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PROGRAM: LEARNING TO WRITE POETRY

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Program Overview

- Major Goals:**
1. Give young children exposure to different types and sounds of poems (i.e., Shel Silverstein's style is funny and clever; some poets make their words rhyme)
 2. Give students confidence to create poems by:
 - a. sharing your own poems and making up poems in front of the class
 - b. writing poems as a class

Target Student Age: 5-8 years (kindergarten to grade three)

Timeline: This study requires a minimum of four weeks but could stretch to eight weeks. Poetry is taught during Writing Workshop time, which should be just less than one hour every day (or might be four days per week). This is roughly how the hour can be divided: 15 minutes for a mini-lesson, 30 minutes of independent writing time, and a 10-minute share/wrap-up to close the Writing Workshop.

NOTE: The poetry publishing study may last one or two months, however the class should be exposed to poetry throughout the year.

Assessments:

Since there is no formal assessment tool, it is up to the teacher to evaluate writing throughout the study. Time spent conferring with individual students or groups each day is time when the teacher can assess writing.

Questions to consider:

- Is the student actively involved in poetry readings and mini lessons? (participating by sharing ideas, questions, and observations with the class)
- Is the student using writing time to develop his/her own poems or experiment with the genre?
- Is the student trying techniques that have been modeled and discussed in mini-lessons?
- Does the student's writing look like a poem or a story?

Lesson Planning

In this poetry unit, I use daily mini-lessons (as I always do in Writing Workshop). Here are some examples of mini-lessons:

1. (This is ideal for the first day of unit). Read any poem you like to the class. Have it written out or blown up so all of the children can see. Read it a second time, encouraging the children to join in. Ask them what they notice about the poem. Then ask them how poems differ from stories and other genres of writing. You should definitely create a chart based on children's responses--it might look like this:

What We Notice About Poems

The words look different
They are shorter than stories
They are kind of like songs

2. Model writing--or starting-- a poem. With your students watching, think aloud and begin writing on the chart paper. You might actually cross out words or lines as you go, so the children see that anything can be changed if you aren't satisfied with it!
3. Make another chart listing possible topics for poems, i.e.:

Ideas for Poems

-weather
-friends
-school
-babies
-brothers and sisters
-pets
- the beach

4. Invite an older student to visit and share a favorite poem with your class. It could be a poem the student wrote him/herself, or one selected from a book. Often, the work of older students inspires younger children.

Poetry Samples (first graders)

Castle and Princess

In the castle princess tiptoes
tiptoe princess shoes are
so beautiful
they sparkle as they wish
click like beautiful shoes do

- by Umi

Green

Green paper
Green paint
Green plants
Green pages
Green markers
Green pens
Green pears
And green is green!

-by Nika

Loose Teeth

when you have a loose tooth
it wiggles
like a piece of cheese
and when it is
about to fall out
it bleeds
fall, fall out, into your hands!

-by Mariel

Poetry Resources

A. Poets- See if you can get a poet to visit the school. Or invite anyone you know who writes poetry to come in (it could be another faculty member, a friend, or a student teacher)

B. Books (Most are appropriate across the grades K-5)

1. *Random House Book of Poetry for Children* by Jack Prelutsky
2. *Read Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young* by Marc Brown
3. *A Pizza the Size of the Sun* by Jack Prelutsky
4. *Commotion in the Ocean* by Giles Andrea
5. *A Giant's Cake* by Diane Snowball
6. *It's Raining Pigs and Noodles* by Jack Prelutsky
7. *Poems to Read to the Very Young* by Josette Frank
8. *I Like Being Me* by Judy Lalli
9. *Jewels: Children's Play Rhymes* by Sharon Taberski
10. *Sports, Sports, Sports* by Lee Bennett Hopkins
11. *Honey I love* by Eloise Greenfield
12. *Scholastic Month-by-Month Poetry* by Marian Reiner (set of 3 books)
13. *Hand Rhymes* by Marc Brown
14. *A Small Child's Book of Cozy Poems* by Cindy Szekeres
15. *Lemonade Sun* by Karla Kuskin
16. *A Light in the Attic* by Shel Silverstein
17. *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein
18. *If Pigs Could Fly* by Bruce Lansky
19. *Positively Mother Goose* by Diane Loomans
20. *A Collection of Family Poems* by Mary Ann Hoberman
21. *Kids Poems- Teaching First Graders to Love Writing Poetry* by Regie Routman (This book is a great resource to teachers with limited experience teaching poetry. It gives great tips and examples for all elementary grades.)

All of the above titles are available at major bookstores like Barnes & Noble or on the Internet.

C. Internet

1. Scholastic.Com – you can check out poems on their website as well as order grade-appropriate poetry books
2. www.abcteach.com

D. Field Trips

- Take your class to a poetry reading at a local bookstore, library, or coffee shop.
- Visit another school in the district to hear poetry written by other children.