

If You Give a Kinder a Piece of Paper
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The basis for this project was to combine the wonderful writing technique of Laura Numeroff, in If You Give a Mouse a Cookie, with the major concepts learned throughout the kindergarten year. The combination resulted in a play performed at the Kindergarten Graduation Ceremony. We borrowed the idea of “giving” from the author’s series and connected it to the months of the year, themes and concepts for each month and “a piece of paper”.

As the school year was coming to a close, the class was reviewed the many things that they had learned that year. The teacher listed all ideas on a monthly titled chart. We talked about what we thought was the most important of all of those listed. The students were given paper to draw pictures or write simple sentences about what they learned. The students talked among themselves while drawing, commenting, “Do you remember when we...?” This led to more ideas for the posters. We talked about what we needed for each concept learned. After listing all of this information, we discovered that a piece of paper was common to most all of the ideas. With this main idea we narrowed down the posters to one main idea for each month. Each student randomly drew a month. The teacher worked individually with each student to decide what kind of paper they needed to convey the idea, and to write a 2-3-sentence script to accompany the paper.

Other classes that decide to do this project could personalize their themes/topics for the month and what was common between them all. Students could work in pairs or even groups of three to design their “paper” and write their script.

Practice was held daily for 2 weeks before the performance. We practiced holding our paper so the audience could see our face. We practiced saying our memorized lines so the audience could hear us and understand what we were saying. We used a small cassette recorder for speaking into and playing back, so that we could hear what our voices sounded like. We also practiced standing and sitting while holding our paper. We worked on remembering when it was our turn to speak. A theme that underlined this whole play was self-confidence and the ability to share orally with others.

The teacher started the play with an introduction of the author’s name and the titles of several of her books. Then she explained the correlation of the books to the play. The teacher started each section with the same sentence, inserting the name of the next month: “In (month) if you give a Kinder a piece of paper to (activity), you must first teach him/her (concept).” Example: “In September, if you give a Kinder a piece of paper on which to write his name, you must first teach him the alphabet.” The assigned student would stand up and recite the alphabet, while holding a sentence strip with his name, or possibly a poster with the alphabet on it.

If you have more students than months or themes you can pair up the students. They should both help with the art portion and the verbal portion. Pairing an ESL student with a bilingual or English speaking student would be helpful, with possibly both students saying the same sentence in 2 languages.

This project was a great review for the student. They were able to see a list of all of the things they had learned that school year. They were given the chance to share what they remembered about specific activities. They helped to select the concepts to be highlighted for the months, and then were the authors of their own scripts.

The main materials needed for this project were several of Laura Numeroff's books, 10 large blank poster sheets for listing the original ideas, and 10 "posters" for the final presentation. Photos, crayons, paint, glue and scissors were used to decorate the final posters. We also used a small cassette player/recorder for practicing our "lines".

On stage we needed appropriate sized, student chairs and a riser for the back row of chairs. We could have used a wireless microphone to make ourselves sound louder. The teacher had the full script and each student had his/her own "piece of paper". The teacher typed up a program with the months, students and themes listed. This program was included in the graduation program.

As we wrote the original lists and the final script the students were excited to share their experiences and suggestions. They were proud to write their scripts. The day of graduation was the final assessment. Each remembered their lines with only one reminder needed to what student followed next.

The students could be lined up in order of their performance time, but since we were also on stage to graduate, the order was predetermined by last names. You could change the idea of only one theme per month and have several students represent a month with different concepts.

Many of the Language Arts and Math Standards were used in this project. They were combined with a few specific standards from Social Science and Science. Some of the standards were addressed specifically, such as Number Sense – counting to 100 and geometric shapes. Other standards were incorporated in the script writing – complete sentences and the oral presentation of the play – Speaking Applications.

Reciting the alphabet, vocabulary development and the writing of lists were also covered. Realizing that words have meaning and give information was the basis of the original monthly lists and writing the final scripts.

Science concepts of nature were incorporated into the themes. Drawing a picture to represent a concept shows understanding of the concept. Putting information into sentences shows deeper understanding.

The Social Science standard of working together and sharing orally was demonstrated. Understanding and establishing a timeline was also a large part of this project.