



## **It's Not Just Black and White, a Literacy Celebration**

By Jacquelyn Fizet, 2019 CTI Fellow  
Renaissance West Steam Academy

This curriculum unit is recommended for kindergarten

**Keywords:** Emergent Literacy Skills, Literacy, Writing, and Math

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** For this unit students will learn that print carries a message, and should be an engaging “fiction or a nonfiction text. This unit will focus on a literacy aspect of cultural diversity, more specifically, cultural diversity in our classroom. We will be working with fiction and possibility nonfiction texts, comparing, and contrasting what is real and what is not may not be accurate when it comes to diversity. I will be bringing engaging literature components to science, writing, dramatic play, small and large group activities. The unit will contain fun and inviting activities that the children will flock to during their center time. By repeated readings of the books through interactive large group activities, and readings, the children will be able to retell a true-to-life version of the lives we live.

One result of this unit will be that the children will have a better understanding of diversity, what it means and how to respect each other for who we are. Let the fun begin.

*I plan to teach this unit during the spring 2020 to 23 students in all learning domains in Kindergarten.*

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# It's Not Just Black and White, a Literacy Celebration

*By Jacquelyn Fizet*

## Introduction

Today, children are born into a world full of print. The degree to which literacy is evident in home varies, but almost all children see adults being literate every day, reading books, making lists, writing notes, reading newspapers and magazines, reading directions or recipes, filling out forms and text messaging, reading labels on food packaging and doing countless other tasks that require literacy. In a way, children start becoming literate almost from the day they were born, as they notice elements of the world, which are bound to include literacy. Most children do not understand the difference between fiction and nonfiction in the books they may be looking at or the ones being read to them. The way I will present fiction/non-fiction is by telling them fiction is make believe and non-fiction is real. This can be done through pictures verses real time photographs, explaining the difference.

The ability to read and process information is a necessary part of our educational experience. The teaching of reading and writing to the young child is key for the formation of literacy skills as preschool children get ready for kindergarten and beyond. Literacy is now, more than ever, essential for the basic survival on a day-to-day basis. It has been proven that children who struggle to read will struggle in all subject areas. This can cause children to have a negative attitude towards reading and school in general.

What is the importance of a “read aloud?” Since most kindergartners read at a beginning level, reading aloud exposes the children to a variety of fiction and nonfiction books. To emphasize the difference, choose a fiction and nonfiction book about the same subject. For example, read *These Shoes* and a fiction book about shoes. Discuss the difference in the type of information in the book. You might say the shoes in *These Shoes* do not really fit the boy but he is permitted to buy them anyway. If you went to the store with your family, would you want to buy shoes that are too small? Before you read any book to the class, ask the children to predict if it is fiction or nonfiction to reinforce the idea.

This unit will help students explore the specific features of books to help kindergartners learn the differences between fiction and nonfiction books. Nonfiction books in particular have different features not often found in fiction books, including picture captions, tables of contents, glossaries, indexes and headings. Both types typically include pictures, but a nonfiction book is more likely to use real photographs instead of illustration, which is critical for a kindergartener since most of them are not yet reading. I will be pointing out those features as the children look through books on their own, and ask them to look for the print features.

Why chart differences? Charts and diagrams provide a visual reminder for the kindergarten students to help distinguish between fiction and nonfiction. One simple option is a Venn diagram that shows the similar and different text features, since this is the simplest I will be using it in this diversity unit to get them used to charting similarities and differences. I will have my

students brainstorm common details of all people regardless of color, language or backgrounds. This will be a great activity to use in think, pair, and share after I have introduced what diversity means in our world/classroom to the children. Together we will list details about nonfiction books in one of the single circle areas, such as labels, diagrams, and facts. We will then list fiction-specific details in the other single circle area, such as make-believe, conflict, characters, and illustrations instead of photos. I believe it is important to show children aspects of diversity not only in picture books but in real life stories with actual photographs of children from all around our school, city and even the world.

Sorting titles of books is a wonderful way to show children how a fiction and nonfiction book may look different. I will point out that most nonfiction pictures are captured, not through illustrations but by actual photos. A simple sorting activity will give my kindergarten students a chance to practice identifying fiction and nonfiction work. I will give my students a stack of books with both fiction and nonfiction selections. My students will look through the books to determine which they are, and put the books in separate piles. Another option is to use old book orders for the sorting game. Students will divide a piece of paper in half: one side for fiction and one side for nonfiction. They will cut out the covers of the books from the book order and glue them onto the paper. This activity is more challenging since the kids cannot open the books to see the interior features. The lesson will have them focus on the cover and title for clues.

## **Rationale**

To promote early literacy, teachers and parents need to provide multiple opportunities. It is important to permit and encourage children to build on their existing knowledge or oral and written language, as well as to provide a supportive instructional environment where children can build a positive attitude toward themselves and literacy development. We, as teachers, need to remember to prepare ourselves as teachers of the very young child to deal with and respect the differences in languages and cultural backgrounds. Teachers can prepare themselves by expressing interest in the ethnic background of your students, redirect your role in the classroom from instructor to facilitator, maintain a strict level of sensitivity to language concerns and maintain a high performance for student performance. In my current classroom, I have at least four different cultures represented and that is not taking into consideration religious beliefs. Teachers also need to ensure that children have access to quality and age appropriate books, both fiction and nonfiction. There are many books made for young children but this does not mean all books for early readers are appropriate. We need to be sure to look through, read and analyze the contents to be sure the book is age appropriate. Lastly, we need to design a classroom setting for young children that is rich with literacy materials for reading as well as writing, and exploring with science, social science and even math. Young children will begin to write and tell you what it says even at the very young age with scribbles. As I begin to teach the unit, I am sure I will see all the developing stages of writing from exploration to developing.

I believe that children learn best through play at a very young age. Since I am teaching in an at-risk program, I decided to research how play intervention affects the learning of at risk kindergarteners. In searching for research studies to support my theory that children learn best through play, I found the research conducted by Han, Moore, Vukelich, and Bell, along with the research from the “Foundation for Child Development” to be the most informative and best

support my ideas of learning through play. I am creating this unit because I feel play is the basis for so much of the learning that kindergartners do. There are three essential contexts for play: cognitive-exploring, asking questions, and thinking; emotional-expressing feelings within the social context, and creative putting together new learning. Through play, children can be responsible for their own learning and they can use language not just to acquire knowledge, but also to demonstrate their knowledge.

### **School and Student Demographics**

Renaissance West Steam Academy is a Pre-Kindergarten through 7th grade school serving 700 students. RWSA, is part of the Renaissance initiative to help impoverished families to better housing, food, jobs, medical, and education.

At RWSA, students engage in Literacy, Math, Social Studies, and Science instruction daily. Literacy at RWSA follows the balanced literacy model. Teachers engage their students in multiple components of the balanced literacy model. This year, staff members will continue to engage in professional development in literacy.

This year (2019-2020), teachers continue to be fully engaged in the Data Driven Instruction (DDI) process. This includes “at a glance” data, which is asking questions and writing students responses. Our kindergarten teachers also develop checklists to use to track skills that will be used depending on the activity being assessed. Kindergarten teacher’s use Mastery Connect to track data, and use this data to drive instruction and differentiate lesson plans to meet the needs of all children.

### **Unit Goals**

A major goal of our society’s educational system is for children to become literate. Although agreements exist regarding the importance of literacy, controversy surrounds the timing of literacy instruction and methods used to teach literacy skills. While most reading curricula involve formal instruction, I feel that informal instruction is more developmentally appropriate for five-year-olds. The early childhood literacy curriculum for a five-year-old should use a collaborative learning process that actively involves children to demonstrate their understanding of how words and images communicate meaning. Sadly with the new literacy curriculum adopted by our district there is a lack of diversity in the books being used for instruction. I plan through this unit plan to add a better selection of books on diversity and inclusion.

The following goals will serve as the basis of my developmentally appropriate diversity unit. I will encourage an awareness of how reading and writing are useful, attempt to develop listening comprehension skills, develop my student’s concept knowledge, develop their oral language skills, and explore the process of communicating through written language as well as drawing.

## In the Areas of Reading and Writing

Through reading and writing students will recognize when there is print in the environment, knowing that print is read in stories. This will allow them to be aware of the sequence of events in stories that they can connect to life experiences. Connections between stories and life experiences leads to the students' ability to demonstrate understanding of the literal meaning of stories through questions and comments. Again, this leads to the ultimate goal of differentiating fiction and nonfiction text.

## In the Areas of Speech and Language

Students will be expected to name similarities and differences in people and classmates., often indulge in make believe, use extensive language while carrying out activities; readily follow simple commands even when the object is out of sight, carry on long conversations, and converse moderately with their classmates.

These are some hefty goals but I believe all are attainable. I am going to need to be well equipped with a variety of different research interventions to have the most beneficial learning experiences for all my students. Being innovated and flexible to new ideas can bring new attitudes and a new interest to even the most reluctant students.

## **Content Research**

As our nation grows increasingly diverse, there has never been a better opportunity for us to learn to live respectfully together and benefit from one another's wisdom and experiences. Sadly sometimes fear, uncertainty, or discomfort prevents people from talking to each other. We all want children to grow up in a world free from bias and discrimination, to reach for their dreams and feel that whatever they want to accomplish in life is possible. We want them to feel loved and included and never to experience the pain of rejection or exclusion. The reality is that we do live in a world in which racism and other forms of bias continue to affect us. Discrimination hurts and leaves scars that can last a lifetime, especially with a young child, affecting their goals, ambitions, life choices, and feelings of self-worth. We can raise children to celebrate and value diversity and to be proud of themselves and their family traditions. We can teach children to respect and value people regardless of the color of their skin, their physical abilities, their social status or the language they speak.

As teachers who partner with families to nurture young children, parents often regard us as a resource on a wide range of issues connected to diversity. As teachers we are in a unique position to engage in conversations that ask us to consider important questions. The biggest question that I considered was, "what does it mean to be a young child growing up in a diverse world?"

The first thing that is important to do is to develop cultural sensitivity. There are many ways to raise healthy children who are able to thrive in the world. Professional knowledge and experience are important, but we must never forget how much we can learn from the families we work with. It is very important to become skilled at talking with parents about differences, in cultures, practices, and family morals. When parents' practices differ from our professional beliefs, some of us may try to change behaviors without understanding that these parents' motives may be different from, but no less valid, than our own. To prevent this, we must become skilled at talking with parents about differences. We all know situations will arise when we strongly disagree with a family's practice even after we understand its roots. When this happens, it is important to keep in mind that different ways of doing things are not necessarily bad or harmful. Children are resilient, as all of us who work with them know. Children adapt, thrive, and are able to appreciate that care, comfort, and love come in different forms, in different contexts, and from different people.

If what children do at home is never mentioned, or is considered strange by others children may refuse to speak their home language, wear certain clothes or even eat certain foods. Children will begin to compare their appearance of life with others; they may even start to express their concern about being different. As educators, we know that children will need to be reassured that differences are fine.

When teaching diversity in the classroom I think teaching about children with physical/mental diversity is extremely important. With the educational system heading towards full inclusion, it is important for children to learn that children with special needs are different, and that's not a bad thing. Sometimes children can become curious and even uncomfortable around children that may look or sound different. As educators, it is important to talk about these things in a respectful way to enhance students learning. To demonstrate that students with disabilities are the same as other children, the teacher may talk to students about what they and the child with special needs have in common. They may both have two eyes, hair, hands etc., but what about the things we can't necessarily see? Sometimes it is hard to come up with the right words to tell your students about special needs, avoid using words like "sick" or something is "wrong". Some people are born with special needs, and other disabilities happen because of an accident or illness. It is important to let children know that a disability is not something you can catch. It is also important to teach children the right words when talking about our differences, disabilities and special needs. To help our students have a successful future, they need to be able to work with others. They need to not be afraid, to step outside their comfort zone and to understand, learn, respect and appreciate others. Tolerance is not about accepting bad behavior, but accepting people for who they are and treating those how you wish to be treated. Remind your students of this consistently.

## Play Based Research in Kindergarten

Research dating back to 2003 explains and proves the reason “play based teaching” is an essential component of early literacy achievement (Roskos).

Kindergarten plays a very important role in supporting language growth and development. Talking is the way kindergartners process all the new information they are gathering as they use their senses (look, hear, feel, touch and taste). Language is the most important tool for interrupting and explaining the information they pick up as they explore and learn. Quality talking and listening support memory and enhance listening. The kinds of talk children engage in as they play foster risk taking, support and demonstrate comprehension and strengthen community. Resnick and Snow (2008) describe four kinds of talk, these forms being narrative, explaining and seeking information, oral performance, and giving and understanding directions. These are all essential elements in knowing how to read and write.

Per the National Association for the education of Young Children (NAEYC), of which I am a proud member, *any* instruction of young children ought to consider the child’s age and their developmental progress. NAEYC & NAECS/SDE (National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education). 2002. NAEYC recognizes that play is a central component of developmentally appropriate practice and a vehicle for developing language, cognition, and social competence. Therefore, all the research on play has the potential to provide guidance for early Sadly, there is strong evidence that time for play has been dramatically reduced in present day early childhood classrooms (Zigler and Bishop), which contradicts much of what research has told us about what is beneficial to children. Howes and Wishard report that pretend play among 5-year-olds has dropped dramatically in recent years. However, in early childhood classrooms, academic learning and play are not mutually exclusive. NAEYC’s recent statement cautions educators, “Rather than diminishing children’s learning by reducing the time devoted to academic activities, play promotes key abilities that enable to learn successfully,” (NAEYC 2010). I am personally such a strong believer in this idea of play-based learning. I have been teaching 31 years, I have taught both sides of the spectrum, and my students and I learn more and at a faster rate through play because it is so much more engaging.

Research shows that an overwhelming number of children in the United States are not academically ready to begin kindergarten. Education reform during the past two decades advocates that a crucial step in preparing all children to be “school ready” is to create programs to ensure readiness. Dogget and Wat reported on data presented by different states in the U.S. that began kindergarten state mandated programs and their effectiveness. The result of this research drives my passion to develop effect play based teaching methods to improve this deficit with young children. The classroom has the greatest capacity, second only to the home and family of a child, to provide quality educational experiences and interactions to support and strengthen cognitive development. Since I am a child’s first experience with formal education, I need to have methods in place that will be engaging and inviting to my 5-year-olds. If not, I will miss the opportunity to make a difference in their school lives. All the research I have presented so far points to the importance of early intervention and the success of play based curriculum.

Play based learning is a term that embraces two approaches simultaneously. One is that children are given ample time to carry their own ideas into play, with assistance from teachers as needed. The other is that their knowledge of the world has been enriched through appropriate content offered in interesting and experiential ways by the teacher. This can include reading books, storytelling, puppetry, music and the arts, as well as encouraging hands on activities and exploration of nature. The children's own play and content offered by myself one another. Play is the basis for so much of the learning that kindergarteners do. There are three essential contexts for play: cognitive-exploring and asking questions and thinking, emotional-expressing feelings within the social context, and creative- putting together new learning. Through play, children will be motivated to learn.

Lev S. Vygotsky presented insights as early as 1978 on play that suggested a new role for adults in child's play. Vygotsky believed that children develop an understanding of the world through play and that adults could encourage this development by appropriate intervention. He viewed play as a means for socially assisted learning and scaffolding. In scaffolding, the adult assists the child to perform at a higher level than would be possible without adult support. When the child can perform alone, the adult gradually withdraws and lets the child act independently. This kind of adult intervention helps children expand their learning and knowledge during play. Makes sense, doesn't it?.

Play has been linked to the inquiry-based approach of a scientist because both engage in "what if" thinking. The child is continually trying out new possibilities and learns as much from failure and mistakes as from positive outcomes. The process is of great importance to the child rather than the outcome. Creativity, curiosity, play, and problem-solving are all intertwined in early childhood. Social negotiation is also frequently part of the mix. This holds true for children from all socioeconomic backgrounds. The way we present and teach these skills to young child can be life changing. We need to make it exciting, engaging and most of all fun for a five-year-old.

## **Instructional Implementation**

### Teaching Strategies

How do I use my play-based instruction with a nonfiction unit on diversity? Start the process by deciding how much information about diversity you feel a five-year-old child will be able to absorb.

### Class Norms

First set age appropriate class norms, as these will be an important part of promoting inclusion and openness. Be explicit about the ways your class will be respectful to each other and share ideas, opinions and values. Teach even young children how to disagree respectfully. I like to use Restorative Practices to promote self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and decision-making. I like to do this during morning circle to set the mood for the day. I use a talking piece, explaining to children that everyone will have a chance to speak but must wait until they are holding the talking piece.



## Purposeful Planning

Conversations about diversity and equity can be uncomfortable for students and teachers. An important part of promoting equity and diversity in your classroom is purposeful planning. Planning a lesson is just as important as the execution of the lesson; especially if your class will discuss sensitive topics or ideas. Think about the text that you can use to explore topics about multiculturalism. Consider texts that explore alternate opinions or view history from a new perspective that may not be present in mainstream text. When planning, consider how you will differentiate your lessons for various learners and learning styles. This includes having various picture books and differentiating the way students show mastery. Consider using collaborative learning groups that allow students to work in groups within their class.

## Unit Lessons

The best way you can incorporate diversity into your classroom is by making an effort to include books into your curriculum that features diverse characters as much as possible. Using a unit like “Christmas Around the World” is not sufficiently diverse, as this method signals one culture, religion or minority group as being different. When diversity is taught as a separate unit, it is usually confined to one or two weeks and will have little if any impact on our students understanding and acceptance others in the end. In this unit plan, I am not going to use a “multicultural unit” but I will be incorporating lessons, through diverse literature, into my classroom routine. Be sure to use those “teachable moments” to discuss similarities and differences as they arise during large group time.

### Books that I will be using in my Unit Plan

#### *The Crayon Box that Talked* by Shane Derolf

Shane Derolf wrote a poem, a charming little piece that celebrates that celebrates the creation of harmony through diversity. The poem goes like this, “While walking through a toy store, the day before today. I overheard a crayon box with many things to say..

**Lesson-**This is one of my favorite books and one I think is a wonderful piece of children’s literature to begin lessons on diversity. Read the book or even watch the video of *The Crayon Box that Talked*. Discuss with your students how all the crayons are important, and how they all worked together. After reading I ask, does anyone know what a narrator is? If need I clarify that a narrator is someone what tells a story and usually uses pictures as they do. Questions that I might ask are “How does the narrator show that all of the crayons are important?” (Draws a picture) “How does that help them realize that they all need to work together? (Each color represents something in the picture and that makes the picture complete) “What if there was no green crayon?” (The grass would not look like grass) This kind of discussion helps deepen the students understanding which helps me understand their level of comprehension.

- After reading, give each child a crayon with the poem written on the back. I then have the children come and glue their crayon into the box that we have pre drawn onto a piece of chart paper. When all the students have had a chance to glue their crayons in the crayon box ask questions like, how are the crayons alike? How are they different? And why did we put all the crayons in the same box? Hopefully they will come up with some great answers, don't be afraid to help guide the answers for better understanding of the point of the book.
- For a writing activity, I have the poem on the top of the paper for them to attempt to put in their own handwriting I sometimes use highlighter to for the words for those students who struggle to reproduce letters to trace. I then have them turn their papers over and draw a picture of their choice encouraging them to us as many colors in their crayon box as possible.
- Bring the children back to the carpet to share out their creations. As they finish, put their page into a page protector to protect the page in the class book. Put the pages into a binder with a picture of the class holding the book, which will now become a part of the classroom library.
- Give your students a hand help pencil sharpener and crayons to shave with the sharpener. Have them shave the crayons on to a piece of wax paper, when they are satisfied with the amount of shavings cover them with a second piece of waxed paper and stand back as you apply a hot iron and melt the shavings into a beautiful blend of colors. Next, have them choose a colored frame (precut from construction paper) to frame their creation. Hang the pictures in a window in your classroom or better yet ask the principal if you may hang them in windows all over the school.

*Morris Micklewhite and The Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldachinno.

Morris is just who he is. Who he happens to be is a boy who loves to dress up in an orange dress. It takes some time for all the kids to be accepting, but soon their similarities and mutual interests overcame the differences. Everyone plays better together, and Morris does not have to change who he is.

**Lesson-** This book is new to my classroom library. I purchased this book because during free play I noticed the negative reaction some of my students displayed against their classmates. I found the girls teasing the boys for dressing up in what they said were girls colors or playing with the dolls. I heard the boys telling the girls they could not be doctors or police officers and knew this would be a wonderful teaching moment. We talked about how color should not decide who could wear the article of clothing; I provided a pink shirt that was my husband's and a pair of blue jean overalls that were mine. After a few laughs and giggles, the students decided that both boys and girls could wear any color of clothing. I used google to show my students that either girls or boys could perform any job. I am planning on inviting a female police officer to talk with my class, along with a male nurse.

- Provide the students with a selection of dress up clothes and props; I was able to get a great selection at Goodwill cheap. In small groups, one person should identify as the

mannequin who will be dressed up. The other children in the group will select the items and props that create a character. The group will then present their character to the rest of the group and ask questions such as, who is their character? What do they do? How do they act? How would you act if people dressed like this all the time?

- Share the front cover of *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*” Ask the children what they notice about the front cover? What do you think the story might be about? Then share this fun story about Morris. After reading ask your students, how do the other children treat Morris when he wears a dress? How does Morris feel when he is wearing the dress? For deeper thinking ask the children why has the tangerine color been used?
- During large group time as a class, look at all the times where Morris is happy. Make a chart and list how he is feeling, what things can be seen and what sounds are suggested such as swish, swish. Have the children do a turn and talk and share what makes them happy, who they are with and how do they feel. Using paint, tissue paper, crayon, and pencil, have the children create a 3D background on poster board with different tones of color, which is their favorite. Have the children draw pictures, use photographs and write words on top to create a journal page about what makes them happy! When they are done share and celebrate the different things that make people feel happy.

### *The Big Umbrella* by Amy June Bates

It is a simple book to teach about inclusion. It is a rainy day, and a child goes out with their umbrella. Soon the umbrella that loves to help is taking in everyone from the rain, no matter who they are or what they look like.

**Lesson-**As teachers, we want all children to feel welcome in our classroom. This is a great book to teach your students about inclusion. Inclusive education (when practiced well) is very important because, all children are able to be part of their community and develop a sense of belonging and become better prepared for life in the community as children and adults. It provides better opportunities for learning. Lead a discussion after reading *The Big Umbrella* about inclusion. This way, students fully understand the book, purpose and reflect understanding in their writing/drawing.

- Print the title and question headers on colored paper and glue to an anchor before students reflect and partner talk about the book. Students will be able to use the chart to support their writing/drawing. Questions to use in a three-column anchor chart could be, “what is inclusion?” “What does it look like,” and “how can you include all?” As the children brainstorm to answer these questions, write their answers in the correct column.
- After talking and reviewing their answers on the anchor chart, send them to their tables with the following writing/drawing prompts. Ask, “Who did the umbrella shelter in the

story “and “How can you welcome all under the umbrella? Encourage them to draw or write their answers on the paper. I teach kindergarten so I will probably have drawings. I would put the heading, “All are welcome under our umbrella!”

- For the purpose of call and retrieve, I will give them a paper with an umbrella on it and ask them to remember some of the characters the umbrella sheltered in the story. I would then have them draw three different characters from the story under the umbrella.
- For a fun end to this story, give the children Legos or small building blocks and Lego people. As the children what the purpose of the umbrella was. Allow them to work together to build a Lego umbrella and see how many Lego people the umbrella could shelter.

### *These Shoes* by Meribeth Bolets

All Jeremy wants is a pair of those shoes, the ones everyone at school seems to be wearing. Though Jeremy’s grandma says they do not have room for "want," just "need," when his old shoes fall apart at school, he is more determined than ever to have those shoes, even a thrift-shop pair that are much too small. Sore feet are not much fun and Jeremy soon sees that the things he has — warm boots, a loving grandma, and the chance to help a friend — are worth more than the things he wants.

**Lesson-** Before the lesson, find an attention-getting prop that was once in fashion and was very trendy but is now hopelessly outdated (40 inch bellbottom pants for example). Tell the children about the fad item you brought in and explain how much you wanted that item. Before reading the book, make an anchor chart with two columns, on one-side write *needs* and on the second column write *wants*. Discuss with the class the difference between needs and wants, it is interesting to check for understanding, if do this with pictures and have the children sort them on the chart. Look at the cover of the book, read the title and ask what they think the story is about. Talk about fads, what is a fad? Compare currant fads and past fads, again this is fun to do with pictures with kindergarten children. Ask if the was ever something you ever really wanted. How do you feel when you weren’t able to get what you want? Time to read the story; remind children to pay attention to the characters facial expressions for clues to how they are feeling. Ask the children how they would feel if they were Jeremy and you realized that your grandma thinks that those shoes were too expensive. Read the next part of the story when we encounter Antonio and his worn out shoes. Jeremy makes a tough decision about his own too small shoes. Read the page where Jeremy feels both happy for Antonio and mad about the Mr. Alfry shoes. Ask the children if it’s possible to feel both happy and sad at the same time. Read to the end of the story and discuss the resolution.

- For a fun writing activity, have the students list/draw what they consider are their most important needs on cutouts of high-top tennis shoes.

- Have students interview each other about their wants. Model what an interview looks like with a student in the class, such as facing the person you are interviewing. Model the types of questions you would like them to ask each other, provide sentence starters if needed. Encourage students to ask who, what, and why questions when interviewing classmates.
- Have students interview their parents about a fad they loved and report to the class, encourage them to bring in the item if possible. Provide them with a list of questions to ask their family member along with instructions for the family member to help their child conduct their interview.
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*Strictly No Elephants* by Lisa Mantchev

I found this book to be very good and very important to teach. This book is about a little boy and his elephant who are banned from the local pet club because well, elephants are not allowed. They do not share a reason why elephants are not allowed, just that they are not. Now it's time for a little boy and his tiny pet elephant to show what it means to be a real friend.

**Lesson-** Turn your dramatic play area or a place in your classroom into a pet club. Encourage your students to bring in a stuffed animal they love or one that they wish could be their real pet.

- At the beginning of the story, ask students if they know what the word “strictly” means. This could be the first word on your story words for this book.
- While reading the story ask the following questions to help, students interpret the action and content, you can extend their answers by asking why or why not?  
What do you think “never quite fit in means?”  
What pets do you see in the window?  
How do you take a thoughtful walk?  
Do you think the elephant is heavy?  
Why do you think the elephant is okay with the sidewalks cracks now?  
There are some unusual pets on this page. Can you name some of them?  
The sign they are painting say “All Welcome”. What does that mean?  
Why would they not let the boy and his elephant into the pet club?
- Bring the book to life for your students by asking without words, to show you why they think the pet club did not want a skunk. Also show me, by the look on your face, how the boy and his elephant felt.
- Time for Think, Pair, Share. Ask think of a pet you would like, give your partner three clues, what color it is, where it lives what it eats etc. and see if they can guess the pet.
- Have the children share if they could have a pet, what it would be, ask them to draw the animal and label what it is.
- Now bring the children and their stuffed animals together to make their own pet club. Give them the opportunity to discuss what they want the name of the club to be, have them make signs and even invitations for all pets and their owners to become a member. Encourage them to make lists of members and their pets, what they want in the club, examples would be, pet food, blankets, feeding bowls, whatever they feel is important. Then give them the time to play, to be a part of their new club, and welcome everyone no matter what.

## Day V: End of Unit Celebration *Maybe Something Beautiful* by Rafael Lopez

What can a good splash of color do in a community of gray? As Mira and her neighbors discover, more than you might ever imagine! Based on the true story of the Urban Art Trail in San Diego, California, *Maybe Something Beautiful* reveals how art can inspire transformation, and even the smallest artists can accomplish something big.

This will be a big, exciting, messy super fun day for you, your students, their families and the community, but you will need to go full out to make it a success. There will be five art stations; the children will be using pain, string, balloons, hands and feet to create works of art. In advance, be sure to have paint smocks and disposable gloves for you, parents and children. After you read the book, ask your students, Why did Mira and her neighbors wanted to transform their community into something more beautiful?

### Lessons

- **Project 1.**-This must be done outside. You will need a large canvas board (check your local craft store sometimes if they know it is for a school the will give you deal). In advance prepare paint balloons; You Tube has a great tutorial for this. Stick push pins through the back of the canvas. Lean the canvas against a tree, or a fence, cover the children with paint smocks and have them wear gloves. Next, have them pick up a paint balloon and throw it at the canvas, when it hits the pin it will burst and splatter a beautiful color on the canvas. Repeat with the rest of the children, making sure many different colors are used. I suggest using two adults with the project.
- **Project 2.**-Hand print rainbow. You will need a long piece of bulletin board paper. Draw arches with pencil for the children to follow and they paint their hands to form the arches of the rainbow. Allow children to choose the color of their choice but remind them they will be using only one color to make their arch of the rainbow. Depending on how many children in you class you may find in necessary to make more than one rainbow. One adult should be all you need to accomplish this project.
- **Project 3.**-Chalk drawings. Each child will do this individually. They will need black or dark blue construction paper and all different colors of chalk, Dollar Tree has chalk. Give them the paper and chalk and let them go to it, creating any type of drawing they choose.
- **Project 4.**-String painting. In advance I went to a couple of fabric stores and asked them for their empty material bolts, which they throw away anyway, and gathered enough for each of my students to have one. Cut about three foot lengths of string, I suggest 4 to be used in 4 different cups of paint. If the fabric bolts are not white, already I cover them in white paper. Divide you class inti 4 equal groups, have a volunteer with each group. Dip the strings into the four different cups of paint and allow the one child at a time to drag each color of string all over their board until they are happy with the outcome. Repeat until all children have painted their boards.
- **Project 5.**-Balloon Prints. You will need small balloons, slightly underinflated and white construction and markers. A shallow container of different colored paints for each balloon to be used in painting. Have your students dip a balloon in paint and press lightly on the paper, repeat the process with the other balloons and colors of paint. Have the children draw a knot and string on each balloon, you made to model this in advance.

While you are waiting for all these beautiful pieces of work to dry, have a mini celebration with parents and class. I will be asking parents to supply different kind and colors of fruit to make a fruit salad to share as a snack. I will be passing out colorful streamers made for plastic party table cloths of different colors, cut into strips and tied to shower rings, all bought from the Dollar Tree. These will be used for dancing outside to happy upbeat music. Now that everything has had time to dry, take some of the artwork, not only to brighten the school but also the community. In our school, we have a community resident center that is allowing us to hang our beautiful artwork. Command strips are great for this so there is no damage to the walls. The children are also going to hang their colorful streamers on the daycare across the street with permission, for the little ones to enjoy. Finally plan for time for your school and community to tour all the places the class artwork is hanging. I would suggest an early evening walk, with students, parents, friends and neighbors, through the school and community that they have so lovingly made more beautiful. If done in the spring end the walk with perhaps a community picnic, or pizza party to bring everyone together to celebrate the students and their beautiful art work.

## **Conclusion**

By attending this class and listening to my instructor and classmates, I was so inspired to make my classroom and my classroom library more diverse, not only culturally but also to show inclusion and acceptance. As I looked at my current books, I realized I needed to do some research into picture books for my classroom that would help my students by more compassionate, accepting and be able to relate to the stories they were hearing. I found a great deal of books, that were so inviting, fun and just what I was looking for, to share with my students. I could not make lesson plans for all of them, or this plan would be forever long, so below I have listed a few other books that I just loved and will be using for a long time. Enjoy!

*Brontorina* by James Howe

This book is brilliant because it combines dinosaurs with how to make an environment that is not inclusive into one that is inclusive with a great story. Brontorina is a dinosaur who wants to dance, but she is too big for the dance studio. At first, they turn her away. Soon, it becomes clear that the studio needs to change. What child does not love dinosaurs?

*Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman

Grace loves stories, whether they are from books, movies, or the kind her grandmother tells. So when she gets a chance to play a part in Peter Pan, she knows exactly who she wants to be. Inspired by her family's support, and an excursion to a weekend ballet starring a lovely Trinidadian dancer, Grace shines during her audition, leaving no doubt in anyone's mind as to who will play Peter Pan.

*Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt De La Pena

Every Sunday after church, CJ and his grandma ride the bus across town. CJ wonders why they do not own a car like his friend Colby. Why doesn't he have an iPad like the other boys on the bus? Why do they always have to get off in the dirty part of town? Each question is met with an encouraging answer from his grandmother, who helps him see the beauty and fun in their routine and the world around them.

*The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig

This is a tough story about a little boy named Brian. Brian is a quiet student and his classmates do not notice him much. Justin, a new student, is introduced to the class and things seem to turn around for Brian. This is an excellent story to read at any time through the year. Regardless of when you choose to read it, this story is a great reminder for students to make everyone feel welcome.

Assessments

In my kindergarten classroom, I am required to do ongoing assessments, and snapshot assessments with the students. For this unit, you can make a simple assessment chart with the targeted skills across the top and children's names down the side. Your target goals should align with your teaching standards and unit goals. I have enclosed an example in the teacher's aide appendix.

The objectives are aligned with the Common Core Standards, and state early learning guidelines. These objectives are at the heart of the system; teachers use them to focus their observations as they gather information to make classroom decisions. An ongoing assessment is happening during regular, everyday activities. It is implemented on a continuous basis throughout the year, helps teachers meet children where they are, helps children meet challenging and achievable learning goals and give a broader more meaningful picture of development.



## Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

Our teaching standards come from North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development. All the standards I have chosen will directly relate to my unit content, as well as being measurable and will be ongoing. Besides language and literacy goals, I have chosen, math, science, arts, social/emotional and fine motor goals. I have incorporated language into all my activities to demonstrate the children can use language every day, every way.

APL-1 Children show curiosity and express interest in the world around them.

APL-5 Children are willing to try new and challenging experiences.

APL-8 Children maintain attentiveness and focus.

ESD-4 Children form relationships and interact positively with other children.

LDC-1 TO 5 Children understand conversations with others. Children participate in conversations with peers and adults in one on one, small group, and larger group interactions. Children ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood. Children speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly. Children describe familiar people, places, things and events. Children use most grammatical constructions of their home language well. Children respond to and use a growing vocabulary.

LDC-8 Children develop interest in books and motivation to read.

DC-13 Children use writing and other symbols to record information and communicate for a variety of purposes.

CD-2 Children recall information and use it for new situations and problems.

CD-5 Children demonstrate self-expression and creativity in a variety of forms and contexts, including play, visual arts,

CD-11 Children compare, sort, group, organize and measure objects and create patterns in their everyday environment.

CD-15 Children explore the natural world by observing, manipulating objects, asking questions, making predictions, and developing generalizations.

## Appendix II

### Student Resources

ABC Mouse is a beneficial website because it takes children through the natural progression in all learning domains. Once a level is accomplished by the student it automatically takes them to the next level.

Starfall is a wonderful website that promotes early learning in letters, letter sounds and early reading.

### Teacher Resources

Confessions of a Homeschooler is a great resource for additional activities to complement the unit.

iPads let the children do a reader's workshop of the story and then allow them to play it back, you'll be surprised not only of the enjoyment it brings but how they want to do it differently next time.

Making Learning Fun has many teaching ideas in all domains and links them to favorite and popular children's books. They also provide master copies of images that you may want to complete a unit.

Measured Mom is a great website developed by a stay at home mom who also has many teaching ideas in all learning domains and most of the things she uses you will have in your home. She also has many teaching game and project master free of charge.

School or neighborhood library instead of buying books and companion books for the units. When I get a book from the library, I make sure to let my students know that they too can go the library to borrow books. The library will provide teachers applications for library cards, give these to students to take home and have their parents fill out so they too can take their children to the library

## Notes

1. Cheung and Anderson, *Time to READ: Family Recourses and Educational Outcomes in Britain*, 5, 13.
2. Roskos, Christie, and Richgels, *The Essentials of Early Literacy Instruction*, 1-3.
3. Hirsch, E. D., Jr., *Reading comprehension requires knowledge—of words and the way*, 10-29.
4. NAEYC & NAECS/SDE (National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education), *Early learning standards: Creating the conditions for success*, 1, 83, 84
5. 5 Cultural Diversity | Early Childhood Development, Culture Matters: Supporting Children's Social and Cultural Development
6. Diversity in Early Childhood programs-<https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/encouraging-children-to-value-diversity>
7. 5 Ways to Promote Equity and Diversity in the Classroom-  
<https://www.kickboardforschools.com/blog/post/5-ways-to-promote-equity-diversity-in-the-classroom>
8. 8- 6 Ways To Teach Your Child About Diversity by Katy Epling

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Cheung, and Andersen. "Time to Read: Family Resources and Educational Outcomes in Britain." ResearchGate. June 2003. Accessed September 2016.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285874262\\_Time\\_to\\_Read\\_Family\\_Resources\\_and\\_Educational\\_Outcomes\\_in\\_Britain](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285874262_Time_to_Read_Family_Resources_and_Educational_Outcomes_in_Britain).

In this paper, the authors explore the impact of social structure at home on children's responses in the classroom.

Han, Myae, Noreen Moore, Carol Vukelich, and Martha Buell. "Does Play Make a Difference? How Play Intervention Affects the Vocabulary Learning of At-Risk Preschoolers." *American Journal of Play*, 2010, 83-105.

Hirsch, E. D., Jr. "Reading Comprehension Requires Knowledge— of Words and the World." *American Federation of Teachers*, Spring 2003, 10-29. Accessed September 2016.

[http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/AE\\_SPRNG.pdf](http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/AE_SPRNG.pdf).

This article focuses on how children are able to retain basics, but when the time comes they cannot retain more advanced literacy. In order to help these children overcome this hurdle, we must first understand where it is coming from and how to address it.

Howes, Carollee, and Allison Gallwey Wishard. "Revisiting Shared Meaning: Looking Through the Lens of Culture and Linking Shared Pretend Play Through Proto-Narrative Development to Emergent Literacy." Academia.edu. Accessed September 2016.

[http://www.academia.edu/436026/Revisiting\\_Shared\\_Meaning\\_Looking\\_Through\\_the\\_Lens\\_of\\_Culture\\_and\\_Linking\\_Shared\\_Pretend\\_Play\\_Through\\_Proto\\_Narrative\\_Development\\_to\\_Emergent\\_Literacy](http://www.academia.edu/436026/Revisiting_Shared_Meaning_Looking_Through_the_Lens_of_Culture_and_Linking_Shared_Pretend_Play_Through_Proto_Narrative_Development_to_Emergent_Literacy).

Social play and proto-narratives allow children to interact and cooperate with other children. Forms of narrative development directly impact literacy development. This should be visited both at home and in the classroom.

NAEYC recognizes that play is a central component of developmentally appropriate practice and a vehicle for developing language, cognition, and social confidence. Play is critical for developing the oral language skills that children need to read. Research discovers that children at play often use higher forms of language than normal.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children, and The National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. "Early Learning Standards: Creating the Conditions for Success." *Early Learning Standards Position*, November 19, 2002. Accessed September 2016.

[http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/executive\\_summary.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/executive_summary.pdf).

This articles addresses the educational, ethical, developmental, programmatic, assessment, and policy issues that arise in Head Start programs.

- Roberts, Joanne, Julia Jergens, and Margaret Burchinal. "The Role of Home Literacy Practices in Preschool Children's Language and Emergent Literacy Skills." *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*. April 01, 2005. Accessed September 2016. <http://jslhr.pubs.asha.org/article.aspx?articleid=1783817>. This study analyzed shared book reading frequency, maternal book reading strategies, child's enjoyment of reading, and maternal sensitivity, and their effects on a child's language and literacy skills.
- Roskos, Kathleen A., James F. Christie, and Donald J. Richgels. "The Essentials of Early Literacy Instruction." *YC Young Children* 58, no. 2 (March 01, 2003): 52-60. Accessed September 2016. <http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200303/Essentials.pdf>. Children of a young age need both reading and writing to help learn about one another, as well as oral language to help understand both.
- Vukelich, Carol. "Effects of Play Interventions on Young Children's Reading of Environmental Print." *Early Childhood Research* 9, no. 2 (June 1994). Accessed September 2016. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223538487\\_Effects\\_of\\_play\\_interventions\\_on\\_young\\_children%27s\\_reading\\_of\\_environmental\\_print](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223538487_Effects_of_play_interventions_on_young_children%27s_reading_of_environmental_print). This article explores how children exposed to print during play, both enriched and non-enriched, impacts the child's ability to read environmental print.
- Zigler, Edward F. "Play Under Siege." *21 Community News*, Winter 2004, 1-11. Accessed September 2016. [http://www.childcareexchange.com/resources/pdf/21community\\_win2004.pdf](http://www.childcareexchange.com/resources/pdf/21community_win2004.pdf). This article reflects upon how many schools are reducing or even getting rid of children's play, mainly with those of preschool and kindergarten age. This interactive play is crucial to the children to help their cognitive, language, problem solving, memory, and creativity skills.