

Enhancing Reading Scores with Home-to-School Connections

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to increase literacy scores through improving home to school connections. This was done by sending home literacy bags, which included language experience journals, reading calendars, “I Can Read” books, and popcorn words. Knowledge of sight words in the fall semester was compared to knowledge of sight words in the spring semester to determine the effectiveness of the literacy bags. Results of this study showed an increase in sight word knowledge, letter recognition, blending, and rhyming. In conclusion, literacy bags are an effective way to increase reading scores through home to school connections. The author of this study recommends improving the home to school connection through the use of literacy bags and parent communication.

### **Introduction**

“A child’s experiences in the early years of schooling may set her or him on a learning trajectory that affects an entire school career” (Galindo & Sheldon, 2011, p. 90). According to Sheldon, the two most influential contexts in which young children’s learning and development occur are home and school. In my five years of experience as an elementary educator I have noticed that students who come from a home where parents participate in school culture (i.e. folders checked daily, phone calls returned promptly) tend to be more successful academically. In contrast, students whose parents do not participate tend to struggle. Decades of studies conclude that parents and family members are powerful influences on student achievement across grades (Galindo & Sheldon, 2011; Wallace & Zeece, 2009). As an educator I accept my role in this partnership. In my conversations with parents I have found they are often unaware of the academic expectations for their children. They need to understand the expectations and be given guidance in how to help their child meet academic expectations. Therefore, I believe that

establishing a strong base of communication with my parents is essential in helping my students be successful. Parents need support and resources to help their child engage in high quality learning activities at home. I need to provide materials and information to them frequently so they can practice the same reading skills the students practice at school. This challenge led me to my overarching question: Will students' reading fluency, reading stamina, reading comprehension, and sight word recognition improve when parents reinforce classroom instruction using materials I have provided? To answer this question, I enacted an action research study in my classroom. I created literacy activities for parents to do at home with their student that related to the literacy activities being done in my classroom.

### **Home to School Connections**

Home and school constitute "overlapping spheres of influence" on children's development and academic achievement, and the degree to which educators and family members maintain positive relationships with one another helps determine children's academic success (Epstein, 2001). Studies have shown that family involvement at school can have a positive influence on children's education and cognitive development (Galindo & Sheldon, 2011). Parental involvement can be considered any interaction between a parent and a child or the child's school that may contribute to the child's development (Anderson, 2000). The onus of responsibility is not entirely on parents. Teachers must play their part as well. Parents tend to be more involved when schools or teachers make a stronger effort to engage them in their children's learning (Sheldon, 2011). Studies have shown that children's intrinsic motivation is more positive when parents receive weekly communication from the teacher. Newsletters, school websites, curriculum, open houses, and mini conferences are just a few examples of how

teachers can welcome parents and open the door to communication. Schools should focus on educating children and their families through parent involvement programs (Anderson, 2000).

### **Early Literacy**

Engaging young children in early literacy activities is not meant to push them beyond their years, but to allow their development to unfold at a natural and healthy pace (Huisman, 2012). There are many factors that improve early literacy outcomes for children. Three of the most important components of early literacy are sight word recognition, time with text, and phonemic awareness.

Sight words are words that students can rapidly recall from memorization. Sight words are common words which constantly occur in reading (Dolch, 1936). When readers know words by sight and can recognize them automatically, then word reading operates unconsciously (Ehri, 2005). Being able to read words automatically from memory is the most efficient, unobtrusive way to read words in text (Ehri, 2005). When a child struggles to read, it is often found that they have a poor sight word vocabulary (Dolch, 1936). When a child develops strong sight word recognition, more time can be spent on decoding the less common words and comprehending what is being read. Studies have shown improving sight word recognition builds self-respect and self-confidence in struggling readers (Dolch, 1936).

Reading aloud to children is essential to building early literacy (Richardson, Miller, Richardson, & Sacks, 2008). Research demonstrates that reading aloud to children promotes the development of language and other emergent skills that help children prepare for school (Augustyn, Duursma, & Zuckerman, 2008). When a child is read to, it increases the child's listening vocabulary, letter and symbol recognition abilities, length of spoken sentences, and other comprehension abilities (Anderson, 2000). When children are read to they are introduced

to a variety of language patterns in which the child can begin to understand and construct rules used in the reading process (Anderson, 2000). Children begin to recognize letters, story structure, and literary conventions, understand that print represents the spoken word, and learn concepts of print when they are engaged in a shared book reading (Augustyn, Duursma, & Zuckerman, 2008). Having these skills helps build a successful reader.

Phonemic awareness also plays a key role in developing early literacy. The English language is comprised of two to three dozen phonemes that can be combined in a variety of ways to form every word (Liberman & Shankweiler, 1979). Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are made up of these different phonemes or sounds (Snider, 1995). It also means that a person can attend to one sound in the context of other sounds (Snider, 1995). Research indicates that children without phonemic awareness tend to struggle as readers and that instruction in phonemic awareness can improve reading achievement (Snider, 1995).

### **Home to School Connections to Build Early Literacy**

Home to school connections are important for building early literacy skills. Early literacy development begins at birth and is highly correlated with school success (Wallace & Zeece, 2009). Caregivers and teachers who facilitate literacy-related activities help create literacy-rich routines that support emergent literacy (Wallace & Zeece, 2009). Parents and teachers are very important role models for children's language and literacy development. Parents are influential on their child's perceptions of and attitudes toward literacy (Huisman, 2012).

Children's literacy is built in incremental steps. Research suggests five different ways to encourage and foster early literacy skills at home, including: doing it daily, doing it in authentic ways, having fun with it, being creative, and making sure to be developmentally appropriate

(Huisman, 2012). Parents can engage in these activities by reading aloud to their child, interacting with environmental print, and engaging their child in conversation (Huisman, 2012).

Most parents want their children to be successful readers but some are unsure how to help them (Richardson, Richardson, & Sacks, 2008). Teachers can provide parents guidance in this area by communicating what reading strategies are being taught at school and providing activities to be done at home (Jensen, 2006). In the current study, includes literacy bags are used for this purpose. Literacy bags provide materials and the means to bring learning into the home, and make it a fun and memorable experience. Family literacy bags are a great way to provide support for emergent literacy at home, while reducing pressure to “perform” in the presence of a teacher (Wallace, & Zeece, 2009).

These three concepts provide the backdrop to my study: a) positive interactions between schools and families are beneficial to a child’s education; b) building early literacy skills such as sight word recognition, time with text, and phonemic awareness increase children’s literacy success; and c) parents can help their children build these skills if information and resources are provided by the teacher. The information I gathered in my literature review led me to incorporate literacy bags, reading calendars, and language experience journals in my classroom as a way to build the home to school connection to benefit my student’s literacy development.

### **Action Research**

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship of home-to-school connections and student’s reading scores. The research was divided into two focus areas: the impact of literacy bags including “popcorn” words and Language Experience Journals on student’s reading scores. I collected data through report card assessments, monthly reading calendars, parent

surveys and DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) scores from second and third quarter of the 2012 school year.

## **Methods**

### **Setting**

This study took place in a school district located in a small Midwestern city. The community is extremely involved in making education a priority. As educators in this district, it is our goal for our Kindergartners to know 45 sight words by the end of the school year (Appendix A) and to be reading instructionally at a level four on the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment).

This study took place in a kindergarten classroom where students had been participating in Daily Five since September, which includes read to self, word work, reading to someone, work on writing, and listening to reading. The data were collected during the 2012-2013 school year. During reading instruction, the students get two mini lessons focusing on different reading strategies. Students break off and work on Read to Self, Word Work, Work on Writing, and Listening to Reading. During this time I often conference with students on what they should be working on during Read to Self. Six of the ten students at a time take home literacy bags that include materials in relation to Daily Five components. Parents work with their child at home on the activities. Four of the ten students, take home a literacy based game to share with their families. Each student is able to keep the bags for three to four days at a time.

The data from this study were collected quarterly. The dates for each quarter are as follows; quarter one was from September 4, 2012-November 11, 2012, quarter two was from November 12, 2012-January 1, 2013, quarter three was from January 22, 2013-April 4, 2013 and quarter four was from April 8, 2013-June 6, 2013. The quarterly assessments that are used for

our Kindergarten Report Cards provide data. I took data from the Fall and added it to my research from the Fall of 2012, but did not start my study until the Spring of 2013. I also made changes to my study from the data obtained from Spring 2013 to apply to Fall 2013. There is no data for Fall 2013 in this paper. The paper includes items that have been modified for the Fall 2013 from the research obtained from the Spring Study.

### **Participants (Spring)**

Twenty-two kindergarten students (14 boys and seven girls) participated in this study. One girl moved at the end of February and one boy moved at the end of March. Both individuals started the study, but did not finish. The students vary in age from five to six years old and come from diverse educational backgrounds. Some of the students have attended professional preschools, academic daycare settings, and some have not had any educational experiences prior to their enrollment in kindergarten. One student is Native American and one student is both Native American and African American. The other 20 students are white Caucasians. One student receives Special Education Services and four students receive Title I reading services for twenty five minutes daily. Six students went to Academic Endeavors, an after-school reading and math program that ran from February through April, two nights a week.

### **Materials and Procedures**

**Literacy Bags.** Literacy bags in Kindergarten were used to give students opportunities to work on sight words, word families, letter recognition, and letter sounds through engaging activities. During parent/teacher conferences in the spring, I discussed with each family the process by which Literacy Bags were going to be used. I had one hundred percent turnout for conferences, which made it easy to establish my expectations. Each family got a letter explaining the research, along with a survey about literacy which they were asked to fill out and return to

school. No incentives were given to children whose parents returned the survey. All of the parents appeared excited and enthusiastic about the upcoming activities.

There are ten literacy bags that go home with the children. Since I only have ten, they were rotated among my twenty students. In each bag there was a folder explaining what each bag had in it. Each bag had a whiteboard and marker in it along with a list of all kindergarten sight words. The bag also included four rings of different lists of words that the children could work on. We work on three-dimensional shapes as well, so a page with all of the shapes on it was included. Two of the bags include books to read as a family, a journal to respond to the story and a sight word game to play together. These activities were fun and educational for the students and I believe the instructional expectations were clear for parents.

For this study I used “popcorn” words in my classroom which are sight words. Each sight word is written onto a popcorn kernel and put into our “popcorn machine” on Mondays where it will be “cooked” or practiced all week. On Fridays the words “pop” onto our word wall that contains popcorn boxes for each letter of the alphabet (see Appendix B for a picture). The kernel is put on top of the box corresponding to the first letter it begins with. We read or “pop” all of the popcorn words on the wall daily as part of our morning meeting. The students are also given a popcorn bag at the beginning of the year that they take home to hold the popcorn kernels they get each week. Every Friday I attach the next week’s popcorn word to their weekly newsletter for them to practice at home.

**Language Experience Journals.** Students in this study also had “Language Experience Journals” which were sent home every Friday. The journal had a page for each letter of the alphabet. Each page contained the letter we were working on, a poem with many words that start with that letter, a picture of something that starts with that letter, and a space for an illustration of

the poem or things that start with that letter. At home, either with their family or independently, the students completed the page associated with the current letter.

Students also had a reading log and reading calendar to fill out each month that is kept in a plastic sleeve in their take-home folder. On one of the reading logs, they got to color in a picture for each five minutes they read at home. The reading calendar has a space for each day of the month for the family to fill out how many minutes the student read. At the beginning of the year, and throughout the year, I give parents several handouts with suggestions on things to do while reading aloud with their children at home (see Appendix C).

During each week, students got Leveled Readers that they put into their “I Can Read” bags located in their book bins. These books contain sight words that we were working on and were books they could read. During “Read to Self” time, students were required to read these books first. On Fridays, the whole bag went home and the students read these books with family and brought the empty bag back on Mondays. Throughout the school year I also had “Mystery Readers” come into our classroom and read to us. The Mystery Reader brought in some books to read aloud to our class and was typically a parent of one of my students. I invited my mom, our principal, and other specialist staff at our school to read as well. As a school, we also had a morning during “I Love to Read” month where families came in to have breakfast and share books with each other in our classrooms.

**Parent Surveys.** Parents were given a survey (see Appendix C for survey) at the end of the school year in relation to literacy. I asked questions in relation to the home reading calendars, helpful literacy tip letters that frequently went home, and popcorn words. I included questions about what is going well for them in terms of reading at home and I asked for suggestions of how I could make it more beneficial for them. I also tied in a few questions about what events parents

had attended that the school provided throughout the year. I received 13 in-depth surveys back out of 20 students. Parents stated that the reading calendars were “very helpful, it’s been nice to track just how much reading we’re doing and a good reminder to step it up when we notice we have been slacking.” One parents also stated that “the calendars have been a helpful reminder to keep up with reading throughout the week and are helpful to motivate our child to read.”

I received a lot of positive feedback about the use of “popcorn” words to help learn sight words. Parents stated that they loved the popcorn idea and games that I made to go with them, they also found that I was easy to communicate with. Parents also commented that they liked the popcorn words because it helped keep track of where their child needed to be and what words they needed more practice with. “They are a nice tool to have at home that is consistent to what is going on at school, my child likes to go through any book to show the popcorn words.”

## **Procedures**

**Beginning of the Year:** Students were introduced to the monthly reading calendars and an informational letter was sent home to parents with expectations. The students learned their first focus letter and how to use their Language Experience Journals. A letter to all parents communicated my expectations (Appendix C). Students were given a popcorn bag at the beginning of the year. When the first sight word was introduced, the whole concept of “Popcorn” words was introduced. I communicated expectations of how to practice these via a letter at fall parent/teacher conferences (Appendix C). Parents were also given several handouts with helpful reading strategy advice (Appendix C ). Students were assessed quarterly on sight word knowledge and letter identification and data was collected on an assessment sheet (Appendix D).

**Week 1:** The first ten students were introduced to the literacy bags, which included a whiteboard, marker, and folder. Inside the folder was a letter to parents with expectations, full

list of all kindergarten sight words, a list of three dimensional shapes, and three rings of lists that included words students could practice writing. Parent surveys were sent home prior to starting the literacy activities to get feedback. The surveys asked parents if they thought the “Popcorn Model” was helping their child and if the home reading calendars were helpful to encourage reading at home. The parents were also asked to give feedback on whether they use the reading suggestions at home and if they have anything they would like to change.

**Week 2:** Ten different students took the literacy bags home over the weekend. “Popcorn” words were sent home along, reading calendars were filled out, and Language Experience Journals were sent home.

**Week 3:** Ten new students took home the literacy bags home. Four of the ten students were able to take home bags that contained a literacy game. The games were “Popcorn Sight Words” and “Sight Word Dominos”. Directions were sent home with clear expectations to parents. Each game had been introduced to the children during centers by the teacher prior to the children taking them home.

### **Participants (Fall)**

This fall my classroom demographics are fairly different in relation to my class from the previous study. I have twenty-three kindergarten students this year. I have 9 girls and 13 boys and of these twenty three students three of them receive Special Education Services and are on an IEP (Individualized Education Plan). The students vary in age from five to six. Some of the students have attended professional preschools, academic daycare settings, and some have not had any educational experiences prior to their enrollment in kindergarten. One student is Native American and one student is African American, and the remaining twenty-one students are

white. Four students receive Title I reading services for twenty five minutes daily. Four students have been recommended for Target services, a before-school reading and math program.

### **Materials and Procedures (Fall)**

The overall procedures and materials that used in Fall 2013 are similar to those used in the Spring 2013. Some modifications have been made from the research obtained in the Spring study.

**Literacy Bags.** The literacy bags that were used in the Spring study are being used this Fall. The bags include the same materials that were mentioned in the Fall study with a few changes. The bags will include books at each individual student's instructional reading level. The students will read the books with their family along with filling out a journal page to share with the class. The bags will also contain a picture of Stretchy the Snake that helps us stretch out our words (see Appendix E for a picture). The students will use Stretchy to work on word families. I keep a running record of who has taken the bags home and make sure that each student gets a chance to take them home monthly.

**Popcorn Words.** This fall, popcorn boxes were sent home with the students on "meet the teacher day," along with a letter (see Appendix C for letter) explaining the purpose of popcorn bags. A letter was also sent home with different activities to do with the sight words. The popcorn words are sent home on Fridays attached to the week's newsletter. The students know the weekend before what word we will be focusing on the following week. Several parent handouts have gone home with ideas of activities to do with the sight words at home (See Appendix C for examples).

**Language Experience Journals.** The journals have been modified since the Spring study took place. An informational letter has been bound in the front of the journal conveying

expectations to parents. Each page of the journal has also been modified by adding the popcorn word to the top of each page with the corresponding letter that is being focused on. The students then practice writing the uppercase and lowercase letter along with the popcorn word. On the back, the students read the poem and then “butter” or highlight the focus letter. The students may also circle any popcorn words they know. At the bottom of the page with the poem, the students are to illustrate a picture that represents what is stated in the poem. I also encourage them to draw pictures of things that start with our focus letter. When the journals come back to school I check them for completion and I use a paperclip to clip together the ones we have done. If the student has not completed the page that is due I work with them on it during free play. I encouraged parents at fall conferences to send the journal back to school if they had a busy weekend and I can help them. This seems to help parents keep track of what letter we are working on. I have sent home a few letters reminding parents what is expected of the journals.

### **Findings and Results**

The quantitative data from 2012-2013 school year shows that the majority of the students knew 100 percent of their sight words to mastery. Figure 1 shows students’ sight word identification scores stayed fairly consistent from first quarter through fourth quarter. I assessed each student individually by using our Kindergarten assessments (Appendix E), which included sight word identification, uppercase and lowercase letter recognition, and sound recognition. The students were assessed during the last week of each quarter.

In Figure 1, the bar graph shows how many students achieved mastery with identifying sight words. If students receive a three, they are at 100 percent. Each quarter, more sight words are added and the percentages change to receive a three, two or one. The percentages change because the number of sight words increases. Each quarter the number of students who achieved

mastery increased and by quarter four there were not any students that received a two and only one student received a one which was below eighty-five percent.

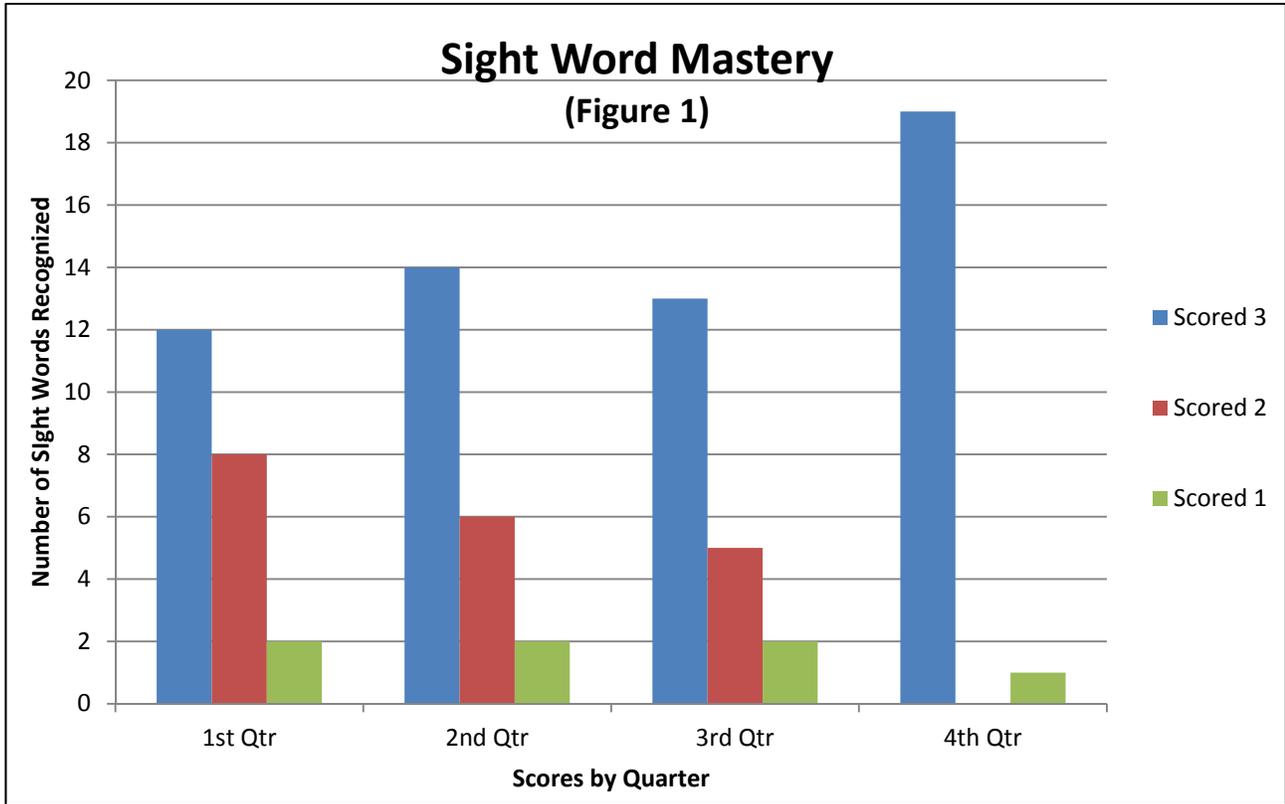


Figure 1. Sight Word Mastery: Students who received a three mastered 100 percent of sight words, each quarter the percentages changed to score a three, two, or one.

<u>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Percentages</u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Percentages</u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Percentages</u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Percentages</u>
2 Letters	11 Letters	20 Letters	26 Letters
100% =3	100% =3	100% =3	100% =19
75-88% =2	79-95% =2	85% =2	85% =0
Less than 75% =1	Less than 79% =1	Less than 85% =1	Less than 85% =1

In Figure 2, the bar graph shows how many students achieved mastery with upper case and lower case letter recognition. If the student obtained a score of three they are at 100 percent. Each quarter, more letters were added to the list and the percentages to earn a two and one changed as well. As the year went on and more letters were added, the percentage of students that were at mastery lowered slightly. In quarter four all students achieved a mastery score.

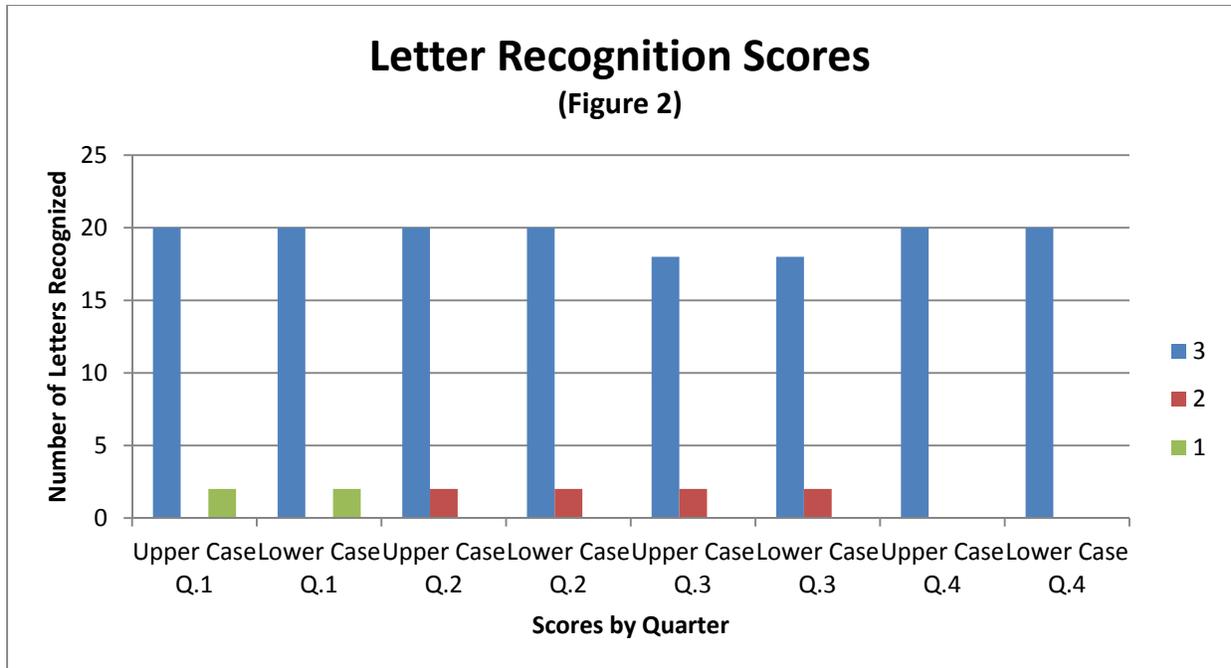
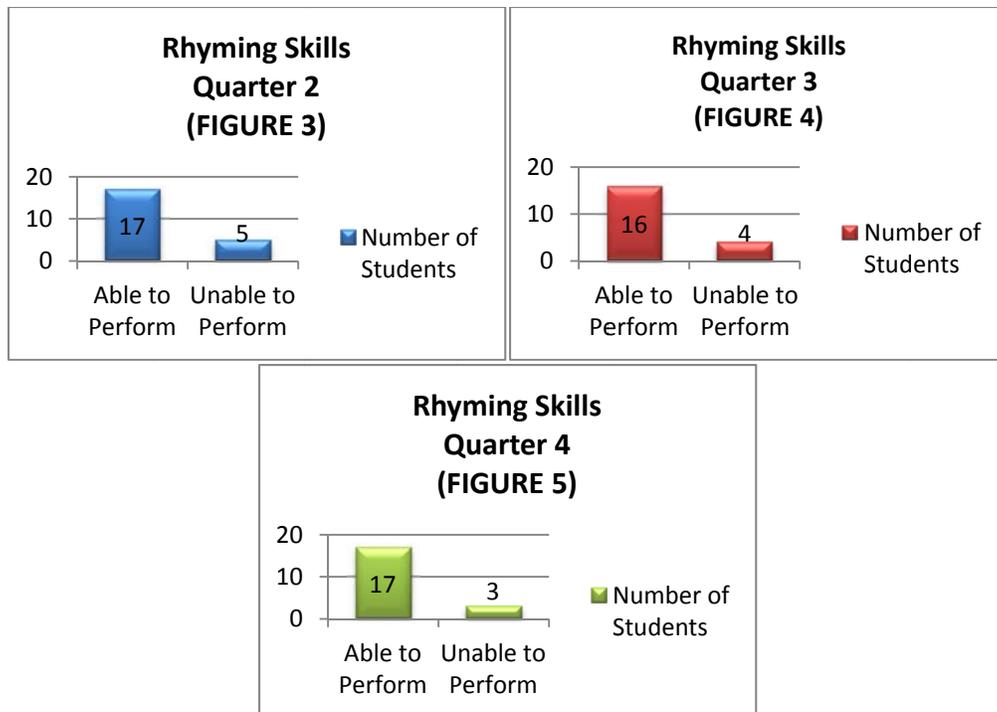


Figure 2. Upper Case Letter Recognition: Students who received a 3 mastered 100 percent of the letters assessed in each quarter.

In figures 3, 4, and 5, a bar graph was created to show how many students achieved a mastery score in identifying and producing rhymes in quarters three and four. In quarter two, 77 percent of students were at mastery. In quarter three, 80 percent were at mastery and in quarter four 85 percent of students were at mastery. In quarter one and two blending skills were not assessed.



Figures 3,4,5. Rhyming Skills: Showed the number of students in each quarter and the number of students who did not reach mastery.

In Figure 6, the bar graph shows the number of students who received a mastery score in blending. Students who received a three got all eight words correct, a score of a two was five words correct, and students who received a one were not able to blend. In quarter three, 55 percent of students were at mastery. In quarter four, 75 percent were at mastery.

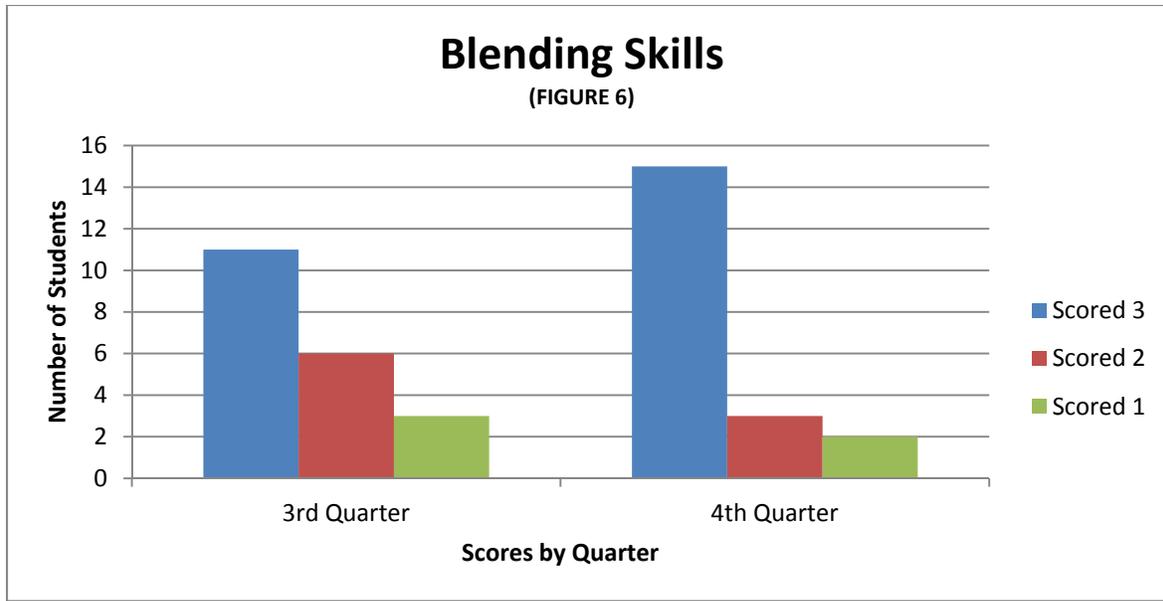


Figure 6. Blending Skills: Students who received a three mastered 100 percent of sight words, each quarter the percentages changed to score a three, two, or one.

In Figure 7, the bar graph shows the students' reading stamina from the beginning of the school year until the present. The average number of minutes increased each month. The minutes were an average per month of how many minutes the students could stay on task during Daily Five reading.

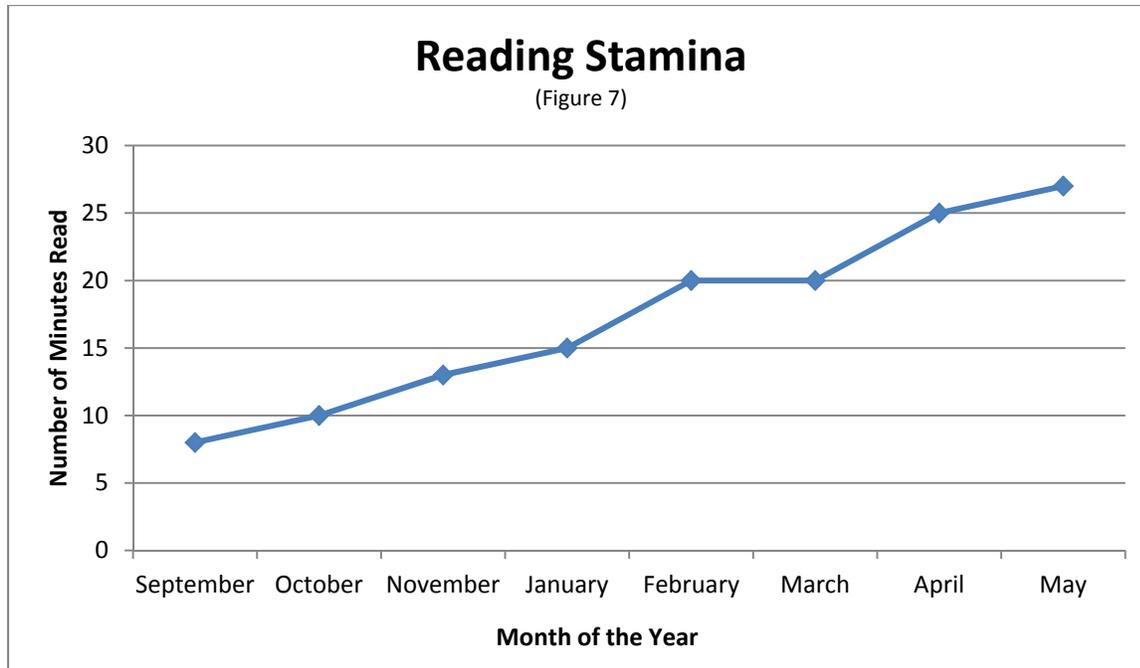


Figure 7. Reading Stamina: The number of minutes the class as a whole read each month was recorded monthly.

### Interpretation and Analysis of Results

From analysis of the data from the spring study I suggest that the uses of literacy bags, “Popcorn” sight words, and parent letters have positively impacted the literacy growth of most of my students. A couple of my students have consistently struggled with sight word and letter recognition from quarter one through quarter four. Over three fourths of my students learned their sight words and letters to mastery by the end of fourth quarter in the spring study. Based on my classroom observations, students appear to be more engaged in reading and increased reading stamina since I made these changes.

Throughout the research time period, the students were engaged in morning activities that involved the “Popcorn” sight words. The students were excited when they could identify sight words when tested on them. A list of “battered” or highlighted words was sent home with them at the end of each quarter for them to work on if they missed any.

From the parent surveys I found that the reading calendars and popcorn words were effective in helping build literacy at home. The parents included that they would suggest continuing to send home any information in relation to reading aloud, building fluency, etc. as often as possible along with any suggestions on how to help them work on reading strategies at home.

### **Taking it to the Next Level**

After conducting my action research in the Spring, I decided to make enhancements to my classroom practices to make home-t- school connections even stronger. With the “popcorn” theme word wall being a success I gave each child a plastic “popcorn” box at mini conferences when they met me. Inside the box I included a bookmark with reading strategies on them that we would be learning throughout the school year. I also gave them a bookmark and pencil. I included an informational sheet for the parents explaining how the popcorn box will be used and activities the students can do with the popcorn sight words when they come home. This helped engage students in literacy with an interesting concept to learning them. Providing parents with information on what to do with them helped them work with their student at home. The students did the same activities at school and at home bridging that home-to-school connection.

My Language Experience Journals were changed dramatically. As a Kindergarten team we introduced two sight words by themselves without a focus letter. A focus letter is a letter of the alphabet that we focus on for a week. With that change, the first two pages of the journals related to experience with reading the word and writing it. At the top of the page the sight word is in a popcorn kernel just like it is at school. After the first two weeks a letter is introduced along with the sight word. On the following journal pages the sight words are listed on the top in a popcorn word and the letter in which we are focusing on. The student then practices writing the

uppercase and lowercase letter along with the sight words. They then have a picture with an object that starts with the letter that they get to color. On the back of the page there is a poem with several sight words and words that start with the focus letter. There is space for the child to connect to what they have read with the help of their parents by illustrating what it means to them. At the very beginning of the journal I have included an in-depth instruction page to assist parents while they are completing it with their child. Each week that I send it home I have also included a half sheet with reminders and further instructions.

When students do not complete their Language Experience Journals, I help them complete them at school and encourage them to help show their parents what they need to get done. When I met with the parents at mini conferences before school started, I explained the students' take-home folders in great detail. Inside the folders I include two plastic sleeves that hold a classroom calendar, lunch menu, reading calendar, and a "Reado" sheet. The reading calendar is a place where the students can keep track of how much they read throughout the month. I did not use a calendar to keep track of the minutes read this year. I decided to do a different activity called "Reado". The "Reado" sheet is in the form of a bingo sheet. In each square there are activities related to reading that the students can complete throughout the month. The data collected from this study helped me to make improvements to what I was already using. The data showed that when students were motivated and could see the improvements they were making their scores increased. Every two weeks the students will be assessed on letter recognition, letter sounds, and sight words that have been taught to mastery (Appendix D). This will then be sent home to communicate to parents what they have mastered and what the students need to work on. By making these changes, literacy has improved because they are able to take what we do at school and use it at home, which has increased their engagement in reading.

Students are also turning in multiple reading charts monthly this year. The “Reado” sheets have been coming back with positive comments from parents stating that they like the new activities associated with reading and it helps make learning at home more engaging.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

Throughout this research study all students have made gains in either their writing or reading stamina. Most of the students have mastered their sight words and letters thus far. Students are using their sight words in their journals and are often able to sound out any word they are trying to spell or read. Parents have been receptive to the literacy bags and also helped students participate in learning sight words through the “Popcorn” model. I will continue to collect data until the end of the school year when quarter four grades are assessed. I will look at the common trends from my first study to my second study. I will then figure out what can be modified for my next group.

In the future, I hope to compare my research with students’ scores from my first study and my current students. Implementing the “Popcorn” method with the sight words excited the students and motivated them to do well. Each week they discuss how they know the upcoming words that are going to be added because they had seen it on the calendar already or had already practice over the weekend. I have noticed how engagement in reading has increased over time. Students enjoy identifying sight words and words they know in books. This study also helped me realize how much my students enjoyed playing different literacy games at school and then being able to share them with their families. It would be interesting to see if the theme of “Popcorn” was changed to frogs, or any other theme, if students would still be engaged and excited about learning the sight words. In education it is always hard because you always get some parents who just do not participate in learning as much as others.

In education it is always hard because you always get some parents who just do not participate in learning as much as others. The greatest limitation with the implementation of this study was the time commitment that parents need to contribute to their children. With the literacy bags, there was also the issue of them not being returned on time and some bags have yet to be returned. While working with two different groups of students I was not able to determine that literacy bags were the cause of the scores my students received. I did not have a comparison group of students' scores before the literacy bags.

Overall I was pleased with the results of my study. It was exciting to see my students engage in literacy at home and at school. From this research process I learned that the more information I give my parents the more likely they are to follow through with helping their child. Giving parents examples of what my expectations are is also beneficial. My students did amazingly well at mastering their sight words this year along with letter recognition. They are also doing really well blending and rhyming. This study helped me realize how important it is to make learning engaging and meaningful for my students. I also realized how vital communicating with their parents is. Being able to successfully communicate with the parents helps the school-t-home connection grow. I was disappointed, but not surprised, that the same two students struggled with the sight words throughout the study. Even though I knew they struggled I still encouraged them forward and thought of new methods to support their learning style. As an educator I will continue to strive for supporting each individual's learning style.

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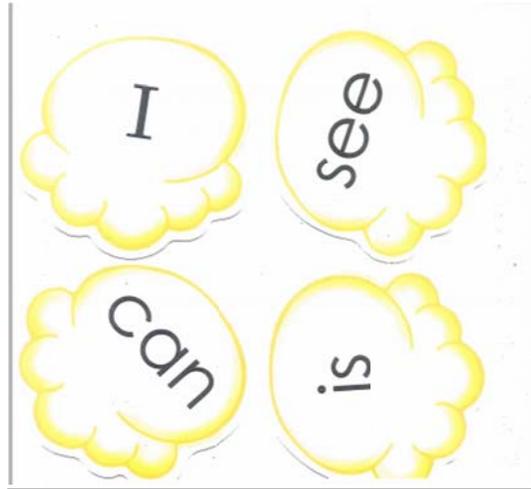
## Appendix

## Document A: Kindergarten Sight Word List


Kindergarten Sight Words

<b>I</b>	<b>see</b>	<b>can</b>	<b>the</b>	<b>is</b>
<b>like</b>	<b>my</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>go</b>
<b>look</b>	<b>at</b>	<b>said</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>you</b>
<b>he</b>	<b>she</b>	<b>it</b>	<b>here</b>	<b>me</b>
<b>for</b>	<b>this</b>	<b>we</b>	<b>an</b>	<b>are</b>
<b>not</b>	<b>by</b>	<b>have</b>	<b>play</b>	<b>in</b>
<b>his</b>	<b>her</b>	<b>on</b>	<b>that</b>	<b>had</b>
<b>or</b>	<b>they</b>	<b>be</b>	<b>all</b>	<b>do</b>
<b>but</b>	<b>how</b>	<b>was</b>	<b>your</b>	<b>of</b>

Document B: Popcorn Word Wall



## Document C: Parent Handouts

Fall 2013



Dear Kindergarten Families,

Welcome to kindergarten! I am looking forward to an exciting year. Listed below is a short summary of what the kindergarten curriculum will be this year.

With Reading, we encompass a variety of tools to expand your child's growth in learning letters, sounds, words, and of course, reading! Kindergarten will begin reading by introducing the letters of the alphabet. We will then focus our attention on learning the sounds of each letter and learning to correctly print each letter. We will take the sounds of the letters that have been learned and blend them into words. We also will be learning several sight words throughout the school year.

Our math curriculum is published by Math Expressions. This curriculum combines elements of standards-based instruction with the best of traditional approaches. We will use objects, drawings, conceptual language, and real-world situations to help students build mathematical ideas that make sense to them.

In science, we currently use Pearson. We implement changes of the seasons, changes of weather, and the growth of plants and animals. For social studies, we work on learning to get along with others as well as individual differences and likenesses. We learn that each one of us is unique in our own special way. I am excited to be your child's teacher. It will be a fun year! You may contact me by telephone (school: 385-4570) or by e-mail [mgkelley@rwps.org](mailto:mgkelley@rwps.org).

Michelle Kelley  
Kindergarten Teacher



Ms. Kelley's Weekly News

November 8, 2013

November is here! We sure have a lot to be thankful for this month! We will spend a lot of time talking about things we are thankful for. We had some fun this week making new art projects to hang up on our walls!

**Next Week's Specials:**

Monday: Day 3: Library

Tuesday: Day 4: Gym and Music

Wednesday: Day 1: Computer

Thursday: Day 2: Gym and Music

Friday: Day 3: Library

\*Please make sure your child has gym shoes for gym. ☺



Sight word "to" is coming home to practice. Put it in your popcorn box!

**Reading**

This week we met Andy Apple. He has helped us learn all about the letter A. We have also worked hard on beginning letter sounds. During our Reading block we have been working on blending onset and rime. The students have done well with this. We have been breaking up words and segmenting them together.

**Winter is Approaching**

Please send a winter jacket, mittens, and a hot every day with your child. We go outside for recess and we need to make sure we are dressed appropriately. It is a good idea to wear boots as well. When it snows and the children do not wear boots they have to stay on the sidewalk. Your child can leave a pair of shoes at school in their locker to ensure that they have a pair to wear every day. Thanks for your help with this! Together we can keep the kiddos warm!

**Math**

This week we have continued to make addition math equations. We have also been working on writing and grouping objects of numbers 6-10. Please keep counting at home! ☺

**Reminders**

~Please check your child's folder daily and send back to school.

~November 12<sup>th</sup>: Early Release

~November 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>: No School

**Weekly Homework:**

Language Experience Journals: Letter A should be completed this week and sent back on Monday. Please do not work ahead.

Read: Continue to fill out the monthly reading calendar!

Daily Five

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the fun world of reading! I just wanted to inform you on how our literacy block works at school. Your child might be talking about the “Daily Five” at home already. The purpose of this letter is to fill you in on what The Daily Five is all about, so you don’t have to nod your head while wondering what in the world your child is referring to.

The Daily Five is a way of structuring the reading block so every student is independently engaged in meaningful literacy tasks. These research based tasks are ones that will have the biggest impact on student reading and writing achievement, as well as help foster children who love to read and write. Students receive explicit whole group instruction and then are given independent practice time to read and write independently while I provide focused, intense instruction to individuals and small groups of students.

The Daily Five is comprised of:

- ⊗ Read to Self
- ⊗ Work on Writing
- ⊗ Read to Someone
- ⊗ Listen to Reading
- ⊗ Word Work

There are very specific behavior expectations that go with each Daily 5 component. We will spend time working intensely on building our reading and writing stamina, learning the behaviors of the Daily 5 and fostering our classroom community. I will spend time learning about your child’s strengths and greatest needs as a reader so that I can best plan for each student’s instruction.

One thing you’ll notice that may be a change for you is a direct decrease in the number of worksheets your child brings home. While worksheets keep students busy, they don’t really result in the high level of learning we want for your child. Instead, your child has been taught to select “Good Fit Books” or books they can read (picture walk), understand and are interested in, which they will read during Daily 5. They spend most of their time actually reading, which research supports as the number one way to improve reading. I anticipate the motivation and enjoyment of reading will skyrocket when this gift of choosing their own books accompanied by extended practice and specific reading instruction for each individual child.

As you can see, I am excited about giving your child the opportunity to be involved in a structure that will have a positive effect on their education.

Please think of our classroom library as you visit garage sales or clean your own child’s bookcase. It is our goal to make our classroom library as appealing as your favorite bookstore for browsing. If you ever have any questions, comments, or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me!

Michelle Kelley



# Popcorn Words



In kindergarten, we learn many “popcorn words”. These words are learned by memory and your child should be able to read them and spell them. There are 45 words your child should know by the end of kindergarten.

I have provided a popcorn box. This popcorn box should be put somewhere accessible for your child to practice these words. You can practice them by playing the “Popcorn Game” which is where you take turns pulling a kernel out and reading the word. If you pull out a kernel that says “POP” you need to put back all of your kernels.

Please have them practice these words as they are sent home. I will attach the “popcorn word” to the weekly newsletter on the Friday before we learn it. Tear it off and add it to the popcorn box.

Thanks for your help,

Ms. Kelley



Just a few reminders:

- Please check the directions sheet located on the first page of the journal
- Please have the students use pencils when practicing writing the letters and sight words
- Spacing sticks are provided to help the students with spacing between letters
- Please return them on the following school day upon completion
- There is a front and back to each page
- Please only complete one page which contains the letter in which we worked on this week and the sight words that we worked on.
- In the poem the students are to highlight or “butter” the letter we are working on and circle sight words they know.

Thank you so much for your dedication and cooperation in doing all we can to help our little learners! Contact me with any further questions! 😊

Michelle Kelley

## When Reading Ask...



What do you think will happen next?

Where does the story take place?

How did that make you feel?

Why do you think that happened?

Who was your favorite character and why?

What was the problem in the story?

How did they solve the problem?

Why did you like or dislike the book?

November 22, 2013

Here is a list of the Letters, Letter Sounds, and Sight Words we have learned so far.

The circled letters or words are the ones your child did not know. Please practice these at home! We spend a whole week learning a letter, its sound, and a word. Any extra help your child receives will greatly impact their success in school!

Thank you for all you do! -Ms. Kelley

Letter Identification:

S s M m R r T t A a B b N n

Letter Sound:

S M R T A B N

Sight Word:

I see can the is like  
my a to go am

**Reading Calendars:**

**October  
Family Fun Calendar**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Sing "The Itsy Bitsy Spider."	How many legs does a spider have?	Talk about the letter 'S'. Can you find things that start with that sound?	Learn your birthday.	Look in a mirror. What color are your eyes? What color is your hair?	Hop, skip, jump, gallop, and run.
Give everyone in your family a big hug.	Say riddles in your family.	Look for letters you can name around your house.	Name different animal homes. (bird, fish, bee, pig bear, etc.)	Draw a picture of your home.	Count forwards and backwards from 0 to 10.	Do a job for your parents.
Make a wish.	Read a book. Who is the author? Who is the illustrator?	Can you act out "Little Miss Muffet"?	Ask your parents to trace your hands. Can you cut them out?	Take a bubble bath.	What is your favorite color? Why?	Go on a leaf hunt. How many kinds of leaves can you find?
Draw a picture of a tree.	Act out opposites. (over-under, up-down, happy-sad, in-out)	Build something with blocks.	What makes you happy? Sad? Angry? Scared?	Sing your ABC's.	Eat an apple for snack. How many seeds are in your apple?	Play "Guess Who I Am?" by acting out different animals.
Do a happy dance.	Make a paper bag puppet.	Say the days of the week.	Practice writing your first name.	Name five things that will fit in your hand. Name five things that are too large.		

**Nightly Reading Book III Record Sheet  
October**

Student's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Color one pumpkin for each 5-10 minutes of reading. Return the completed sheet by the end of the month.





**October**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Please Return to School By: \_\_\_\_\_

R E A D

Read a story under your bed covers.

Listen to the sounds that are said to you. What is the word?

bat bat bat bat bat bat

Have someone at home read you a magazine article. Retell the article using your own words.

Pick a book to read. Find the copyright date.

How many sounds do you hear in the word "candy"?

Ask someone in your family about how they learned to read while you drink a glass of cider.

Listen to someone at home tell something that happened to them. Retell the story using your own words.

Get someone at home to read you a magazine article. Retell the article using your own words.

Halloween, Halloween, Halloween

Dress up in a costume. Read a book using expression to match that character.

Read a story with someone at home. Talk about the setting.

Listen to the words. Fill in the end sound to someone the end sound to each word.

witch, leaves, spider, book, leaves, it, how

Read a non-fiction book with someone at home. Talk about the purpose of kindred words.

Get someone at home to read you a magazine article. Retell the article using your own words.

How many words are in this sentence?

The scary cat sat on a big lawn!

Give a puppet with someone at home. Use the words "tick, tick, the and lat" to describe the story you told.

Say "trout". Instead of *flung* or *slay* fish or *slit*, that's the new word!

Read two books by the same author. Tell someone at home how they are similar.

Read a poem with someone at home. Talk about how it makes you feel.

Help someone at home write a grocery list.

Share a connection you have with the setting in a book with someone at home.

Read a story with someone at home. Do the illustrations to describe its setting.

Read a story. Think of three words to describe the story.

Get someone at home to read you a magazine article. Retell the article using your own words.

Listen to someone at home read a book with a "spooky" expression!

Add "leaves" to the end of "halls". That's the new word!



## Kindergarten Read-Aloud/Book-It Program

Dear Parents,

Please enjoy reading stories with your child every day at home! Research shows that many children who learn to read easily and remain good readers throughout school have been read to regularly from early childhood on. Not only does reading to your child help him or her to develop a love for reading, it enriches his or her language and vocabulary development.

Furthermore, listening to and talking about stories is also great practice for attending to a task – something the children will be expected to do in school and in the real world. Finally, when you read to your child, you are helping him or her to understand how books and reading “work” (for example, we read the words instead of the pictures, we read the left page before the right page, etc.).

Beginning in the month of October, the Kindergartners will participate in the “Read-Aloud” program. This is a month-to-month program that will continue throughout the school year until March. This program is optional, but it is encouraged (and fun!). Here’s how it works:

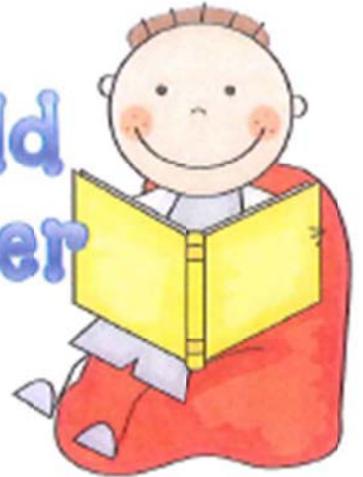
- Please record how many minutes your child reads each day on the calendar that is provided.
- Please return the completed calendar form at the end of the month to receive a certificate for a free personal pan pizza for your Kindergartner from Godfathers.
- It is ok if you do not get a chance to read every day. If half of the calendar is filled out the child will get the certificate.
- Please keep in mind that certificates expire one month from the date they are issued.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Happy Reading!

Sincerely,  
Ms. Kelley



# Help Your Child Become a Better Reader



## **Questions to ask your child while reading nonfiction text**

---

What is the main idea of the text?

What did you learn from reading the text?

Are there any words that you do not know what they mean?

What are some new words that you learned?

Do you have any questions after reading this?

Were there any important features (charts, diagrams, pictures) that were important?

Where could you find more information about this topic?

Did you like this text? Why or why not?

---

# Building a Reader At Home

## Explore Books!

Give your child an opportunity to explore books. Visiting a library or bookstore gives your child a chance to find topics and books that interest them.

## Read, Read, Read!

Make sure to read for at least 30 minutes per day! Students can read independently, aloud to an adult, or back and forth with a partner.

## Ask Questions!

- Predictions
- Characters
- Main Idea
- Problem
- Solution
- Retell Story
- Genre
- Moral

## Make it Fun!

Reading shouldn't be a chore. Intentionally read with your child/discuss books but also research topics and do book activities together.

## Be an Example!

Children learn by example, so let your child see you read whether it be a book, newspaper, cookbook, etc.

## Pick Good Fit Books!

A book that is a good match for your child should meet the following requirements:

- Purpose for reading
- Interest
- Can they understand what they are reading? Can they retell the story?
- Do they know most of the words?

## For Beginning Readers:

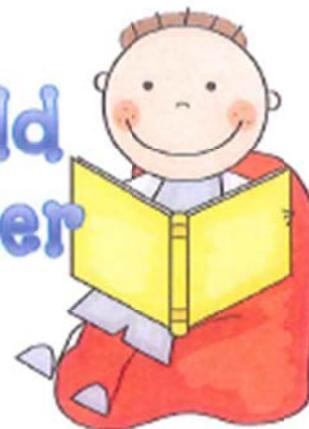
- Point out and read words in natural settings – stores, streets, etc.
  - Memorize sight words
  - Visualize the story in your head
  - Ask questions before, during, and after
- Don't immediately tell an unknown word to your student. Instead, ask them to:
- Sound out the word
  - Break the word into parts
  - Use illustrations for clues
- Skip the word, re-read sentence, and go back – what word would make sense?

## For Advanced Readers:

- Notice interesting, new vocabulary words, and make it a challenge to use them in conversation
- Read with expression
- Explore non-fiction books and their text features (diagrams, table of contents, etc.) along with other genres as well
- Compare and contrast books
- Discuss connections to literature
- Think of new titles for books
- Explore multiple books from the same author



## Help Your Child Become a Better Reader



### Questions to ask your child while reading fiction text

Who is the main character?

What was the setting?

What was the problem in the story and how was it solved?

What do you predict will happen next in the story?

Why do you think the author chose the title for the story?

Do you like the title of the story? Why or why not?

Can you think of a different title for the story?

Which character from the story would you choose to be your friend? Why?

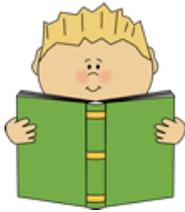
What part of the story was the most exciting? Why?

Did you like the end? Why or why not?

# My " I Can READ Bag"

In this bag are all of the books that your child can read to you. These books are books that we have read all week! Please keep these books at home and return the plastic bag on the next school day!

Thanks for your continued support in helping build our readers!



Ms. Kelley



# My " I Can READ Bag"

In this bag are all of the books that your child can read to you. These books are books that we have read all week! Please keep these books at home and return the plastic bag on the next school day!

Thanks for your continued support in helping build our readers!



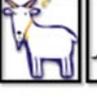
Ms. Kelley





**Second Quarter Assessment:**

S	M	R	T	I	see	can
A	B	N	H	<u>the</u>	is	like
I	V	C	P	<u>my</u>	<u>a</u>	to
O				<u>go</u>	look	at
<u>s</u>	m	r	t	<u>said</u>	and	you
<u>a</u>	b	n	h	<u>he</u>	<u>she</u>	it
<u>i</u>	v	c	p	<u>here</u>	me	for
<u>o</u>				<u>this</u>		

Mug, tug, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,

Stop, shop, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,

Jet, bet, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,

Pin, shin, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,

**Third Quarter Assessment:**

S	M	R	T	I	see	can	the
A	B	N	H	<u>is</u>	like	my	a
I	V	C	P	<u>to</u>	go	look	at
O	G	F	E	<u>said</u>	and	you	he
L	K	Q	U	<u>she</u>	it	here	me
D	Z	X		<u>for</u>	this	we	an
<hr/>				<u>are</u>	not	by	have
<u>s</u>	m	r	t	<u>play</u>	in	his	her
<u>a</u>	b	n	h	<u>on</u>	that	had	or
<u>i</u>	v	c	p	<u>they</u>	be	all	do
<u>o</u>	g	f	e				
<u>l</u>	k	q	u				
<u>d</u>	z	x					

Mug, tug, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Stop, shop, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Jet, bet, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Pin, shin, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Ham, jam, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,

I can blend these words!

<u>rat</u>	ham
<u>peg</u>	bet
<u>dig</u>	tin
<u>mop</u>	fog
<u>sun</u>	cut

**Fourth Quarter Assessment:**

S	M	R	T	I	see	can	the
A	B	N	H	<u>is</u>	like	my	a
I	V	C	P	<u>to</u>	go	look	at
O	G	F	E	<u>said</u>	and	you	he
L	K	Q	U	<u>she</u>	<u>it</u>	here	me
D	Z	X	W	<u>for</u>	this	we	an
Y	J			<u>are</u>	not	by	have
<u>s</u>	m	r	t	<u>play</u>	in	his	her
<u>a</u>	b	n	h	<u>on</u>	that	had	or
<u>i</u>	v	c	p	<u>they</u>	be	all	do
<u>o</u>	g	f	e	<u>but</u>	how	was	your
<u>l</u>	k	q	u	<u>of</u>			
<u>d</u>	z	x	w				
<u>y</u>	j						

Mug, tug, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Stop, shop, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Jet, bet, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Pin, shin, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Ham, jam, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Fun, bun, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,

I can blend these words!

<u>rat</u>	ham
<u>peg</u>	bet
<u>dig</u>	tin
<u>mop</u>	fog
<u>sun</u>	cut



**Task 6 - Recognizing Lowercase Letters**

Level of Control	None/Little	Some	Gaining (Mat)	Control
Total Score	0-9	10-20	21-25	25
1.	a		1.	n
2.	x		2.	y
3.	s		3.	r
4.	c		4.	h
5.	e		5.	g
6.	k		6.	v
7.	r		7.	l
8.	a		8.	u
9.	m		9.	a
10.	e		10.	t
11.	v		11.	b
12.	p		12.	j
13.	e		13.	d
Score		/13	Score	/13
Total Score		/26	Time	/90 sec.