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Volume, Issue

Reading Matters!

*From the desks of Robyn Eckels, Jen Herncane, Sherry Manley, and
Ashley Richardella Early Literacy Coaches*

Welcome Back to School!

Here are some dates and a few tips to get your school year started on the right foot!

New Faces Join the Team ☺

During the 2008-2009 school year, the DIBELS assessment and LETRS interventions will be implemented district wide in grades Kindergarten, one, and two. Because of this increase in numbers, there are a few new faces on the coaching team!

Robyn Eckels – WJ, Logan, Wright

Jen Herncane – Penn Lincoln, J.
Gap, PV

Sherry Manley – MH@I, Juniata

Ashley Richardella– Baker, Ebner

Testing Dates

Kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade will all be tested during the same week. These testing dates for the 2008-2009 school year are the following:

Fall Assessment – September 8-11

Winter Assessment – January 12-15

Spring Assessment – May 11-14

Why Teach LETRS?

LETRS is a scientifically based program that ensures **quality** and **comprehensive** reading instruction in kindergarten through grade three.

LETRS is a program that is designed to provide YOU, **the educators**, with a core understanding of language structure. LETRS helps educators to gain in-depth instructional information to complement their teaching practices already in place in their own classroom.

Rather than replacing the core basal reading program, LETRS brings deeper knowledge of reading instruction by addressing each component—phoneme awareness; phonics, decoding, spelling, and word study; oral language development; vocabulary; reading fluency; comprehension; and writing—as well as the foundational concepts that link them.

“Knowing what to do is one thing, knowing how to do it is another!”

You as the classroom teacher play such a critical part in the lives of your students who are learning to read. Your coaches will provide all of the necessary help, materials, and resources to you that you will need to effectively implement the LETRS interventions in your classroom, and used correctly, the interventions will help you **tremendously** to develop an entire classroom full of successful readers!

Phonological Awareness and Learning How to Read

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."
--Ronald E. Osborn

The Phonological Awareness Continuum

Phonological awareness skills can be arranged in a hierarchy from easiest to difficult:

***repetition—students repeat sentences, phrases, or words**

***word identification—students track or count words in sentences**

***syllable manipulation—students count, blend, and segment compound word parts or word syllable parts**

***onset-rhyme manipulation—students combine or substitute onsets (consonant or consonants before a vowel in a syllable) with rhymes (the vowel and everything after within a syllable)**

***rhyming and alliteration—students produce words that rhyme or words that begin with the same beginning sound**

***phoneme awareness—students match, isolate, blend, segment, delete, or substitute a word's individual speech sounds**

Websites for Handwriting Helps:

<http://mrpencil.acrobat.com/pdmethod1/>

<http://mrpencil.acrobat.com/fingertrace/>

The Importance of Phonological Awareness:

Dr. Louisa Moats who is the author of the LETRS modules emphasizes time and time again that "reading is language based NOT visual...(and that) humans are born with the capacity to speak and understand the spoken language." Armed with this valuable insight, we as teachers need to give our students as many opportunities as possible (and appropriate) to practice this "natural ability" to manipulate and understand sounds. Phonological awareness (at the sentence level, syllable level, or onset-rhyme level) and phonemic awareness (segmenting, blending, etc.) are necessary and important components to include when planning lessons across the curriculum as well as during your daily classroom routines. This (like everything else somewhat new to us) can be difficult or awkward for us to do. This is an area your coaches can help you with—please just ask!

Language Practice and Questioning:

As stated above, "language practice" can be achieved through phonological awareness and phonemic awareness activities particularly with introducing high-frequency words and vocabulary. But did you know that you can foster increased language development and lead students to apply higher levels of thinking and comprehension just by asking questions that require

more than just a "yes" or "no" response? These probing questions are called *queries*. Some examples of queries for you to try are the following:

***What do you think about this?**

***Why did (the character) say/do that?**

***What might one learn from this?**

Your coaches will be bringing a list of queries entitled "Asking the Perfect Question" to you in the near future so you can have an easy to use reference at your fingertips.

Phonological Awareness and Handwriting:

Because Reading is not merely about sounds, but also utilizes the visual word, we as primary teachers can't ignore practicing writing. A way to get the "best of both worlds"—sound and print is to do the following when practicing handwriting:

***coach students verbally as they practice strokes to form letters**

***model letter formation with numbered arrows showing the formation sequence and "talk through" the letter's formation**

***have students say the sound and letter name while they write the letter**

Pages 27-30 in LETRS Module 7 provides more information about this. For some additional tips on how to teach handwriting, please see the side box for some internet resources.

Story Headline

The purpose of a newsletter is to provide specialized information to a targeted audience. Newsletters can be a great way to market your product or service, and also create credibility and build your organization's identity among peers, members, employees, or vendors.

First, determine the audience of the newsletter. This could be anyone who might benefit from the information it contains, for example, employees or people interested in purchasing a product or requesting your service.

You can compile a mailing list from business reply cards, customer information sheets, Business cards collected at trade shows, or membership lists. You might consider purchasing a mailing list from a

company.

If you explore the Project Gallery, you will find many publications that match the style of your newsletter.

Next, establish how much time and money you can spend on your newsletter. These factors will help determine how frequently you publish your newsletter at least quarterly so that it's considered a consistent source of information. Your customers or employees will look forward to its arrival.

Your headline is an important part of the newsletter and should be considered carefully.

Story Headline

You can also research articles or find "filler" articles by accessing the World Wide Web. You can write about a variety of topics but try to keep your articles short.

Much of the content you put in your newsletter can also be used for your Web site. Microsoft Word offers a simple way to convert your newsletter to a Web publication. So, when you're finished writing your newsletter, convert it to a Web site and post it.

The subject matter that appears in

newsletters is virtually endless. You can include stories that focus on current technologies or innovations in your field.

You may also want to note business or economic trends, or make predictions for your customers or clients.

If the newsletter is distributed internally, you might comment upon new procedures or improvements to the business. Sales figures or earnings will show how your business is growing.

"To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here."



Your business
tagline can go
here

We're on the Web!

See us at:

Back Page Story Headline

In a few words, it should accurately represent the contents of the story and draw readers into the story. Develop the headline before you write the story. This way, the headline will help you keep the story focused.

Examples of possible headlines include Product Wins Industry Award, New Product Can Save You Time, Membership Drive Exceeds Goals, and New Office Opens Near You.

One benefit of using your newsletter as a promotional tool is that you can reuse content from other marketing materials, such as press releases, market studies.

While your main goal of distributing a newsletter might be to sell your product or service, the key to a successful newsletter is making it useful to your readers.

About Our Organization...

Think about your article and ask yourself if the picture supports or enhances the message you're trying to convey. Avoid selecting images that appear to be out of context.

Microsoft includes thousands of clip art images from which you can choose and import into your

newsletter. There are also several tools you can use to draw shapes and symbols.

Once you have chosen an image, place it close to the article. Be sure to place the caption of the image near the image.