



The Kindergarten Chronicles

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Integrating Content to Create Background Knowledge

Marlene and Robert McCracken have written about the importance of integrating curriculum on specific topics to create background knowledge for youngsters. In their book, *Reading is only the Tiger's Tail*, they state, "Any language begins with experiences that provoke meaning deep inside the brain. It is only through meaning that form may be understood. Skills must be learned through need in meaningful context." Spending three to four weeks ex-

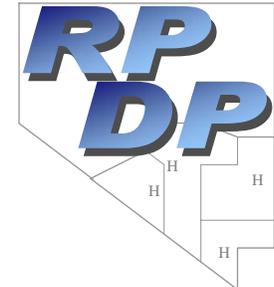
ploring a specific topic will allow young learners to develop vocabulary and knowledge in depth, instead of moving from topic to topic and only skimming the surface of learning.

By creating meaningful content units, your students will develop skills and strategies and internalize the concepts within the context of your unit. This month's chronicle will offer ideas for the content unit of winter.

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Bill Hanlon, Director

Shared Reading: *The Jacket I Wear in the Snow*

By Shirley Neitzel & Nancy Winslow Parker

* In addition to the story, create a pocket chart and use both for a week full of winter fun. *

- Day 1: Brainstorm items worn on a cold winter day. Read the book/pocket chart together with flair and fun, inviting students to join you. Revisit your brainstorm. Check off items that were in the book and add any new items.
- Day 2: Add the word "wear" to your winter word bank. As you read the story, students will give a thumbs up when they hear the word "wear". Then choose one student to come frame it. Tell them you will be excited to see who uses the word "wear" in their writing that day!
- Day 3: Hand out picture cards of the outfit parts from the story and have students place them on the pocket chart as they are read aloud.
- Day 4: Story Construction: Pass out word and picture cards. As the story is read, students will bring up word and picture cards to construct the story on the pocket chart. This process helps differentiate instruction for the various levels in your class.
- Day 5: Class Book: Each child will create their "dream jacket". Have students draw their jackets using crayons or markers, or bring in some items with pizzazz such as beads, stickers, puff paints, etc. After creating their jacket, they will fill in the structured sentence, "My dream jacket is _____."

A Chubby Little Snowman

Author Unknown
A chubby little snowman
Had a carrot nose
Along came a rabbit
And what do you suppose?
That hungry little bunny,
Looking for his lunch,
ATE the snowman's carrot nose...
Nibble, nibble, CRUNCH!

Literature Connections

Snow Day by Barbara M. Joose and *Snowballs* by Lois Ehlert

Using paper from your recycling box, have students write one word wall word on a piece of paper then crumple it up to make a word wall "snowball". Line students up in two "forts" facing each and start **lobbing** snowballs at the other side! After 30 seconds, open up the snowball in hand and read the word. Do this about 10 times before cleaning up and heading back to write about the experience!

Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats

In this story, Peter puts a small snowball in his pocket. To his surprise, after time, the snowball is no longer in his pocket. Ask the students what they think happened.

Experiment: Show the importance of wearing warm clothes during cold weather. Fill two jars with hot water. One is "dressed" in a sweater or jacket and hat. The other "wears" a T-shirt. Place jars outside for an hour or two. Bring them inside, open them up, and test the water temperature. Have students draw or write about the experience.

Snow by Uri Shulevitz

This book is about the joy that even one little snowflake can bring. Experiment: Lightly mist black paper with water, then place it in the freezer. With magnifying glasses, tiny ice crystals can be seen. After observing the tiny ice crystals, students can draw what they see and complete the structured sentence " My snow crystal _____." These can be bound together and shared as a class book.

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen Caldecott Book

This book is about a young child's rite of passage hunt through the winter night to spot an owl.

Activity: Brainstorm with students about a thing they had to wait a long time to be old enough to do. Have students choose one thing and write or draw it. Encourage students to use feeling words when writing about the experience. For example, "I was so excited when I finally got my ears pierced!"

Winter Idea Websites

www.thekcrew.net/winter.html
www.kinderthemes.com/January.html
www.littlegiraffes.com/winter.html

"Teaching is an artful, social activity in which the teacher knows what to teach, how to teach it efficiently, how to direct practices so that every child participates, & how to get out of the way so that children can practice & learn."

-Marlene and Robert McCracken