



The Kindergarten Chronicles

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“Warming Up” With Literature

The rush of the holiday season has ended. Many of our days have been cold and windy. The second Interim tests are still a little ways off. Perhaps you are looking for something to spark your students' interests (and yours too). A thematic unit is a perfect way to accomplish both while integrating the Power Standards and Benchmarks into your balanced literacy program.

A polar animal unit is appropriate for this time of year. Any unit involving animals is of great interest to kindergarteners as well as a connection to science. We study penguins and polar bears. The unit allows one week for each animal. Our shared reading, read alouds, and content reading use fictional and expository texts for each animal. Some of the shared reading texts I use may not directly relate to penguins or polar bears, but I make some connections while teaching beginning reading skills.

The shared reading for the first week is *I Want My Mom!* This book is published by Rigby. It is ideal for teaching rhyming, exclamation marks, and voice. The author uses many synonyms for *said*, such as *cried*, *sobbed*, *screamed*, etc. My students enjoy reading the story with their different “voices”. The students make text-to-text connections between this book and *Penguins and Their Chicks* by Margaret Hall. They relate the character of Jake in *I*

Want My Mom! with the penguin chicks waiting for their mothers to return. Another big book I use is *Warthogs in the Kitchen*. This story can be found in both the McGraw Hill series and the Harcourt Brace Trophies series. This year we will use the format of *Warthogs in the Kitchen* to create our own big book using penguins or polar bears as the main characters.

Penguin Books I Use in My Kindergarten Classroom:

Penguins by Gail Gibbons

The Emperor Lays an Egg by Brenda Guiberson

Penguins and Their Chicks by Margaret Hall

Growing Up Wild by Sandra Markle

Penguins by Claire Robinson

Penguin Chick by Betty Tatham

Penguins by John Bonnett Wexo

The Emperor's Egg by Martin Jenkins

These Birds Can't Fly by Allan Fowler

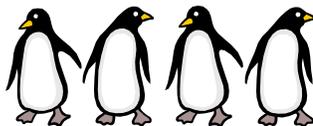
Tacky the Penguin by Helen Lester

Tackylocks and the Three Bears by Helen Lester

Cinderella Penguin by Janet Perlman

Penguin Pete by Marcus Pfister

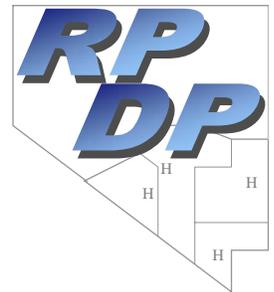
Penguin Pete and Little Tim by Marcus Pfister



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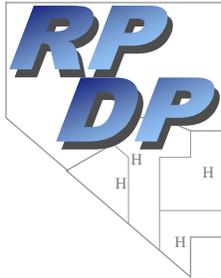
Bill Hanlon, Director

Food for Thought

When a penguin chick hatches, it immediately starts calling so that its parents will learn to recognize its voice.

Penguins spend as much as 75% of their time underwater searching for food in the ocean.

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Professional Development Opportunities

- ! Literacy Centers for K-1 Classrooms is being held at various locations in March and April. Visit www.RPDP.net to view class flyers with dates, times, and locations. You can even access Pathlore through our website!
- ! Need ideas and lessons to support the third trimester literacy benchmarks? Be sure to register for RPDP's Third Trimester Benchmark Classes. Classes will be held March 9-11 at Katz ES. Schedules and classes can be found on our website or by visiting Pathlore and using the keywords literacy/benchmark.

The Value of Integration

The real value of using thematic units is in the integration of skills. I use many fictional texts for the read alouds each day. Expository texts compose our content reading. These two genres can be connected through the twin text strategy. Using this strategy, students compare a fiction text with an expository piece. The strategy spans three to four lessons. I began by having my students brainstorm a KWL chart for penguins. The first day, they were eager to tell all they knew about penguins. Their questions covered a wide spectrum from penguin feelings to the design of a penguin's body. This discussion ignited their curiosity and set the purpose for further reading. During this lesson, I read *Tacky the Penguin* by Helen Lester. Of

course, they thought Tacky was silly and brave. After they finished laughing, we discussed the "big idea" of the story. Most of the students were able to analyze Tacky's character traits and to synthesize the information. During the next two lessons, I read *Penguins* by Gail Gibbons and *These Birds Don't Fly* by Allan Fowler. The discussion before, during, and after the reading allowed them to process this new information. The final lesson incorporated all of their knowledge. We completed the KWL chart by answering questions and summarizing our learning. To culminate all of this information, I asked the students to decide on a way to

demonstrate their knowledge of penguins. They were able to choose the activity. Each activity had been modeled and taught in other lessons. Their choices included creating a bubble map or a double bubble map (comparing Tacky and a real penguin), or writing and illustrating two facts about penguins. Their final projects amazed me. They demonstrated higher level comprehension skills, writing mechanics (grammar and punctuation), knowledge of fiction and nonfiction, phonological awareness (phonetic writing), and life science observations.



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