



The Kindergarten Chronicles

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Ponds Not Puddles

With the Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS) we have to teach deeper not broader... ponds not puddles. We need to think about building our thematic units in a scaffolded, systematic way which will help us in assisting our students to build knowledge about the world. Page 33 of the Common Core State Standards, on which the NVACS is based, states, "Building knowledge systematically in English language arts is like giving children various pieces of a puzzle in each grade that, over time, will form one big picture." Notice that the focus is on reading deeply about a topic. This is not the same as our superficial "thematic" units of the past, such as teddy bears, which did not provide for the building of knowledge in a meaningful, cohesive fashion. Rather, the purpose is on gathering texts that will enrich and develop a deeper understanding of a topic. This month, I will share some texts I used in my kindergarten classroom as we studied the topic of weather.



Standards

(K)1.1 Record observations and explanations using pictures, words or numbers.
(K) 1.3 Observe patterns in nature (leaves, feathers, night, day, weather conditions).
(K) 1.5 Share information, observations and ideas with others.
(K) 3.2 Observe, describe and record seasonal changes.

H3.K.4 RL.K.4 RI.K.4 W.K.2 W.K.5
 W.K.8 SL.K.1 SL.K.5

Vocabulary

My students have continued to use the vocabulary books we created at the beginning of the school year. This **vocabulary book** is used with each theme. In June, the students have a great resource to take home and read over the summer. These books become a tool to promote family learning.

Reading

The Read Aloud Project (RAP) is an excellent resource to consider when reading and analyzing complex text with your students. These K-2 lessons are aligned with the NVACS and available in Curriculum Engine. RAP pairs informational texts with literature on the same topic. The paired texts are rigorous and engaging. Ask your Performance Zone Instructional Coach about these books because most of the RAP books should be at your school site. My kindergarten team chooses two RAP lessons per month that relate to our unit of study. This month, we are reading *Feel the Wind* by Arthur Dorros (**RAP Lesson**) and *Thunder-Boomer!* by Shutta Crum (**RAP Lesson**) to enhance our study of weather.



Feel the Wind gives the students an abundance of information on the wind; where it comes from, why we cannot see it, etc. While *Thunder-Boomer!* is about a storm that brings pounding rain and hail—and an unexpected visitor: a soggy wet stray kitten. These texts lend themselves to text-dependent questions, culminating reading or writing experiences, and purposeful student discourse around the text.

Cloulette

Kindergarteners sure know what it feels like to be the "small" person around school and so does *Cloulette*, the cloud. This book gets at the heart of what it means to make a difference, no matter your size. The students relate to *Cloulette* as they follow her on her pursuit for greatness. After reading the story, the students shared what they can do to make a difference in our school. As a class, we created a [Cloulette map](#) to hang outside our door. This activity helps students realize their role in our school community. We may be the small ones in school, but we're here to make a big difference! (H3.K.4)



Science

What better way to delve deeper into a unit of study after reading books on the topic than to hear from a real live scientist? I am lucky enough to have a meteorologist virtually visit my classroom each year. This visitor is my twin sister, Miss Jo, who is an environmental scientist and a meteorologist. She shares in-depth details about a specific type of weather and creates a video for our class. This year, Miss Jo made a [video](#) for us about clouds. She teaches us about four specific types of clouds. After the cloud video, she instructs the students to line up and see if they can **identify the clouds** we have in our sky.



Make it Rain!

After hearing from a scientist about clouds, we were ready for some hands-on investigation! I wanted my students to discover how precipitation falls from clouds. Here is a [link](#) to the science experiment I used. This experiment helped the students see, in real time, how rain falls. The water that falls from the plate is similar to what happens in the atmosphere. This activity lent itself to culminating writing experiences where my students wrote like scientists and shared their new understanding of precipitation.

The Many Faces of Weather



In class, we are working on adding details to strengthen our writing. Early on, during our study of the weather, each student creates a **Weather Circle Map**. The students keep their map in their writing folder. Each day, the students write about a different kind of weather during independent writing time. As they write, I move around the classroom to **conference** with students who may need help. When conferring with a student, I try to keep this Lucy Calkins' quote in mind, "[We] are teaching the writer and not the writing. Our decisions must be guided by 'what might help this writer' rather than 'what might help this writing'". At the end of our weather study, the students compile all of their writing into a weather book. These books are placed in a take home **"book bag"** (see below for details) for students to read and enjoy with their families.

Parent Engagement: Encourage Reading at Home

Each week, my students take home two different books in a plastic "book bag." These books include both informational texts and literary texts. When focusing on a specific topic in class, I incorporate books on the topic into the book bags. It's a great way to bridge the new learning from school to home. Last week, the students took home an informational book about weather and our class made book we created about weather in different places. Each student wrote two to three sentences in the book. To ensure that the books are rigorous enough to challenge the students at home, I use a website called **Text Project**. The website contains a vast majority of leveled readers that are informational.



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