mr. Freeman told the class they should write for enjoyment and keep journals of their writings. When asked how he engaged in writing his ideas, he said he often got ideas and thoughts for his book late at night in bed. He kept a tablet on his nightstand to jot these thoughts down. This

visit was a wonderful experience for my class; they could discuss writing with a published author with whom some of the class was acquainted.

Jana's mother, a nurse, came one afternoon to take everyone's blood pressure and spoke about the importance of a healthy diet. She answered many students' questions about AIDS, cancer, and drug addiction. Students wondered how long she had to go to college to become a nurse, if she ever had patients die while caring for them, and how she felt about that. Her visit sparked interest in the health care profession.

Mario's interest and hobby is hunting. His older brother and father had taken a gun safety course together, so Mario persuaded his dad to speak to the class on gun safety and accident prevention.

Julian's mother enjoys cooking for her five children. When she visited, she shared cornbread and black-eyed peas with the class. Some of her favorite things to cook were passed down orally from her grandmother and not written down. She indicated, however, that she would like to start recording recipes to pass on to both of her daughters. Our class enjoyed her accounts of her heritage. We took up a collection and bought her two small recipe journals to write in and keep for her daughters.

Conclusions

Several of the parents have been very supportive this year and have attended Open House, Curriculum Night, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and other school functions. I find that the parents are most interested in their children's education and school behavior even though some of them never finished school.

This spring we had a book fair and almost three fourths of my class and their parents came and bought books. The students have indicated they are going to the library more often now. Their composite California Achievement scores were second highest of the six 5th grade classes. Parental involvement at school has increased, and I believe the students benefited from having parents come share their experiences with the class. Such sharing creates a greater closeness to the families, and communication has opened up with a greater parental support of what I do at school with their children.

The home/school literacy connection will continue next year. I will send home two letters soon after school starts: One will invite parents to share ideas, hobbies, recipes, vacation adventures, and jobs with us. The other letter will explain the Accelerated Reading Program that has been incorporated into our reading program.

The bimonthly student newsletters will be continued. The parents have indicated they enjoyed seeing the writing of their children. The class enjoyed this activity as well and collaborated with one another on some of the articles. I would like to start our class newsletter earlier next year as the students enjoyed the responsibility of this project.

Many of our parents are not able to visit school because of their employment or because they do not feel comfortable in the school. I hope to encourage more involvement on their part. Along with their journals, I plan to develop packets of literature with expressive activities for the children to take home. It is my hope that next year through the school-to-home reading/journaling packets and expressive activities I suggest from Harms & Lettow (1998), I will inspire more parents to share good literature with their children and see the value of sharing their time with their children.

I believe if I continue to reach out to parents they will respond and ultimately their children will benefit. My goal is for students to read for enjoyment and know that literacy will open doors of opportunities for them in their lives.

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Appendix A

Letter to Parents

August, 1999

Dear Parents and Students,

Hello and welcome to the fifth grade class in room 118. As the teacher of this class, I am looking forward to visiting with each and every one of you soon.

As you probably know, exciting things happen here at Central Park School. My personal goal this year for the class is to promote family literacy through a monthly class newsletter, suggested reading experiences for you and your child to share; and I am extending an invitation for you to come visit our class to share a favorite story or book, recipe, or your vacation adventures.

More information will follow on each of these ideas to foster literacy within your family and our classroom. I am anticipating a great school year. Meanwhile, read with your child, take them to the library, let them see you reading for pleasure and enjoy the time you are able to spend with your child. Believe me, as a parent of grown children, they grow up quickly.

I hope to visit with each of you this fall.

Sincerely,

Pat Greguras

Appendix B

Letter to Parents

September, 1999

Dear Parents,

Greetings! I would like to let you know about the Accelerated Reading Program that we have incorporated into our reading program. Our class receives a different boxed set of books every six weeks. The children select and check out a book they would like to read during Sustained Silent Reading time, (sustained silent reading). A record is kept of their reading time and the books they have completed.

I would like to extend the opportunity for our class to take the books home to read and share with you. Your child's responsibility is to read for about twenty minutes each evening and carry the book back and forth each day to school in a waterproof bag. It will be their responsibility to take care of the book and return it daily to also read in class.

Over the year, the students will be constantly reading and exposed to various author's styles. This will improve your child's fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.

Another plus with the AR Reading Program is the students take a test on the computer when finished with their book. This holds them accountable and checks for comprehension. Should the student fail the test on the computer, they will do a written book report and conference with me on the book.

Please join with me in helping create an environment where our children can enjoy books for a lifetime. Together we can build a community of readers.

Thank you for your help, support and cooperation with our Accelerated Reading Program.

Sincerely,

Pat Greguras

Please indicate that you have read this letter.

signature of parent or guardian

Appendix C

Newsletters

Room 118 Family Link January 1999**Dear Parents,**

Our room has decided to publish a monthly newsletter to keep you informed what exciting things happen in our room.

The Poetry Center enhances our units of study. The students are able to browse through Poets work and see the different styles of writing. For example, during Black History month in February, students are able to read the poetry of Langston Hughes, Eloise Greenfield, Gwendolyn Brooks and other black poets. **Alanna Faison** especially enjoys writing poetry. She submitted this poem entitled "Solar Time" for our January Newsletter since our class is studying Space, the Stars, and the Solar System.

SCIENCE NEWS**SOLAR TIME**

**It's solar time,
It's solar fun.**

Planets, comets, asteroids, sun and moons for everyone.

**The stars make constellations in the night sky,
Looking and wishing that you could fly.**

URANUS

The third largest planet in the solar system is Uranus. It is the seventh in order of the distance from the sun. It has 5 known moons. It is blue green in color and was discovered by Sir William Herschel on March 13, 1781. He thought it was a comet. It has 7 rings like Jupiter but they are too faint to be photographed.

By: **Oshnah Holt & Anthony Freeman**

SATURN

Saturn looks like a big phonograph record, grooves and all. The grooves actually are countless trillions of particles gathered in ringlets. The ringlets make up Saturn's seven rings. Ice makes the rings bright. The icy particles are as small as microscopic to some as big as a house. One might wonder where the rings came from. According to a planet expert, the particle rings are left over from the constellations of a moon and a comet.

by: **LASHONDA SMITH & ALEX**

CONSTELLATIONS

BY:

BRANDY BOYER

Constellations aren't just stars. They are great visions that tell stories. You can't enjoy unless you know when to look. The Dragon is one of the largest. It can be seen most of the time during May through August. The Big and Little Dippers are the easiest found and best seen in May and June.

FYI.....Parenting classes start next month.

Two six-week sessions on "Common Sense Parenting" are planned at Minnie Lusa School, 6905 North 28th Avenue. They will be held on Thursdays

Sessions are planned Feb. 4 to March 11, and April 15 to May 20, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the school. A book is included in the \$14 fee for each six-week series. Free child care is provided at the school during the meetings.



math corner

At this time of year we are studying metrics. Our class enjoyed measuring themselves and just about everything in the room. We measured in decimeters, centimeters and meters. Lashae and Vernon said centimeters was the easiest for them to calculate, so they measured several additional objects and came up with this report

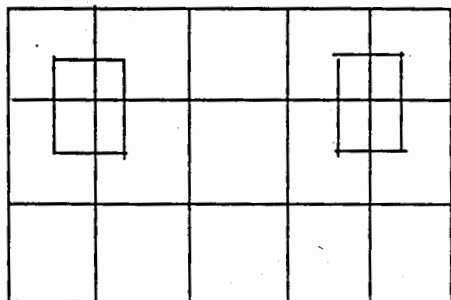
In our fifth grade class we were measuring things in the room for math. We measured a cabinet in c.m. and we got 145 c.m. Then we measured a window sill's width and it came up to 65c.m. We measured our teachers desk and it was 65 c.m. also. After that we had to go over and do the table. It was 90 c.m. long. We had done a lot of measuring but we were not done yet. We measured a small poster and it was 28 c.m. wide and 63 c.m. up the long way. After that we did the front door window and got 63 c.m. by 88 c.m. Last but not least, we measured Jamar's arm the long way and we got 57 c.m. It took a long time.

by: LASHAE RICHARD & VERNON MCCLEND

Allana and Evan came back from challenge class and asked us to see how many squares we could find within this large square. They also gave us a second puzzle to figure out. Test yourself

How many squares can you find?

by: Alanna Faison and Evan Byron



What's Happening

What's Happening

Flower Show
St. Cecilia's Cathedral
701 N. 40th St.
Sat., Jan. 30: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sun., Jan 31: Noon - 4 p.m.
Free to Public

Familyness
Tuesday, Feb. 2
7 - 8:30 p.m.
Omaha Public Schools
IAC Auditorium
3215 Cuming St.
Public Invited, Free

Winter Reading Club
Jan. 11- Feb. 28
Omaha Public Libraries
Contact Neighborhood
Library for Details

Black History Museum
2213 Lake St.
10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Weekdays
\$2 Admission

Title I Talk Box
557-2488
Always Available,
Always Free
Stories, Rhymes

Finish the math square. Remember you can only use each number once.
Use numbers 1-15

5			10	
				=30
15				

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Martin Luther King has left his mark on history. His non violent means of bringing peace to the nation and his part in the Civil Rights Movement have taught us much about his dream. Our class is studying the life of Dr. King. Marcellus Slaughter and Brandon Shelby made a time-line chronicling 11 important events in Dr. King's life. It was added to the bulletin board under "Our Dream". The class discussed dreams they hold for the future and wrote about those dreams. Included here are only a few of those dreams. Please ask your child to bring his or her essay home to share their dream with you.

I have a dream... to get a college education, a scholarship and a good paying job helping others. Money wise, well, I wouldn't ask for much from anyone, just enough to help me get along. For a long time one of my favorite dreams was that everyone would live in peace on the earth, but my dream has not come true because of killings, drugs and bad things people do. But, if my dream ever came true I know I and many other people would be very happy. If my and another persons dream come true, I know he would be very glad if he were here. So as I finish I Julian E. Mims have a dream.

I Have A Dream by: Anthony Freeman

I dream the world would be a better place. People would stop smoking and doing drugs. I want to help people and students when I get older. I want to be a teacher to make a difference. My teacher always says to me "you are so smart Anthony. I believe her too. I want to maybe be president and beat Bill Clinton. That would be a miracle. I want to change the earth. This is a better dream than last year. My father has a group of books about Martin Luther King. I have always liked him. He was an outstanding man. I guess his family misses him.

This is my dream....

Martin Luther King Jr.

As a minister, civil rights activist and writer, Martin Luther King inspired African Americans to stand up for their rights. But King always encouraged nonviolence. Using this strategy in the bus boycott in Montgomery, King's victory was followed by a Supreme Court ruling that bus segregation was unconstitutional. King never gave up his struggle. At age 35 he won the Nobel Peace Prize.

By: Janay Smith and Kim Mercer



'THIS N THAT'

Macaws

by:

Jake

and

Julian

Macaws are the largest members of the parrot family. There are 328 species of Macaws. They come in a variety of sizes and colors. All Macaws have a powerful bill with two curved mandibles. The upper mandible is longer and has more hook which fits over the lower mandible. This structure makes the bill a strong tool for eating and acts as a hook to assist the bird in climbing.

"Why the Sea Is Salt

In Norway the ocean is called "the blue meadow." Norway, a small country, has nearly 1,650 miles of coastline because there was so much water around them, people wondered about the sea. "How did the sea become so salty?" some asked. "The supply of salt ought to be used up by now." Others said where does the salt in the sea come from? Do you know the answer?

by: Andrew Dragon

Social Studies

Our class is studying the thirteen colonies this year. The colonies are divided into three geographical groups: The New England, Middle and the Southern Colonies. There were many large plantations in the Southern Colonies, which sold crops such as: tea, Indigo and tobacco
By: Alanna & Evan

Tips For Parents.....

You may hearing "I'm bored" and "There's nothing to do" this time of year. It's time to get out the puzzles and paints. Take time to do fun family activities such as go to the Library with your children to pick out good books to read together on these cold winter evenings. Curl up with a mug of hot chocolate and play charades using characters from children's favorite books. Or, if you have any non-working appliances have older children try taking them apart and put them back together. This fosters creative thinking.

Well, until next month.....

Here's hoping your New Year is off to a great start. If you would like to visit our class sometime please feel free to come. You are always welcome here at Central Park.

Mrs. Greguras and class

Family Link February/March Issue

Family Link February / March Issue

Dear Families,

Hello! January and February really flew by. Our class is busy getting ready for the CAT tests at the end of March. We have just about finished the benchmark tests and are practicing Math and Reading skills to be sharp for the tests. Please make sure your child gets plenty of rest the week of the CAT tests and eats a good breakfast either at home or here at school. Of course, your child needs to be here on time in the mornings so he or she does not miss out on important learning .

Thank you,
Mrs. Greguras

THE READING CORNER...

In Reading we are finishing unit 3. "Imagine A Place" is the theme". We have read several good stories including "The Search for the Magic Lake", "Snowshoe Trek to Otter River", and "When Shlemiel Went to Warsaw". These were our favorites. Suggested books that go along with the unit are:

Bridge to Terrabithia by Katherine Patterson, **Chimney Sweeps** by James Cross Giblin, **Freaky Friday** by Mary Rodgers, **In the Year of the Boar and Jackle Robinson** by Bette Bae Lord, **The Land of the Lost: Adventures of a Boy In Vietnam** by Huynh Quang Nhuong, **Sarah Plain and Tall** by Patricia MacLachlan, **The Secret Garden** by Francis H. Burnett and **Shoeshine Girl** by Clyde Robert Bulla.

Since we are having a month long reading contest throughout the school in March, it would be great if you could get your child to the library to check out one of these or any other books they might be interested in to read at home during the evenings

Dates to remember.....

March 17th, 18th - Parent- Teacher Conferences

March 19th -No school, teacher in-service day

March 25th - Family Fun Night with the Pancake Man. A book fair and babysitting will be provided. Time announced later.

Game Wars

We decided to try something new in our classroom for the month of March. I call it **GAME WARS**. It is a game between the boys and girls in our room. Right now the girls have two points and the boys have one point. The object of the game is to get the most points in a month. The way to get points is to complete your work and have good behavior. The girls are on one side of the room and the boys are on the other to work as a team. The winning team will get to have a party with the counselor, Miss Tacke and the losing team will stay in the room to do work with Mrs. Greguras. We are all trying hard and Mrs. Greguras won't tell us what the treats will be. The only kind of point you don't want to get is a negative check. If you get five of those you are automatically out.

By: Julian Mims

THE READER BOWL

We have been talking about reading in are class room and some of the things we can to to read more. Our school is having a **READER BOWL**. We are going to read as many books as we can. We set goals

by the number of pages we think we can read. The two people in the school who read the most books or pages will get trade places with the principal and the assistant principal for the day. The principal and assistant will have to do the two students school work for the day.

by: Vernon McClendon

Social Studies News.....

We are learning about the states. Each student in class has picked an individual state for reports.. In the computer lab we are going to work on HyperStudio. We will write about state flowers and state trees and other important information, about our state. We will do this all in the computer lab. Alex picked Montana for her state and I picked Minnesota because my aunt lives there. We are anxious to begin our reports.

By: Anthony Freeman
and Alex Borys

can you find all 50 states?
try your luck

THE UNITED STATES

Everyone knows Alaska is the largest state and Rhode Island is the smallest, but did you know San Bernardino County in Calif. is the largest county? Or that Jacksonville, Fla., with 827 square miles, is the largest city in area?

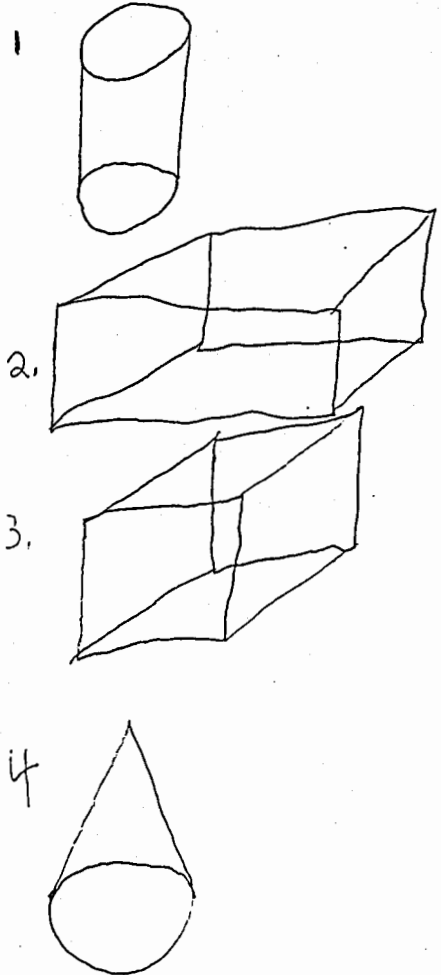
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A H E E A S T A T E O F C O F F U S I O H G I I O
N E E X A F A I S I U O L F K R E T U C K Y E M S

Below are the 50 names you should have found.

- | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| ALABAMA | HAWAII | MASSACHUSETTS | NEW MEXICO | SOUTH CAROLINA |
| ALASKA | IDAHOW | MICHIGAN | NEW YORK | TENNESSEE |
| ARIZONA | ILLINOIS | MISSISSIPPI | NORTH CAROLINA | TEXAS |
| ARKANSAS | INDIANA | MISSOURI | OHIO | UTAH |
| CALIFORNIA | IOWA | NEBRASKA | OKLAHOMA | VERMONT |
| COLORADO | KANSAS | NEVADA | PENNSYLVANIA | VIRGINIA |
| CONNECTICUT | KENTUCKY | NEW HAMPSHIRE | RHODE ISLAND | WASHINGTON |
| DELAWARE | LOUISIANA | NEW JERSEY | SOUTH CAROLINA | WEST VIRGINIA |
| FLORIDA | MAINE | | | WISCONSIN |
| | MARYLAND | | | WYOMING |

Math Mania ...

We are studying geometry in Math. Test your geometry I.Q. Can you identify the following shapes?



4. 100 - YOU KNOW YOUR MATH

3. YOUR GOOD

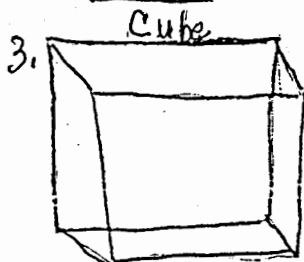
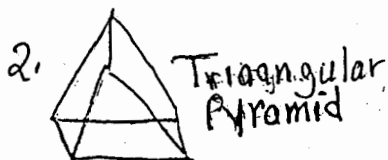
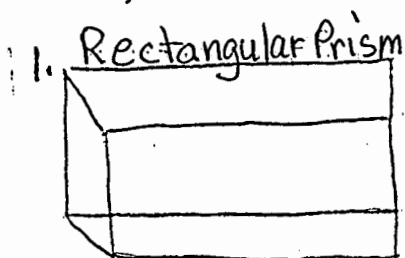
2. KEEP WORKING

1. OK

BY: BRANDY BOYER

MORE MATH FUN...

In class we are studying geometry and learning vertices, faces and edges. Can you count the vertices, faces and edges in these objects?



	faces	Edges	Vertices
①			
②			
③			

BY:KIM MERCER AND JANAYSMITH

CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER BROWNIES

1/4 CUP (1/2 STICK) BUTTER AT ROOM TEMP.

1/4 CUP CHUNKY PEANUT BUTTER

1 CUP PACKED BROWN SUGAR

2 LARGE EGGS

1 TSP. VANILLA

2 OUNCES (2 SQUARES) UNSWEETENED CHOCOLATE, MELTED, COOLED

1/2 CUP ALL PURPOSE FLOUR

1 TSP. BAKING POWDER

1/2 CUP CHOPPED Peanuts

Preheat oven to 350 . Adjust oven rack to middle position . Lightly spray or grease 8 in. square baking pan. Mix peanut butter, brown sugar and eggs in a large bowl with mixer. Add vanilla and melted chocolate until thoroughly combined. Fold in flour, baking powder, and peanuts. Spread evenly in prepared pan. Bake for 15 minutes or just until tester inserted in center come out slightly moist; don't over bake.

Cool in pan on rack. Cut into squares. YAM!

Another recipe we liked was:

STRAWBERRY ICE

1 package (3 ounces) strawberry flavored gelatin

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 cup boiling water

1 package (16 ounces) frozen sliced strawberries, half thawed.

1/4 cup orange juice

1/4 cup lemon juice

Blend gelatin and sugar. Pour boiling water on gelatin mixture in a large bowl, stirring until gelatin is dissolved. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour into 2 refrigerator trays, freeze until mushy, about 1 hour. Remove from trays; beat until smooth. Return to trays until firm, about one hour.

By: Alanna Faison, Oshnah Holt and LaShonda Smith

We decided to include recipes on this newsletter because we are also studying fractions in math and because we found these in a library book someone in our room checked out.

TO CELEBRATE BACK HISTORY MONTH....our .

class chose famous black Americans to research and write about.

Several members of the class not only did an extraordinary job researching , writing rough drafts and final drafts, but published their work by typing their final copies on the computer, We proudly displayed our work in the hallway by our classroom.

Among the many little known African Americans who gave great contributions were Phillis Wheatley, who was the first African American woman to write beautiful poetry. She was born in 1753 and died in 1784. She was a slave who got to visit the president to read her poetry. **Destiny Brown** wrote a wonderful report on Mrs. Wheatley and shared this and much more information with us. **Josh Craig and Andrew Dragon** wrote about an inventor by the name of Lewis H. Latimer who contributed to the development of incandescent electric lighting. Mr. Latimer invented the light bulb and supervised the installation of electric street lights in New York City. Their report was very informative. Also, an African American champion bull rider that I never heard of is Charles Samson. **Jake Stock and Marcellus Slaughter** wrote about his accomplishments. General Colin Powell's life was written about by **Alex Borys**. Several other famous African Americans such as Malcolm X, Jesse Owens, Dr. George Washington Carver, Michael Jordan, Joe Louis, and Harriet Tubman were researched by students.

The class has worked hard on this project.

Reading with your child.....

Active Children Need Reading Materials Handy

Some kids are born active. If they aren't kicking a ball down the street, they're climbing a tree or swinging from a rope.

Most of these very active children, says Mary Leonhardt in *Parents Who Love Reading, Kid's Who Don't, are not going to sit down for long periods of time to read. In fact, she says, "it's difficult to get them to sit down and do anything."*

But there are things you can do as a parent to encourage your active child to love reading. First, make sure you have lots of interesting reading material handy so kids can read on the run.

They can read a short magazine article while they're waiting for the microwave to heat up their snack. They can read a comic book while they're waiting for a sister to get out of the bathtub.

"Reading material near food is, of course, crucial," Leonhardt advises. Because active children run around so much, they also need to eat pretty frequently. See if you can't find a shelf in your kitchen that you can keep stocked with reading material, just as you probably keep a shelf stocked with healthy snacks.

Like all skills, reading improves with practice. Active children need to have reading material handy.

Source: Mary Leonhardt, *Parents Who Love Reading, Kids Who Don't*. 1993 (Crown Publishers, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022, 212-751-2600

Happy Easter to all. Enjoy your spring break. Remember school is back in session on April 12th.

Room 118 Family Link April/May 1999

Dear Families,

Happy spring! The school year is winding down and I feel we still have so much to do. Our class has been very busy this spring writing stories and practicing peer editing. We have been on several field trips as you know and have finished quite well on the CAT tests and Benchmarks.

Summer is fast approaching. Please take the time to visit the library with your families and continue reading together.

I will be taking summer school classes in Reading as many of you know I am finishing my Masters degree in Reading/Language Arts. It will be a busy summer for me but I also plan to relax, take a vacation and read for pleasure.

This has been a great year. I feel lucky to have great parents and families who have really come together to work for student achievement. Thank you all! I hope to see you in the fall. Stop by my room when you are in the building.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Pat Greguras

The Reading Corner....

This semester our class read two novels. It was fun getting out of the Reading book and reading Bridge to Terrabithia and Junkyard Holiday. We read in small groups most of the time. Sometimes we read by ourselves or with our teacher. We answered questions to check for comprehension and discussed the stories in our groups. After we read Bridge to Terrabithia, our teacher showed the movie. I liked the book better.

by: LaShonda

We were the first class to move all our footballs down the field during the Reader Bowl. Our class won an ice cream party and Mario's name was drawn out of the fish bowl to trade places with the assistant principal for a day. He did a good job, but threatened to suspend us all. Of course she was kidding. LaShonda

Science News....

In Science we have been studying the food web. An example would be the caterpillar feeds on a poison leaf. A robin eats the caterpillar with the poison inside. The hawk preys on the robin. Next, the hawk dies and earthworms feed on the dead hawk. Nutrients from the dead pass into the soil and some are later taken up by roots.

Also, in Science we learned about plants. We planted bean seeds in little cups. Each group planted two cups with three bean seeds. We placed one cup by the window and one in the dark to see which one would grow and absorb energy the best. Can you guess which one did? We also lined petrie dishes with dampened napkins and put several pea seeds in each one. Each day we moistened the napkins just a little and watched the pea seeds sprout. We recorded our observations for four days and on the fifth day our teacher put red food coloring on the plants so we could see the roots better. We looked at these under the microscope. It was fun to see the changes the little seeds went through. Science is our favorite subject because we like to do the experiments.

By: Oshnah & Andrew

Summer Treats

by Brandy

If you have a summer party to go to or are having friends coming over try this treat that you can make. Use a square or oblong pan, cool whip -9oz., carton of sour cream, can of wilderness cherries, and pecan nuts-small pkg. Mix all the ingredients in a large bowl. Spread in the pan, freeze, and presto! You have made a delicious desert.

Test Your History Knowledge...

By: ANTHONY & ALEX

1. During World War 2 a German "U" boat was a _____?

- a. barge
- b. submarine
- c. battleship

2. Confucius was a wise Chinese _____?

- a. teacher
- b. writer
- c. lawyer

3. Who invented the telephone _____?

- a. Belle Starr
- b. Alexander Bell
- c. Vincenzo Bellini

4. Who was the first American woman to travel in space _____?

- a. Sally Ride
- b. Amelia Earhart
- c. Eleanor Roosevelt

5. Who was the "Teddy Bear" named after _____?

- a. Ted Baxter
- b. Teddy Kennedy
- c. Teddy Roosevelt

6. According to legend she made the very first American flag _____?

- a. Julie Andrews
- b. Helen Keller
- c. Betsy Ross

7. Later, she and her plane vanished. Who was she?

_____?

- a. Jennifer Sesna
- b. Parrah Shoot
- c. Amelia Earhart

8. The FBI named the notorious bank robber "Public Enemy" number one _____?

- a. Grancisco Franco
- b. Bugsy Malone
- c. John Dillinger

9. What was the nickname of the man who roamed the United States planting apple orchards?

His real name was John Chapman _____?

- a. Johnny Appleseed
- b. Paul Peel
- c. Apple Jacks

10. Who was the first to sign the Declaration of Independence _____?

- a. John Hancock
- b. George Washington
- c. Thomas Jefferson

ANSWERS1. B 2. A 3. B 4. A 5. C
6. C 7. C 8. C 9. A 10. A

MATH CORNER....

This year we learned to reduce improper fractions to lowest terms. We rounded numbers . We estimated. In geometry we learned how to count corners, sides, and faces. We learned about scalene, isosceles, and equilateral triangles. Finding mean, median and mode was difficult at first but got to be fun after we practiced. In our last Math chapter we will study probability. Sometimes we play "around the world" with multiplication and division flash cards so we won't forget those.

BY: Lashae

Spring!

by: Janay & LaShonda

Spring is the Season when the birds begin to sing,
happily together as they fly around in a ring.
The sun is shining very bright.
The sun is so warm , it is giving us a fright.
But, when it comes to swimming,
all the fright is taken away,
for us to enjoy the warm spring day.

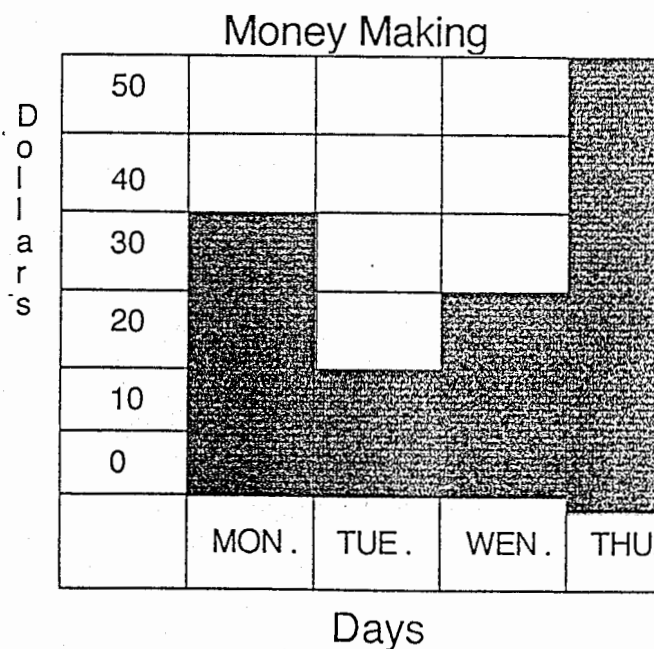
School's Out!

by: Jake

School's out!
We all want to shout!
Put away our books
and pack up our stuff.
I guess it wasn't really so tough!

GRAPHING -MATH

1. What is the name of this graph?
2. How much money did the company earn on Tuesday?
3. How many days are on the graph?
4. How much money did they earn on Monday?
5. How much was earned for all of the days?
6. How much was earned on Wednesday? Was this more or less than earned on Tuesday?



FIELD TRIPS....

We have gone on five field trips this year: Boxcar Children play, Circus, Go For It! with the athletes, Fontenelle Forest Marsh, and Kaleidoscope. The boxcar children was at the Rose theater. We had lots of fun. It was about three children who's mother and father died. They were supposed to live with their grandfather, but they thought he didn't like them so they ran away. Since they didn't have any money, they lived out of a boxcar. In the end, grandfather found them and they lived happily ever after.

At the circus we saw men juggling and motorcyclists driving in circles. The animals were cute. At "Go For It" they picked kids from the audience to play games. The teams were called "Purple Thunder" and "Green Lightning". They had cool lights shining on the ceiling and they were throwing out t-shirts to the audience.

At the marsh at Fontenelle Forest we set a record for finding the most bugs. We dug into the water and sifted to find the bugs and compared them to the pictures the guide gave us.

At Kaleidoscope we made artistic things. They had hot wax markers and paint. By: Lashea

HUMANE SOCIETY – PET EDUCATION

A lady named Mrs. Carter comes to our class once a month to teach us pet safety and education. Sometimes she will bring her dog Buddy. Most of the times she talks to us about animal care. She talks a lot about animal abuse and loving and caring for our animals. When Mrs. Carter is at the Humane Society she helps care for homeless and sick animals. Pam Carter must really know a lot about animals. She is very nice and very funny because she used to be an actress. When she comes she makes things sound realistic and she gives us assignments to write about animals. She has taught us what to do when a dog charges at you! We are also going to the Humane Society to look at some animals and visit. We think it will be a very extraordinary field trip.

By: Brandon

Summer Vacation Plans...

Where are you going on summer vacation? If I had a choice, I would go to Chicago because it is warm there in the summer and they have nice hotels. You could meet new people and go to an amusement park. The Kennedy-Eisenhower expressway is huge and the Sears Tower is a very big building there. Lake Michigan is famous as well. I would probably see a Chicago Cubs baseball game and meet some of the players. by: Mario