



The Kindergarten Chronicles

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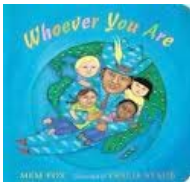
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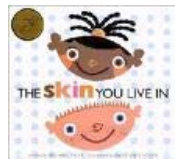
It's a brand new year with a brand new, bright-eyed group of little ones eagerly awaiting your instruction. For the first month of school, one of the most important things a kindergarten teacher can do is create a caring community of learners. There are many ways to create this climate in your classroom, and one of the most effective ways is to use children's literature as a starting point. There are many quality children's books that will send a message of inclusion and acceptance to your students. Here are a few:

Whoever You Are by Mem Fox (a beloved children's author) helps children understand that even though they make look or speak differently, there are many more similarities that they share — they all love, smile, laugh, and cry. Their joys, their pain, and blood are the same, "Whoever they are, wherever they are, all over the world."



In *My Name is Yoon*, by Helen Recorvitz, a child struggles with writing her name in English when she starts school in America. The rich illustrations add to her story and all children will relate to the story of Yoon's journey

toward seeing herself as part of her class in her new country.



The Skin You Live In by Michael Tyler shares a story of similarities and differences, using rhyming text, which also presents

a great opportunity for phonemic awareness instruction.

What I Like About Me, by Allia Zobel Nolan helps children look at themselves and identify the qualities that make them unique.

Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists not only celebrates those qualities that make us unique, but it shows our young learners how people, even adults, communicate through both pictures and words.

These wonderful texts all address the ELA benchmark, "Listen to, read, and discuss text from different cultures and time periods, with assistance" (4.K.7), which is a third trimester benchmark, but can be taught all year.

Many teachers have children do an "All About Me" project in which the children make a poster about themselves. This is a wonderful "get to know you" activity, but including their families can make it even better! After you have laid a foundation of interest in and appre-

ciation for each of your students and their cultural background, the next step might be a "family culture project." This is especially effective for your ELL students, who may feel displaced in their first weeks of school. Have your children complete an at-home activity with their entire family to share where they are from, what they like to do as a family, and the things that make their family special. You might want to include some guiding questions about number of brothers/sisters, family interests, extended family, etc. Children may include pictures, drawings, and other family artifacts. Their project can be in poster form or a scrapbook-style page. This is a wonderful way to teach our social studies CEFs: Recognize differences between home and school(H3.K.1); Identify the occupations of people at home (H3.K.3A); Demonstrate respect for each other in the classroom and school(H3.K.4); Share events that are important to the students and their families (H3.K.5).



Once all or most of the projects have been brought to school, allow children time to share their projects with the class. Then display the projects proudly in your hallway or classroom and watch your students learn to appreciate their new friends!



Your Name is the Game!



Teaching children to recognize their printed name is not only a kindergarten ELA benchmark (5.K.4), but using learning activities based on the names of your students also shows that you value and appreciate each of your students as individuals. Children LOVE to see their name displayed, especially during the first few days of school. Here are some ways to teach name writing and recognition:

Fish for Your Name: Cut out a fish for each child and write their name on it. Then attach a paper clip to each fish

and provide fishing rods made by attaching magnets to strong twine. Spread the fish out on the floor and each child has a turn fishing for their name. You can also ask students to fish for another classmate's name.

Stuck on Your Name: Provide each student with name stickers, made with file folder labels. Before students can even write their names, they can label their work with these stickers. Repeated exposure to their printed name will help them recognize it.

Build Your Name: For one of your

centers, use letter tiles or magnetic letters, and provide index cards printed with each student's name. Children will use the letters to build their name and the names of their classmates. This also promotes letter recognition and work with letter-sound correspondence (ELA, 1.K.3).

Name Trace: The best way for children to learn to write their name is simply practice, practice, practice. Provide name-tracing sheets for them to work on this skill. <http://www.handwritingworksheets.co>

m/print-k/choose.htm is a website that customizes handwriting worksheets using Zaner-Bloser print. This can be done as homework and/or in-class work. The more your students practice, the sooner they master this skill. You might want to provide some form of incentive or reward for those children who master the skill by a certain date. This will motivate them to practice and learn more quickly, as well as add fun to their practice!