

Child and Play: Is Decreased Playtime Affecting the Classroom?

A Study of the Importance of Recess and Playtime for Children

A Masters Research Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree, Master of Arts in Teaching at Colorado College

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March 2013

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## Child and Play: Is Decreased Playtime Affecting the Classroom?

### A Study of the Importance of Recess and Playtime for Children

#### **Chapter One: Introduction**

The turning point in my undergraduate education that led me to change my course of study and become passionate about teaching was first, I discovered that many children aren't taught the importance and excitement for learning, and second, the realization that many children in our country do not enjoy going to school. They are either bored, frustrated with the constant instruction, or struggling to keep up. My goal as a future teacher is to change the mindset of these children and show them the power learning has and the endless opportunities that education brings. My interest in this specific topic of play came from a conversation with my sister who had just spent a semester in South Africa. She witnessed schools that have a fraction of the materials, opportunities, and resources that some of the poorest schools in the United States have. However, according to my sister, these children are much more eager and excited to go to school, to learn, and to do their homework.

When we think of children and what they do, we often think of playing, toys, or fun. For adults the word "*play*" does not mean the same thing as it does for children. If you were told to go play, you would probably respond with, "*Play what?*". For a child, however, the instruction to "go play" has much meaning. It opens up a child's world of learning, fun, imagination, and creativity and allows them to use these natural abilities. It is obvious to see a child's developmental stages evolve through their manner of play, and it can be fascinating to watch how they incorporate their observations and learning in

their method of playing. For instance, I have often observed the way a young girl plays reflects her mother's actions or a young boy, his father's. This childish play seems to be key to a child's development in that it allows the child to practice or act out what the child has observed or learned.

### **Nature of the Problem**

Why are elementary schools cutting recess and play minutes? Over one hundred years ago the value of play for early childhood was obvious. There was "little or no difficulty explaining the importance of play for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Things are different in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With high-stakes assessment, No Child Left Behind, and competition for limited funding, play has taken a back seat. In fact, play and even nap time have been eliminated from many early childhood education programs" (Kohler, Kilo, & Christensen, 2012, p. 201). I hope to find a way to measure the effectiveness and importance of play as well as discover the benefits of promoting the natural learning process of playing. Discovering the different types of play and the most beneficial type of play can be very helpful for students. Play may also positively effect the behavior and learning environment of the classroom. Children do not get the time they need to use their energy, and therefore, schools may need to make the time for students to receive enough exercise to stay healthy at their age. This leads to the question of how much recess is necessary to provide children with a healthy amount of movement during the day? Overall I hope to find out if there is a certain type of play that is most beneficial to learning and if the decreased recess time in schools is affecting classroom learning and behavior.

### **Thesis Statement**

A child's most natural method of learning is being eliminated from schools; the value and importance of play seem to have been forgotten. Play enriches the thinking of children and provides them with opportunities to create, invent, reason, and problem solve, thus leading to a higher motivation to learn.

### **Rationale**

When I was in elementary school, recess and/or play time was my favorite part of the day. It was the time I was able to make new friends and use my imagination. Incorporating more play time in elementary schools might be the key to getting children focused to learn. Beginning in first grade, children will be in school all day thus decreasing the amount of free time they have to be creative without any instruction or direction, yet there never seems to be enough time in the school day as it is. How will there be room to add recess? Differentiating instruction so all students get their needs met is a goal many teachers have; what they don't realize is that providing kids with instructed recess is a form of differentiated learning. I believe children will use the knowledge they learn from class and apply it to their play in many different ways. I am surprised at the little amount of play time that young students get in elementary school and am interested to find out whether adding more play time will truly help kids increase their love for school and learning.

### **Key Terms**

What constitutes play will be one of the most challenging terms to define. According to the dictionary, to be at play means to "be engaged in playful activity; amuse

oneself in a way characteristic of children.” It can also mean “engage in recreational activities rather than work; occupy oneself in a diversion, an activity by children that is guided more by imagination than by fixed rules”(Webster’s Dictionary). For this paper, I will be using a more psychological definition established by Piaget. “Piaget describes play as a process where children take reality and work on it in their own way--they fit reality to their own inner understanding and needs” (Carlsson-Paige, 2008, p. 54). In other words play is the time where children can use their imaginations and creativity to create, discover, and make sense of the world around them. This definition includes facilitated or structured play. For instance, a second grade teacher might say to her class, *“It’s play time, however, while you play I want you to keep in mind the story we read this morning and see if you can include what you learned in your play time.”* I am unsure how that would work and if children would follow through, but I hope to figure this out through my research. When implementing play in the classroom, I will be implementing serious play as described by Wassermann. Serious play is defined as play used for learning in the classroom (Wassermann, 2004, p. 95). Using serious play is a differentiated way of teaching and learning. I hope to find out the extent of the benefits serious play will have in the classroom.

The nature of this problem also includes the effect play has on engagement. Engagement is the motivation, participation, and attitude with which children go about their work, listening, and following directions. Engagement is also directly related to student achievement and leads to learning and rewarding experiences (Marks, 2000, p. 154). Engagement is also called learner engagement.

Learner Engagement is extent to which all learners (1) are motivated and committed to learning, (2) have a sense of belonging and accomplishment, and (3) have relationships with adults, peers, and parents that support learning. Indicators include attendance rate and participation rates in extracurricular activities.

Students need to be engaged before they can apply higher order, creative thinking skills. They learn most effectively when the teacher makes sense and meaning of the curriculum material being taught. This can only happen if the teacher has created a safe learning environment that encourages students to meet challenges and apply high rigor skills to real-world, unpredictable situations inside and outside of school (Jones, 2009, p. 24).

This engagement will promote behavior improvement. Behavior improvement can be based on the class as a whole or on individual students. If the entire class environment and attitude has become more positive, then behavior has been improved. Improved behavior will increase children's awareness of respect. Evidence of respect is seen by children's ability to listen and follow directions. Their awareness of when to speak and when to listen are also signs of respect. These terms are difficult to define and will be clearer once the research begins and they relate to specific situations.

### **Delimitations**

To narrow my topic, I have decided to focus on the younger elementary school children; grades K-2. Unfortunately, I will probably not be able to apply the research in this year's class due to a busy schedule that is already planned out by the supporting teacher. Instead I will present what I would do if I could apply increased play into my

own classroom. To fully understand the effects that play might have on children, I would have to find the connection between play and classroom learning. I am aware that structured and directed learning is important; however, it does not replace the natural learning and developmental process achieved through play.

### **Procedures and Organization of the Paper**

My planned procedures will be library research, interviews with both teachers and children, and observing various classroom situations. Following this chapter, I will present my research and provide the evidence necessary that leads into the third chapter. In the third chapter I will present my methods of applying the research in my classroom and hopefully find more evidence to support my argument for more play. The fourth chapter will present my reflections throughout the process and my experience. I am excited to begin this journey and curious about where it will lead me.



## Chapter 2: Research on Play

### Introduction

Research shows the many benefits of play and its relationship to learning, social development, child health, as well as a child's need for breaks and physical activity (Jarrett, 2002, p. 3). This chapter will present the research relevant to the topic of study that will be beneficial to the observation of a first grade classroom and the affects of play. The research showing the relationship of play to learning and social development is most pertinent to this study and has provided some evidence to support the thesis. However, much of the research talks about *free play*, play that is entirely unstructured. The goal of this study is to find out if structured play is an acceptable compensation for free play. This paper does not agree that recess should be decreased. On the contrary, children are not getting enough play time, and because of the time issue that teachers struggle with, I am hoping to discover that structured play can be an opportunity for teachers to get more teaching time and students to get more play time. "Play is an essential part of the learning process throughout life and should not be neglected....Play that is serious and focused within a learning environment can help learners construct more personalized and constructive understanding. As educators, our challenge is to implicate motivation into learning through play and to recognize that play has an important cognitive role in learning" (Reiber, Smith & Noah, 1998, p. 35).

### Research Review and Analysis

It is crucial for adults, parents, and teachers to remember that, in first grade, we are teaching children. To best educate these six and seven-year-olds, we need to reach out

to them as children and not as *little adults*. Carlsson-Paige notes that what is missing from contemporary childhood is creative play and readers are reminded that “all of the great child development theorists, from Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget to Anna Freud and Erik Erikson, saw play as vital to children’s social, emotional, and cognitive growth--and perhaps the most important tool our children have to work through new experiences, ideas, and feelings” (Carlsson-Paige, 2008, p. 53). Lanza, likewise, expresses concern that children are losing their neighborhood fun. Adults are reminded to think back to their childhood and to their fondest memories reminding them of the playing they did, the activities they enjoyed with their others, the running around, and the adventures. Lanza compares these memories with the *modern childhood* of video games, television, and computer games and expresses a strong concern that children are not *playing* anymore (Lanza, 2012). There is a focus on neighborhood play where children interact with other children and are able to develop socially and learn from others around them. “Thus kids of today are far less healthy emotionally, and they have far fewer opportunities to develop social skills, leadership skills, problem-solving skills, independent thinking, and creativity” (Lanza, 2012, p. 5). Lanza’s concept about the “free play problem” addresses the concern that children do not want to go outside to play; instead they stay glued to screens inside. This problem may start in the young ages, but it carries through to the teenage years and even to adulthood. Sometimes it is not until the children reach their teens that the problems become clear.

Although Lanza does not address teachers or the classroom, information is provided that can benefit the classroom. After all, the students spend 30 hours of their

week at school. One of the problems is too much structure. It seems that teachers tend to pack children's' schedules to keep them busy, and there is no time for them to organize, reflect, and absorb all that they do. This lack of free time may be too much for young children. Teachers should be aware of this when they schedule their days. While curriculum demands are high and overloaded, it is important to keep in mind what is best for students. Scheduling every minute of the school day may get you through all the necessary content, but it does not leave the opportunity for children to learn naturally and develop in all areas. Lanza describes how to transform a neighborhood into a playborhood filled with fun for children to play. Classrooms can use this information and create an environment where children have the opportunity throughout the day to learn their own way and use play to discover new things that interest them. This does not need to happen all day or even every day, but teachers should make sure that their schedule is not overpacked, and that children have time to be natural students (Lanza, 2012).

Picture what a child's day would be like without play. Now remember that although play may seem like just a fun thing children do, most experts see play as a "necessary preparation for growing up or, at the very least, as an important and instructional form of exploration" (Time Life Books, 1987, p. 7). Play is a child's natural method for discovering the world around them and making sense of how things work. It shows a child's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development, and is a stimulus to further growth (Time Life Books, 1987, p. 7). Time Life Books goes on to present how psychologists have divided play into three different types: sensorimotor play, physical play, and symbolic play. Sensorimotor play involves the senses and movement and

emphasizes small motor skills. Physical play is all about the action and uses “large muscle skills” (Time Life Books, 1987, p. 11). It allows children to practice previously learned motor skills and develop new ones. The last category of play is Symbolic play. This third type of play involves manipulation of reality. It allows children to use their imagination, mental images, and words to represent real life situations and objects. As a teacher, I hope to be able to use all three of these types of play to enhance children’s learning.

Time Life Books presents the essential benefits of play based on psychologists’ research and theories. “Without the stimulation of play, virtually every aspect of a child’s cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development will be affected” (Time-life books, 1987, p. 15). The development of these areas is key to a child’s future. Teachers can only hope that through their teaching students are developing at appropriate speeds in all these different areas. Incorporating play will help assist their development, and if teaching is done through play, it may give children the ability to increase their knowledge and develop different aspects. The different types of play that develop are broken up by the age of the child (Time-Life Books, 1987, p. 24-36). At six years old, about first grade age, children plan role playing activities that involve other children. A child will “engage in more complicated dramatic play in which he [or she] takes on such real-life roles as fire fighter, teacher, and nurse as well as fanciful characters such as space voyagers, kings, and queens” (Time-Life Books, 1987, p. 34). At this age, they begin to play games that have specific rules, and they have mastered cooperative play. Pretend play involving coordinated roles such as teacher-pupil, doctor-patient, and parent-child is seen more

frequently. The child has developed into an “imaginative, increasingly social playmate, with a well-coordinated body to match” (Time-Life Books, 1987, p. 35). He/she enjoys the company of others and finds rules easier to handle and follow. They can handle goals and physical challenges, and they have an increased willingness to play with other children in a highly structure manner. This is evidence that encourages the idea of structured play as a tool for teaching. Creating games for students to play, with rules and roles for them to follow, will give them time to *play* and learn simultaneously. The structure created gives the opportunity to teach children specific topics. Although Time-Life Books focuses on parents, there is much information relevant for the child in a first grade classroom.

G. W. Bush’s administration claims “play [as] no longer a viable means for learning and that time spent in free play could be used to study phonics” (Zigler, 2000, p. x). Zigler disclaims these policies through both theoretical and practical aspects of play and provides information of its importance and value. This information on the importance of play coincides with the research discussed above stating play as a strong contributor to a child’s intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. Zigler goes on to provide information from Segal who states that play allows children to feel good about themselves and is a way for them to handle their fears, anxieties, and unpleasant experiences. Carlsson-Paige provides a good example:

In the second half of the school year, Ruby [a kindergarten student,] fell ill with spinal meningitis, (or “spider meningitis” as she would later tell her classmates) and was out of school for at least three weeks. Upon her return to the

classroom, she headed straight to the dramatic play corner where I had set up a “hospital,” put on a white coat, and was soon leaning over Sam, one of her favorite play partners and now her “patient.” I remember Ruby listening to his heart..., giving him a shot, and directing him to eat some “medicine”... And I remember her spending much of the next few weeks in the same play area, hovering over one willing patient after another. Slowly, Ruby began spending more time in other parts of the classroom, much before she got sick.

Ruby’s dramatic play during this period was vital for helping her work through her hospital experience. Real play is remarkably creative: a child can be playwright, actor, and director all in one. Every child’s play is different, because every child’s life experience is different. (Carlsson-Paige, 2008, p. 5).

Children at play receive a sense of power that they do not usually have in daily life.

Taking on roles gives them the ability and flexibility to be whom ever they wish, allowing them to act out their thoughts, ideas, and understandings of others in their pretend games. Play focuses on a child’s thinking and puts a child in a position where he or she has to create meaning and understanding for themselves. Zigler provides an example of how playing can be used as part of a lesson:

Louis and Jarrett are sitting in a large box. They are playing ‘fishing’ and the box has become their ‘boat.’ They decorated this box with magic markers, using many colors. With their teacher’s help, they fashioned a fishing pole, using Legos and a long string attached to one end. The boys ‘sail’ out to sea and take turns catching

the fish. When a storm comes, we hear much giggling and silly noises as their ‘boat’ begins to rock back and forth.” (Zigler, 2000, p. ix)

There are many aspects and benefits found in child play. Louis and Jarrett, in this example, not only demonstrate the different aspects of play, but also show how a teacher can promote and enhance a child’s natural tendency to role play. These aspects include children that, “Spontaneously and creatively explore their environment, act out their thinking, and assume the roles and perspectives of others. Natural child play is motivated from within and is free of externally imposed rules” (Buchanan & Cooney, 2000, p. 9). Another aspect of play that Lois and Jarrett are demonstrating is creating their own *meaning* or understanding in play. During this play they are trying to make sense of a fisherman scenario. By watching, one can learn what these kids have understood about fishermen and fishing. Lastly, there are two children who are focusing on the act of playing and not on the goals the teacher may have for them. This aspect shows play as self-sustaining and rewarding because of the satisfaction it provides for Louis and Jarrett.

In a game, like the one above, we see the children using the three different types of play discussed above, and we realize how a teacher can assess students’ understanding of a topic and their developmental stage. Whether the topic was fishers, boats, or something else, the teacher can get a clear understanding of Louis and Jarrett’s understanding and ability to act on it. The teacher was also able to teach them something new by helping them fashion the fishing pole. How they use the fishing pole will give further information about their development and understanding of the topic. The teacher is not the only one that gains by watching these two boys play. The boys are also gaining

and practicing many social skills. Cooperation, sharing, taking turns, working together, and fun are all happening at the same time. These boys are experiencing and gaining knowledge in their own natural way.

Zigler also discusses the importance of symbolic play and defines it as “play during which the child may be using objects in the environment in a way that is quite different from actual purpose of the object. A broom becomes a horse, a banana becomes a telephone, and clay becomes a cookie” (Zigler, 2000, p. xi). Watching children at play can be an eyeopener to understanding how young children learn and make sense of what they are learning. Using this understanding can be beneficial for teachers in the classroom if used appropriately. Carlsson-Paige labels this “pretend play” and discusses in great detail its “profound purpose in [children’s] lives: this kind of play is a powerful vehicle through which they can make sense of their experiences, master difficult life events, and build new ideas” (Carlsson-Paige, 2008, p. 53). For example, a child afraid of spiders pretends that a doll has the same fear and then offers the doll soothing and encouraging words. This is one of the ways children use play to get over their own fears. “No other child would have created a scene exactly like this one. When children engage in this kind of play on an ongoing basis, they are gaining mastery over the challenges of life in a way that enhances their physical, cognitive, and psychic well being (Carlsson-Paige, 2008, p. 54). When children play, they take reality and work on it in their own way, they are processing and reflecting on information. These processing skills are useful in later school years. As people we process information all the time. Our culture is filled with



constant information available to us at any time, therefore, these processing and reflecting skills are extremely valuable.

“Engaging in dramatic play can result in an increased number of mental constructs in very young children, allowing them to experience themselves in new ways, both as an individual and as a member of a group” (Ghiaci & Richardson, 1980). This experience as an individual and a member of a group is what we strive for in schools. Students should feel safe in the group they are in, yet be the individuals that they are. This balance can be challenging especially for younger children. Playing allows for creativity, use of new language, mimicry, divergent ways of problem solving, and practice of verbal and narrative skills that are essential for the development of reading comprehension and other academic skills (Zigler, 2000).

It is important to understand play and how learning through play happens, especially if the goal is to include it in lesson plans. Einon gives a few points about when learning through play most likely occurs. This list includes: “Children feel free to express themselves. Children grow up in an environment that is open to new experiences and opinions. Children are encouraged to manipulate and evaluate ideas. Children are allowed to be original. Children are encouraged to consider more than one solution to a problem. Discipline is firm but not punitive...”(Einon, 2004, p. 9). Other points include: the acceptance of mess, acknowledging achievement, having confidence in children’s abilities, allowing students to continue play when it’s going well, providing support and direction without interference, demonstrating their own creativity and flexibility, exposing children to stories, and encouraging make-believe. All of these points are ideal

but not always realistic in a classroom. How does a teacher provide support and direction without interference? This balance can be extremely difficult. How does one know how much interference is too much or too little and when does giving direction and guiding turn into interference? Every situation is different and needs to be assessed. Sometimes more direction is needed, other times less.

It is important to appreciate the value of children's healthy creative play and to be aware of what teachers can do to support "richer and more meaningful play" (Carlsson-Paige, 2008, p. 65). According to Einon, singing, clapping, movement, and more is all considered play. Getting our students to play does not just mean that they need to be out on the playground. Incorporating play may be introducing a hand clapping game, singing a song, or something as simple as tag, as long as the game/play is relevant to the topic of study. Teachers also need to be aware of what students need in their environment to be able to play creatively. "They need time, a place to play, materials and props, and at times some specific help from adults" (Carlsson-Paige, 2008, p. 65). Props for play are materials that are open ended and can be used as whatever a child needs for the narratives they invent. Making sure that students have the time to use their imaginations and get involved in their own narratives is also valuable. Children are often interrupted multiple times during their play and therefore are less engaged in their own play scenarios. Valuing and supporting imaginative play is the first step, but providing an adequate environment is just as important.

A child's self-esteem and *power* start to develop at a young age. Having a safe and stable environment provides a high chance for that student becoming a healthy adult

(Wassermann, 2004). Giving students opportunities for creative and investigative play allows them to build a positive outlook and empowers them as learners and individual students. This power provides children with ability to discover and understand new things. Wassermann states “play is children’s work and that play experiences are fundamental in the development of children’s personal power” (Wassermann, 2004, p. 15). The power Wassermann talks about is not negative power as in taking control. Instead, when referring to power, “The message given to self is: I can do this! There is something special about me!” (Wassermann, 2004, p. 6). Children need to be seen as persons and their choices need to be respected. Their thoughts and ideas should not be seen as silly, especially when they are playing. Instead, teachers, parents, and other adults should take children seriously and assist them in developing their thoughts and help them correct their thoughts if needed.

Wassermann talks about the situation most teachers find themselves in today. Play is a reward for classwork; it is done *after* finished classwork. A teacher would feel guilty if her students get *too much play*. The role model today is “the achievement-oriented workaholic” (Wassermann, 2004, p. 16). However, the problem with this view is that research tells a different story. Children are learning so much during play, and one can watch them learn what is noteworthy through play; yet there is a want to rid them of their play time.

We see them designing experiments, exploring, investigating, making decisions, solving problems. We see them generate, create, invent. We see them use language more skillfully and relate to each other more successfully. As we

observe young children playing, the boundaries of what is work and what is play evaporate. We know, in fact, that children are working, and in these work-play settings we see what they are learning. We see how play empowers them. Why then is it so hard for us to believe and accept this as good, as having validity in our early childhood programs? (Wassermann, 2004, p. 16)

The research clearly supports play, yet play is decreased. Play is a valuable tool for children to prepare themselves for the future. Wassermann continues to discuss the value of play referring to Piaget, Groos, and Bettelheim's work which argues that, through play, "Children learn that they do not need to give up in despair if things don't work out the first time; that success can be theirs if they persevere" (Wassermann, 2004, p. 16).

Children do not play for rewards; instead they will learn to look for feedback. In addition, play will promote flexibility and openness. It is something that is satisfying and enjoyable; learning becomes something fun that they want to do. *This* is how it empowers them; it is enjoyable and encourages risk taking (within parameters of safety) that broadens their learning experiences. Belief in themselves grows and the belief that they are able to accomplish what they set out to do.

Wassermann provides research evidence from Bruner (1985) that suggests three conditions, which will "strikingly increase the richness and length of play" (Wassermann, 2004, p. 17). These include a playmate, appropriate play materials, and an adult nearby. These conditions are important to consider as a teacher. Children don't usually play by themselves over a longer time period, however, when playing with others, there are two minds working and gives the opportunity for exchange, negotiation of meanings and

rules, and more elaborate interactive play. When planning to have structured play as part of learning teachers should create an environment where students need to play with other classmates; set the standard so that children play together and interact. The second condition, appropriate play materials, should be an obvious one. For any activity done in the classroom, teachers need to provide necessary materials. Puzzles, blocks, and other props are valuable for children if they are relevant and these materials can help children's play last longer and stay focused. Materials that provoke exploration are also noteworthy. Providing material that require students to use their imaginations can only benefit child play. Having an adult nearby means being involved as a teacher, parent or other adult. As a teacher, we are guides who should be observing, assessing, and intervening when necessary during children's learning. This does not change during play. Sometimes adult assistance is necessary for children to be brought back on task. Other times the children will need help to problem solve. Teachers can be there to buffer a situation and provide a response if necessary. These three conditions are valuable to a teacher incorporating play into lesson plans and will be beneficial if applied.

Wassermann discusses *serious play*, which means play used for learning in the classroom. The typical forms of learning such as listening and watching are important, but it is just as important to remember the benefits of learning through play.

Play is another arena that provides fertile ground for children's learning. While observing, listening, and example teach children many things, it is only play that allows active, experiential involvement: testing and trying, manipulating variables,

gathering data in many different contexts, and interpreting data to develop meaningful concepts (Wassermann, 2004, p. 95).

Wassermann discusses the instructional approach “play-debrief-play,” which requires the teacher to “provide opportunities for creative, investigative play, followed by helping children reflect on their play experiences and then encouraging them to build on earlier experiences through replay” (Wassermann, 2004, p. 24). Studies have shown that these types of classrooms become more self-initiating, responsible, creative, and results in inventive students. Their ability to learn and understand concepts within the curriculum grows and develops. This method allows for individualistic learning styles and accounts for differentiated learning. When allowing children to *play* they are receiving the freedom to use their learning strengths. They use their best learning strategy to learn. By debriefing in the middle, students are able to listen to other students learning processes and discoveries. Since it is a teacher guided debrief, s/he can make sure the students are on task, and if not, provide investigation questions that they can use to go back and investigate during the replay. The replay time allows students to use ideas from other students and the teacher to gain more knowledge or to get a better understanding of a concept. The process of play-debrief-replay, provides students an opportunity to be responsible, self motivated, and teaches them to use others as their resources. Play is valuable, but if the debriefing is missing in a classroom setting, the lesson and the play loses its value. The replay is that extra touch that allows students to reassess themselves and *go deeper* into the topic being studied than they went during the *play* time. For Wassermann, the value of this approach is its ability to empower children. This feeling of

empowerment is important for a learner and will increase the motivation and self initiation in the classroom.

Scarlett, Naudeau, Salonijs-Pasternak, and Ponte provide a deeper understanding of the importance of play for young children. Children have many wishes that they cannot satisfy such as driving a car, controlling their parents, and many other things that they see adults do. Most people would get frustrated and even angry with the realization of all the things they can't or are not allowed to do, yet they see others doing them. Children are not different, yet "to escape this predicament and to realize unrealizable wishes, preschoolers [and children in general] play" (Scarlett et al., 2005, p. 53). It is during play that they are able to satisfy those wishes; they drive cars, they act like controlling parents, they take their dolls/toys to the doctors, the list goes on and on. Thinking about child play in this light gives an entirely new perspective. The other two parts of play are interest and anxiety management. Anxiety management occurs when children deal with situations that happen to them or that they witness as discussed earlier. Interest is something that every person has. Certain things spark one's curiosity and lead to motivation. Children's interest is not just in the world they live in, but extends to the past, distant lands and ideas, and fantasies. Scarlett et al. provide the example of dinosaurs. Dinosaurs are fascinating to children because of their size, their diversity, and "for their being monsters that have been tamed into extinction" (Scarlett et al., 2005, p. 53). Make-believe play gives children such satisfaction and fulfillment. Adults and even older children know how to pursue their own interests through research, activity, and study. They fulfill their wishes by doing them and anxiety is usually overcome through

talking to someone like during therapy. Children do all of that through their make-believe play. They are unaware and incapable of using the resources that exist in our societies, so they have their own way. It is important for teachers to value make-believe play and provide time for primary students to engage in this activity.

There are many different theories when it comes to education and learning. Many theories sound wonderful and promising, but only few are actually wonderful when practiced. Bronson and Merryman provide an example of a curriculum for preschool and kindergarten classrooms called Tools of the Mind. This curriculum requires extra training for teachers but does not cost any more than any other curriculum. Even though this curriculum is designed for PreK and Kindergarten classrooms, it can also be implemented in a first grade classroom. Most elements of a school day are the same; lunch, recess, snack time, etc. However, a typical Tools of the Mind classroom feels and looks very different. In this curriculum, children learn through play.

When class begins, the teacher tells the students they will be playing fire station.

The previous week, they learned all about firemen, so now, the classroom has been decorated in four different areas--in one corner is a fire station, in another a house that needs saving. The children choose what role they want to take on in the pretend scenario...Before the children begin to play, they each tell the teacher their choice of the role. With the teacher's help, the children make individual "play plans." They all draw a picture of themselves in their chosen role, then they attempt to write it out as a sentence...For some, the play plan is little more than lines representing each word in the sentence....others use their sound map to



figure out the words...then they go play, sticking to the role designated in their plan (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, p. 161).

The children play for a full 45 minutes, each one interacting with others, and playing out their role. They are self-motivated and they stay in their character. The teacher is there the entire time to make sure that the students stay on task, intervening if necessary to help some get back on track. “During this crucial play hour, the teacher facilitates their play but does not directly teach them anything at all” (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, p. 162).

This facilitated play is the key to this research; it is an example of how play has successfully been incorporated into the classroom. This program has had positive results, yet there are only few schools around the country that have incorporated this method.

Bronson and Merryman report that, “The children from the Tools classes were now almost a full grade-level *ahead* of the national standard. In the district, only half the kindergarteners score as proficient as their grade-level. Of the Tools children, 97% scored as proficient” (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, p. 163). Those are drastic statistics that make one wonder why more schools have not adopted this program.

One of the goals of this program is for children to be able to sustain their own interest. They focus on how to keep the kids engaged. “Kids won’t be distracted because they’re so consumed in activities they’ve chosen” (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, p. 161). By acting out roles that they have created for themselves, they have the motivation to follow through on it. “In one famous Russian study from the 1950’s, children were told to stand still as long as they could--they lasted two minutes. Then a second group of children were told to *pretend* they were soldiers on guard who had to stand still at their

posts--they lasted 11 minutes” (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, p. 166). This presents a scenario where the power of imagination and pretend play speaks for itself. “Play is not only a source of pleasure for children but also an important way for children to learn and practice new behaviors” (Buchanan & Cooney, 2000, p. 4). Educators need to support young children playing because it is a significant child behavior. “It is important for those who spend time with a child to appreciate that the simplest kinds of play provide a foundation for more complex kinds of play”(Buchanan & Cooney, 2000, p. 4), which means that play will only further the development of a child and playing is a vital step of the process.

Teachers need to teach by relating to students abilities. They “need to incorporate opportunities within the curriculum to explore and develop concepts....schedule long periods of playtime as well as provide enriched environments and materials” (Myck-Wayne, 2010, p. 18). One of strengths children have is being able to play, and today they get to play less. Tools of the Mind is aware that during playtime children learn basic developmental skills. These skills are the building blocks for later academic success, and therefore, the curriculum focuses on those building blocks. I hope to use this research as an example for my study. I want to be able to include facilitated play into my lesson plans to keep students engaged, motivated, and interested.

Children love stories; they love to listen to stories as well as tell stories. A child’s eagerness for storytelling gives teachers the ability to make play an easy lesson to incorporate into the day. Motivating students to play out a story (especially but not limited to nonfiction books) gives students a chance to use new vocabulary and new

social interaction, leading them to stronger understandings of diversity in social norms and actions. Finding ways to incorporate play into lessons will probably not be the challenge (Zigler, 2000). The challenge is finding the instructional time to make play a successful and beneficial method of learning. From the research, we find much evidence of the value of play and its importance in a child's development. However, when incorporating play into lessons, a follow up discussion and teacher involvement will be necessary. Play in the classroom will not be free time for the teacher. The teacher needs to be highly involved in the students' play and making sure the students are going in the right direction. If there are misunderstandings on a certain issue, the teacher needs to be ready to intervene and clarify or bring the students back on track. For example, if Louis and Jarrett (in earlier example) pretending to be fishing in a boat all of a sudden caught a whale with their little fishing rod, and the topic of study was fishermen, it would be valuable for the teacher to explain or ask them why that would not be possible. It would be the same if the students were doing a worksheet or other assignment; the teacher is still responsible for ensuring that the students have a correct understanding of the learning information. Ideally, it will be through play that students will have the chance to teach each other. Maybe next time, when Louis plays with another child in class, and that child made the whale catching mistake, Louis would be able to correct and explain why that action does not fit their play.

Most of the research presented so far provides evidence about the benefits of incorporating play into a child's daily schedule. For this paper this is clear evidence that lessons should include forms of play. Teachers and other educators of young students

should be ready and prepared to incorporate play as much as they can. “Make props readily available to support children’s dramatic play. Some of these props might include reading and writing” (Temple, Ogle, Crawford, Freppon, 2011, p. 120). For example if children are acting out a restaurant scene available props that include reading and writing could be a menu written at an appropriate reading level and a pad of paper and a pencil for the waiter or waitress to write down orders. However, it is important to understand that incorporating play into lessons does not replace the time students should be at recess. Recess is extremely valuable in a way that will be different from *structured play*. This paper focuses on structured play and its value if used correctly within lessons, but it is important to understand the benefits of recess as slightly different, yet just as valuable.

Ramstetter, Murray, and Garner (2010) provide a review of the recess-specific literature that yielded a range of articles supporting recess as “beneficial for children’s cognitive, social, emotional and physical functioning” (p. 517). Students need a break from the concentrated academic challenges they face throughout the day; even in the primary grades. Learning the basics such as reading, writing, and basic foundations of math is often undermined. It is easily forgotten how difficult it is to learn how to do the simple daily tasks such as reading and writing. “It [recess] affords the child a time to rest, play, imagine, move and socialize. Following recess, children are more attentive and better able to perform cognitively” (Ramstetter, et al., 2010, p. 519). Many teachers are aware of how fidgety young children get after being in the classroom for longer time periods. It is possible to address this issue by giving them a chance to run around and clear their minds. “Kids learn better when they have the opportunities to move throughout

the day...Life is about learning, but it's also about friendships and establishing relationships" (Patt, 2011, p. 66, 68).

Many of the benefits of structured play are also found during recess. It "promotes social-emotional learning and growth for children, offering them a time to engage in social interactions and to practice and role-play essential social skills" (Ramstetter, et al., 2010, p. 522). Even though recess promotes more social interactions, teachers greatly benefit from it. "In terms of classroom behavior and cognitive focus, whether performed indoors or outdoors, recess made children more attentive and more productive in the classroom. This was found to be true even though, in many cases, the students spent much of their recess time socializing" (Ramstetter, et al., 2010, p. 522). When understanding the full effect that recess has on the *whole child*, it makes no sense why schools all over the country are decreasing the total average minutes per day spent at recess. The time in the day will always be an issue, however, much time is devoted to classroom management and attempting to keep the children focused and engaged. This will never completely go away, but that time can be decreased by allowing students to let out their energy during recess.

The recess debate covers a range of issues regarding when it should be offered, (i.e. before lunch or after) duration and timing of recess, economic considerations, etc. The issue that will benefit this paper, however, is how it affects student learning and the classroom environment. "Because recess is offered in most elementary schools on a daily basis, it provides most children with a co-curricular educational experience supporting their learning in the classroom and their overall growth and development" (Ramstetter, et

al., 2010, p. 523). This unstructured social environment provides that unique allowance for physical exercise and creative, social, and emotional aspects of a child's development.

One of the reasons play and recess is undermined is that there is a lack of understanding about its benefits, and many times it is not even a lack of understanding but forgetting the value play has to offer. Also, teachers or supervisors during recess are unaware of what is safe and what kind of play is acceptable. In other words, when is it necessary to step in and stop certain play? Harlin discusses this challenge that teachers face: "prevalence of dramatic play, play rules and interventions, and attitudes toward rough and tumble play" (Harlin, 2010, p. 190).

The lack of understanding may mean that course content on child development and play needs to be reviewed so that early childhood teachers more fully understand why this type of dramatic play is essential for children to develop social competence, take on different roles, solve problems, and differentiate between play fighting and real fighting. Being equipped with a deeper knowledge of play enable teachers to differentiate whether or not to intervene and, in turn, participate more fully in setting school policies on play (Harlin, 2010, p. 190).

These are challenges that teachers need to learn about and understand. A child's safety is always most important and precedes any research about recess and play, but how does a teacher know when play jeopardizes a child's safety. How does one differentiate between dramatic play and dangerous play? Harvey presents information on the value of dramatic play (especially for boys), but does not present a guide of what dramatic play entails. Teachers, however, should be able to distinguish *bad play* from *good play*. Bad play is the

kind of play that puts children at risk for serious harm. “Lying down on railroad tracks to wait as long as possible for oncoming trains is a dramatic example. But there are less dramatic and much more common examples. Throwing sand at one another and stones at cars are among them, as are the many examples having to do with jumping off and into something” (Scarlett et al., 2005, p. 17). Bad play also includes mean spirited play, which includes making someone else unhappy or terrified, should also be forbidden. This includes teasing (unless it is affectionate teasing among friends), bullying, and beating someone up. Scarlett et al. also talk about a third form of *bad play*, which they call forms of misbehaving play. This category is not always bad, but if it is “chronic and compulsive, it is bad play” (Scarlett et al., 2005, p. 18) and should not be allowed. What this means is that not all misbehavior is bad, it can be part of a child’s learning process. However, when misbehavior reveals psychological problems it is bad. Bad play exists alongside the good play and teachers need to be aware of it, but it should not result in diminishing amounts of recess or removal of play from lesson planning. The benefits of *good play* are too valuable to give up play time for children. Teachers need to take extra precaution that *bad play* is avoided or redirected.

Another issue that has allowed decrease in play opportunities in early education to happen is “that the benefits of play are not easy to understand and assess” (Myck-Wayne, 2010, p. 15). The attitude many educators have is that play is *only* a preparation for real learning, “and as the value of play is questioned in these times of rigorous academic accountability, teachers of young children are faced with either defending the use of play or giving it short shrift in the classroom” (Myck-Wayne, 2010, p. 15). If that is the

mentality that exists, it would make sense to go straight into *real learning* as soon as possible. “This attitude often results in parents and teachers viewing play as irrelevant to the learning process” (Elkind, 2007, p. 6). But research shows that learning and play work together, especially in the primary grades. Learning happens best when children are engaged and are enjoying themselves. It is in a safe and comfortable environment that children are able to learn and mature into developed learners.

### **Synthesis**

There is extensive research that provides evidence for the benefits of structured play, free play, and recess. The key is for educators to remember their audiences. For the primary grades, the audience is a group of children whose natural form of learning is play. “Real-life pretend play situations provide rich opportunities, and sometimes being ‘off-task’ provides valuable support. In play, young children learn to infer and will engage in useful language experiences. Productive play is most likely to occur when the teacher has encouraged it in the primary classroom” (Temple, Ogle, Crawford, Frepponn, 2011, p. 392). It is time for teachers to remember the effect play can have on children in the classroom. The research is available, now it is time to apply the findings to the classroom. This research provides a good basis to encourage a change in the way lessons are taught and the schedules of primary grade classrooms. Not all schools will allow for the necessary changes to be made within the classroom that allow for play to be incorporated into the day’s schedule.

The next chapter will discuss the ideal context in which play is incorporated into the daily classroom and used within lessons as well as a time for students to be *free*.



Chapter Three will also provide example lessons that incorporate play and expected results in implementing this new method of teaching.

## Chapter 3: Application

### **Introduction**

The previous two chapters are based on research. This chapter is strongly influenced by the experience in a first grade classroom as well as the research presented previously. Although no official experiments have been held within the classroom, new insight and thoughts on incorporating play into the classroom from working, teaching, and being a part of a first grade classroom have developed. This chapter will present hypothetical situations and ideas of how to implement different types of play into the classroom. Since no actual data has been collected there will not be any definite conclusions. Instead hypotheses will be made and ideas will be presented using research from the previous chapter and how it can be implemented. Teachers hold the responsibility to be aware of the research that is out there and act upon it. As teachers, new methods and ideas are experimented with and tried out hoping to create the ideal learning environment that allows students to learn the best they can. Thinking about who the students are is the first step.

### **Context**

The experiences that will influence this hypothetical situation come from student teaching experience in a first grade classroom of 25 students (12 boys 13 girls). The school is located in a suburban middle class neighborhood. The school has over 700 students in grades K-5 and classroom sizes range from 15-30 students. Ideally the context in which this trial would best apply would be in a first grade classroom of 15-20 students. A large part of the struggle experienced in first grade classrooms is the management of

18-30 students free playing. It is much more challenging for a teacher to go around and observe 30 students playing than 15. A teacher will have more insight into students' abilities and needs if classroom size is around 15 students. Another solution to the large classroom sizes is to incorporate more teachers within one classroom. For students to have their needs met, more adults are needed to observe them and provide the necessary support.

### **Implementation**

Hypothetically, when applying this research to a first grade classroom, it would be valuable to start most units and some lessons with student experimentation. Allowing students the opportunity to *play* with manipulatives or certain given information would then allow the teacher to see what students know where misconceptions might exist and where teaching focal points may need to be. Math would be a great subject to start applying this research because there are obvious manipulatives that can be used in math. Math is also a subject where students tend to have holes in their knowledge as well as lack a solid understanding of key concepts. Looking at the attached Introductory Geometry Unit (Appendix A) one will see an example of what incorporating play might mean. On day one of this five lesson unit, students are given materials. In this case, two different types of blocks and some school supplies are used. The important part to notice is that there are very limited instructions. Safety and responsible behavior are discussed and the instruction to observe and play will be given. Other than that it is up to the students to use their imaginations and brains to find something to do. Some students may need teacher encouragement if they are not used to having this freedom. Comments like

“*what do you notice about this shape, or what can you do with these blocks?*” may help trigger the student to be creative and explore. Another very important aspect of this first day lesson is that it ends with discussion. Having students play is very important and valuable, but it becomes a great learning experience when the teacher requires students to reflect, ask questions, and make inferences. In a first grade classroom it is very beneficial for the teacher to write down what students are saying in the discussion, that way students can see their thoughts on paper. Another benefit and tool that students have in this lesson is each other. They are going to play with the two different types of blocks as a group. Students need to learn to work together to toss ideas back and forth. This is a natural aspect of play and should be incorporated into learning.

After the first geometry lesson that revolves around play, more specific aspects and objectives are taught. Play on its own is not enough, but play will get students thinking and making conclusion before they are spoon fed information. This allows the opportunity for students to build their own interest in the subject. Questions asked by students will then be answered in different lessons. In this way, students have full control over what they are learning and discovering. Even though the next few days are more structured and have more specific goals than the first day, movement, songs, and manipulatives are still included. Although this is not *free play*, it is still a form of structured play. Instead of just giving students two different types of blocks with the instruction of “go and observe,” students are taught something specific about the blocks and then given the chance to explore. Exploration is a key component of incorporating play into daily lessons.

The next few lessons follow a more structured play form of learning, but the fifth day looks different. This is the last lesson in the geometry mini unit and is also a very important day. Students have gone through different lessons and learned different things, but it is important for students to be able to tie it all together in their own way. This fifth day of the unit allows students to make these connections. The math time is split up into stations that are not as free as the first day, but allow for students to *play*. These stations are set up to allow student to use what they have discovered in the previous lessons and tie it all together. Some stations are more structured, while others are less structured, but they all relate back to what was learned. Just like in the first lesson an important aspect of incorporating play is the getting together and discussing what students did and learned. The last discussion will be a reflection over the entire unit. Students should be encouraged to talk about all aspects of their experience. Along with discussing what they learned and discovered, students should be encouraged to talk about their thoughts and opinions about what they did: Where did they struggle? What did they like and dislike? What is still unclear? These important and valuable questions encourage students to think through their learning process and will be very beneficial and helpful to them and to the teacher. Teachers benefit by receiving insight into the students' thought processes and where individual students are missing clarity and understanding. Even more beneficial for the teacher would be to find a way to schedule smaller group discussions and be able to ask questions that depend on the depth of understanding a student is showing. For students this discussion gives the opportunity to practice putting math into words. They too get the chance to organize and express themselves verbally. These questions will also

require students to make sense of their activities and hopefully make connections and have *ah ha* moments. During discussions the teacher can help guide a student's thoughts to those connections and new understandings. These discussions assess student learning and inform teachers on the direction the next lessons should go. If students show confusion and are not able to make the appropriate connections, more instruction will be needed; however, if students are going above and beyond what was hoped, the teacher should look into finding better ways to challenge students in following lessons.

Implementing play into lessons will not be the biggest challenge, instead the challenge will be how to find out if this incorporation of experimental play positively affects student behavior and or test scores. First grade students haven't completely developed a love or dislike for certain school subjects. They also haven't fully developed learning habits and strategies. Originally the thought of giving students a questionnaire seemed to be a good idea. There would be a survey before and after the unit to see what students thought. If students felt more comfortable with the material taught and if they had more enjoyment, then the implementation of play would have been a success. However, it is uncertain if this would be a beneficial method to measure effectiveness. Changes in behavior is another quality that is difficult to measure. It would be key to find a way to measure student engagement--how long a student is able to stay focused on a task and how long the task sustains their interest and inquiry. At a first grade level, redirecting students and working at keeping students seated and focused consumes much time. Science is typically an easy subject to get students engaged and on task for an extended time, but science is a subject that is taught hands on, allowing students to get

up, talk, and interact with students. A key component to realizing whether incorporating structured play is beneficial would be to see how long a student can be involved, focused, and interested in any task.

Incorporating structured play would not be the only situation to consider implementing into the classroom. The research clearly defines free play in terms of students running around being six and seven year olds. Ideally a teacher would watch her class work and whenever the students start to get restless and unfocused, they would be taken outside for a five to ten minute brain break. A brain break would be a short time for students to run around and play outside. Since it does not seem likely that a teacher would have the time to take students out ten times a day, it would be interesting to see if taking students out for ten minute breaks every hour would impact their learning, engagement, motivation, and behavior. This could be measured by seeing how much more engaged and focused students are at a task after having played outside for ten minutes. As adults it is hard to sit through a multi hour lecture, seminar, or even presentation. How is it that six year olds are expected to sit and learn for that amount of time without a break. For young students to learn, they need to be taught in small doses and they need to have time to be children and learn like children learn.

As a student teacher, I was fortunate to come during the year that the school switched their writing program to Writer's Workshop. The opportunity arose to take over teaching writing and implement this new method. It was a great learning experience for both the cooperating teacher as well as the student teacher. From a variety of books and articles, it seemed that the goal was to allow students the freedom to write about whatever

they want, and in that way giving them the opportunity to take personal interest in their writing. The first mini unit in Writer's Workshop according to "Using Picture Books to Teach Writing With the Traits" by Culham and Coutu (2008), is *Ideas*. The purpose of this mini unit is to teach students how to get ideas for their writing. The book gives examples and ideas of children's books that students can use to help them find ways to get ideas. Appendix B shows an example of a first Writer's Workshop lesson. Looking at the lesson, it is easy to see how small alterations could be made to turn this into a lesson that incorporates play. For example, a prequel to the lesson could be created that allows for students to have a structured play opportunity leading into the lesson. Teaching methods like Writer's Workshop and other individualized learning methods can really work well when incorporating play. When learning gets individualized, it requires teachers to think about their students' ages, abilities, and learning styles. In the early grades such as kindergarden and first, it is no surprise that children need more time to play and opportunities to learn through play.

A good way to start the mini unit on how to find ideas for writing is to give students a scenario and then let them play it out. It may look something like this:

*Good morning students! This morning we will have 30 minutes of play time, but I would like to tell you what you are going to play. I have a question for all of you, What does an author do? At this time students will be raising their hands with suggestions and answers. We read a lot of books in this classroom. Sometimes I read to you, other times you read to yourself, and sometimes you read to each other. Today during your 30 minutes of play time I want you to find a small group*



*of other students and pretend to be authors. You know where to find pencils and papers, and if you need any other materials you can come to me. I will be the shop owner who knows all the answers to your questions and has the supplies you need. All right students, close your eyes... picture yourself being your favorite author. Maybe it is Dr. Seuss or Eric Carle, or even someone else.*

At this moment the teacher lets students go do what they want. At first the teacher should not interfere, but after a few minutes it is important to walk around and talk to students asking them questions about what they are doing and who they are. A teacher can even pretend to be an interviewer and go around with a video camera and interview students. This tape can later be played for the students to watch and discuss their roles as authors. If students seem to be struggling, it may be necessary to watch some YouTube videos or other movie clips that show author interviews. A student's background and life experiences will strongly affect the reaction they have to a role playing activity. Children that have the opportunity to play with siblings or other students on a regular basis may be used to the idea of pretending to be someone or something else. However, students that spend most of their time alone or in front of a television screen may not understand what is asked of them or even feel strange in a pretend situation. Following the activity of students *acting* like authors, the class gathers and discusses what was played. There are many children's books about writing and authors that can be read to the students either before or after the activity. The follow up discussion should stay on the topic of "how can I be an author in this class?"

The following writing lesson would be similar to the one presented in Appendix B. The teacher would read the students a book on how to get ideas for their writing and students would try to do the same. Taking the students out on a walk to look for ideas around them incorporates a form of *play*. Students have some degree of freedom to think and work the way they want to. To get an idea, as a teacher, about whether the first two writing lessons were effective, the teacher should examine the students' writing and behavior during the writing activity. It is typically easy to tell if first graders are enjoying themselves or not. Are the students engaged and working? Does the teacher have to enforce quiet time and work time, or are students self-motivated and excited to write? It is hoped that the extra *play* time incorporated into the lesson will cause students to show more enjoyment, excitement, and motivation in their writing. Students will look forward to writing about something they celebrate and get the opportunity to practice being an author.

Writer's Workshop Implementation Day 5: Something Out of Nothing (Appendix C) continues to work on the skill of coming up with ideas for writing. Looking at the lesson plan, it is easy to see that the structure follows these overall steps: read a story and have students try to do something similar. A simple way to change or modify this lesson to better incorporate a form of play is to take students outside, or even in the classroom, and tell them to go create something. "*Be creative and go make something*" would be the simple instruction to give them. It would be interesting to see what students do at this point. Ideally, students will go off either on their own or in a small group and do a variety of different activities. After a short amount of time, the teacher can go around the

classroom from student to student (or group of students) and have short discussions about what they are doing, how they came up with the idea of what they are doing, and if they are enjoying themselves. However, a more likely situation would be that students are not used to getting so much freedom in school, and therefore have no idea what to do. If that is the case, then the teacher would give some suggestions and provide a few more instructions. Examples of more instruction may be: *you could go create a drawing, or maybe you can cut something out of paper. Perhaps you could use the blocks we have in the classroom to create something or even just use your pencil and create a piece of writing.* Ideally the less that is said, the better. This is an opportunity for students to show their creative side and use their imaginations to find something to create. In our society today, young children are not given the opportunity to use their imaginations as much as they may like, and therefore they lose or forget what it means to be creative. A teacher that constantly incorporates play into the classroom will eventually have students that are comfortable with simple instructions that require students to think and be creative. After giving the students a chance to play and create things, it would be time to discuss as a class what was done. Then (this lesson may go on to the next day) the teacher would read the book and follow the lesson as planned out in Appendix C. The effectiveness of the structured play could be measured based on student motivation and engagement during the writing assignment the next day. It could also be measured by the writing produced by the students.

Appendix D demonstrates a lesson plan that incorporates play in a very structured way. By using marshmallows as a math manipulative, and having students “eat them in a

special way,” the students receive a fun, interactive way of learning how to solve math problems that seems relevant and important to them. The lesson demonstrates how the teacher can make students *play* while practicing math problems. To pass the control of learning over to the students, the teacher may find it necessary to allow students to take the teacher role and talk the other students through a word problem. Another possibility is to do the marshmallow activity in small groups. That way every student gets the opportunity to manipulate the marshmallows in their own way and practices creating word problems and solving them.

Incorporating play does not have to be a drastic change. A basic way to integrate play is to find ways to allow students to have more free time and less instruction. However, it is important to keep in mind that the examples above are ways of implementing structured play. Much of the research presented in the earlier chapter refers to free play--the play that allows children to run around outside and be children. Earlier in this chapter the idea of incorporating 10 minute breaks every hour or between subjects was presented. It is important to realize that this may have a different and/or better affect on students than the incorporation of structured play into lessons. In other words, one way to incorporate play would be to alter the lesson plans; however, a better way might be to make time for 10 minutes breaks every hour. Ideally the implementation of these breaks would require less time for classroom management and redirecting students. Using play may be easier for some teachers and more challenging for others because it requires the teacher to make time in the day for more recess. That may mean cutting lessons short or finding other ways to have the extra time. After a while a teacher may find that the

extra recess reduces the time necessary to redirect students and gives teachers more to complete everything on schedule. It may also mean that daily schedules need to be rewritten and reorganized to make time for the students to be children.

### **Conclusion**

Finding the right way to implement more play into the day is not easy. There are a variety of ways to go about applying the research into the classroom. The goal is to find a way to create a better learning environment in the classroom. First graders are young children that clearly use play as a learning strategy. Our society is not structured in a way that finds this acceptable; however, it is a teacher's job to find out what is best for the students so that they have the opportunities they deserve to succeed at whatever they want. The following chapter will relate this research to the *ideal* classroom of today. The *ideal* classroom nowadays and the topic of discussion in many professional development meetings (PLC) and staff meetings is a *student run* or *student centered* classroom. The goal is to shift the focus from the teacher to the students. Creating this student focused classroom and fully understanding what this ideal classroom looks like and how it is run is still a process. Ideally, it sounds great to have a student centered classroom, and it will go hand in hand with incorporating play into the classroom.

## Chapter 4: Summary and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

Based on the research provided and from my personal experiences in a first grade classroom, one can see how a child's most natural method of learning is play. A child creates, invents, reasons, and problems solves through play. My thesis claims that providing students with the opportunity to use play will lead to a higher motivation to learn. Having worked in a first grade classroom for most of the year, my desire and goal to help students develop higher learning motivation has strengthened. I believe that with strong motivation, students can and will become life long learners. However, primary teachers have to keep three goals in mind: (1) Find the way back to the natural learning process, (2) Remember who the audience is, (3) Search for the best way to make a change. Change is not easy and can promote challenges depending on the district or the school principal's regulations. Implementing a ten-minute break every hour may not be allowed at certain schools. Today's classrooms are test and data driven and breaks may seem like a waste of time. This may make it challenging for a teacher to implement more play breaks. In these situations, it would be key to incorporate as much play as possible into lessons. Giving first grade students a chance to learn through play may result in better test scores and data points. Ideally it will provide students with motivation and a self-derived goal to discover and learn new things. These lessons are what will hopefully go with them from grade to grade and will affect their entire school experience. Teachers need to try to bring fun and the natural love for learning back to the classroom. It starts with the teachers understanding their primary leveled students.

### Reflection

I believe the research to support my thesis is available, and based on my observations and work in a first grade classroom, adding more *play*, whether structured or unstructured, will benefit primary classrooms. However, since I was unable to implement or test my thesis in the classroom, I cannot make any definite conclusions. Depending on the flexibility given to me as a teacher, I would hold two different types of studies. First, I would test the effect a ten-minute break every hour would have on students' motivation, enthusiasm, and excitement for learning. Second, I would find out what kinds of changes to daily lessons increase interest, motivation, and enthusiasm. Lessons need to be adapted to involve the whole child. More hands on activities are necessary and students should be given the time to explore concepts and lessons freely. One clear way of doing this is by giving students projects to complete individually as well as in groups. Students need the opportunity to talk about their work with other students as well as find ways to learn independently. Engaging students does not mean giving them more activities and more assignments, instead it means less, but with quality time for exploration and understanding. We live in the age of information and there is so much we can teach or assign our students to do, however, it is our job to find the most meaningful and engaging activities and allow students to get a deep and thorough understanding of whatever they are learning. The goal is to motivate students and make learning a natural part of their lives. "When educating the minds of our youth, we must not forget to educate their hearts" (Dalai Lama). Learning should not be seen as something students do in school or during homework. Learning should be what life is all about. It should include

discovering, exploring, and promoting curiosity. Students need to understand that learning can be done without a teacher standing in front of a classroom talking and that learning can happen anywhere in many different ways. As teachers we need to remember the whole child and strive to educate them not only academically but also emotionally, socially, and developmentally as well. Play incorporates the whole child. It is during play that one can get to know a child socially, developmentally, and emotionally.

### **Conclusion**

Considering the research, I believe that incorporating play in some way can positively influence primary classrooms. Finland is ranked number one in global student academic performance whereas the United States is ranked seventeenth. Sahlberg, the director general of the Center for International Mobility and Cooperation had this advice to give to the United States, “The U.S. would benefit from understanding that children must have time to play in school and out of school...because using your mind and imagination and creativity are becoming so important, and you can only develop it systematically if you allow your children to...develop the skills and abilities to play.” Teachers need to keep in mind that they are teaching children and not young adults. These children deserve to learn in a way that comes naturally to them. Just play isn’t enough, but it would greatly benefit students if they were able to incorporate their natural way of learning as well as develop new learning strategies. As children get older play becomes less meaningful. More structure and newly developed learning strategies need to be implemented. However, this does not mean that discovery and inquiry should be eliminated from lessons. What it does mean is that finding age appropriate teaching



methods is a key component of being a teacher. First graders are still learning through play and they need to be given the opportunity to learn in that way. Free play can be transformed into increasingly structured play as students build new and enhanced learning strategies. Teaching and learning should be student centered. We need to give students the opportunities they need to become life long learners and to love learning. The secret is to keep the natural desire to learn alive in students. As my sister told me regarding her trip to South African rural schools, “The children loved to do school work and they were desperate to learn. School wasn’t an obligation, it was a privilege, an opportunity to open doors and windows to one’s life.” It is my hope that we can bring a love for learning back into our schools here in America.

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# Appendix A

## 5 Day Geometry Lesson

created with  taskstream

**Author:** Kirsten Gosch and Ronit Pitrone

**Based on lesson by:**

**Date created:** 10/11/2012 1:33 PM MST ; **Date modified:** 02/05/2013 6:27 PM MST

### Basic Information

<b>Summary</b>	This 5 day lesson unit will be an introduction to geometry. It will cover the topics of shape names, shape rotations, shape attributes, shape comparison, and shape combinations. Students will get the opportunity to play with shapes and use them to accomplish different activities and tasks. The lessons will be hands on as well as verbal. The goal is to have students gain a strong understanding of basic shapes and basic attributes such as color, size, thickness, and shape.
<b>Grade/Level</b>	Grade 1
<b>Time Frame</b>	5 Days
<b>Subject(s)</b>	Mathematics
<b>Topic(s)</b>	Geometry

### Standards And Key Concepts

#### Standards

**Display:**  Collapse All  Expand All

#### ▼ USA- Common Core State Standards (June 2010)

##### ▼ Subject: Mathematics

##### **Standard for Mathematical Practice:**

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. Mathematically proficient students start by explaining to themselves the meaning of a problem and looking for entry points to its solution. They analyze givens, constraints, relationships, and goals. They make conjectures about the form and meaning of the solution and plan a solution pathway rather than simply jumping into a solution attempt. They consider analogous problems, and try special cases and simpler forms of the original problem in order to gain insight into its solution. They monitor and evaluate their progress and change course if necessary. Older students might, depending on the context of the problem, transform algebraic expressions or change the viewing window on their graphing calculator to get the information they need. Mathematically proficient students can explain correspondences between equations, verbal descriptions, tables, and graphs or draw diagrams of important features and relationships, graph data, and search for regularity or trends. Younger students might rely on using concrete objects or pictures to help conceptualize and solve a problem. Mathematically proficient students check their answers to problems using a different method, and they continually ask themselves, "Does this make sense?" They can understand the approaches of others to solving complex problems and identify correspondences between different approaches.

##### **Standard for Mathematical Practice:**

3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others. Mathematically proficient students understand and use stated assumptions, definitions, and previously established results in constructing arguments. They make conjectures and build a logical

progression of statements to explore the truth of their conjectures. They are able to analyze situations by breaking them into cases, and can recognize and use counterexamples. They justify their conclusions, communicate them to others, and respond to the arguments of others. They reason inductively about data, making plausible arguments that take into account the context from which the data arose. Mathematically proficient students are also able to compare the effectiveness of two plausible arguments, distinguish correct logic or reasoning from that which is flawed, and—if there is a flaw in an argument—explain what it is. Elementary students can construct arguments using concrete referents such as objects, drawings, diagrams, and actions. Such arguments can make sense and be correct, even though they are not generalized or made formal until later grades. Later, students learn to determine domains to which an argument applies. Students at all grades can listen or read the arguments of others, decide whether they make sense, and ask useful questions to clarify or improve the arguments.

**Standard for Mathematical Practice:**

4. Model with mathematics. Mathematically proficient students can apply the mathematics they know to solve problems arising in everyday life, society, and the workplace. In early grades, this might be as simple as writing an addition equation to describe a situation. In middle grades, a student might apply proportional reasoning to plan a school event or analyze a problem in the community. By high school, a student might use geometry to solve a design problem or use a function to describe how one quantity of interest depends on another. Mathematically proficient students who can apply what they know are comfortable making assumptions and approximations to simplify a complicated situation, realizing that these may need revision later. They are able to identify important quantities in a practical situation and map their relationships using such tools as diagrams, two-way tables, graphs, flowcharts and formulas. They can analyze those relationships mathematically to draw conclusions. They routinely interpret their mathematical results in the context of the situation and reflect on whether the results make sense, possibly improving the model if it has not served its purpose.

**Standard for Mathematical Practice:**

5. Use appropriate tools strategically. Mathematically proficient students consider the available tools when solving a mathematical problem. These tools might include pencil and paper, concrete models, a ruler, a protractor, a calculator, a spreadsheet, a computer algebra system, a statistical package, or dynamic geometry software. Proficient students are sufficiently familiar with tools appropriate for their grade or course to make sound decisions about when each of these tools might be helpful, recognizing both the insight to be gained and their limitations. For example, mathematically proficient high school students analyze graphs of functions and solutions generated using a graphing calculator. They detect possible errors by strategically using estimation and other mathematical knowledge. When making mathematical models, they know that technology can enable them to visualize the results of varying assumptions, explore consequences, and compare predictions with data. Mathematically proficient students at various grade levels are able to identify relevant external mathematical resources, such as digital content located on a website, and use them to pose or solve problems. They are able to use technological tools to explore and deepen their understanding of concepts.

**Standard for Mathematical Practice:**

6. Attend to precision. Mathematically proficient students try to communicate precisely to others. They try to use clear definitions in discussion with others and in their own reasoning. They state the meaning of the symbols they choose, including using the equal sign consistently and appropriately. They are careful about specifying units of measure, and labeling axes to clarify the correspondence with quantities in a problem. They calculate accurately and efficiently, express numerical answers with a degree of precision appropriate for the problem context. In the elementary grades, students give carefully formulated explanations to each other. By the time they reach high school they have learned to examine claims and make explicit use of definitions.

▼ **Grade:** Grade 1

▼ **Domain:** Geometry 1.G

**Entire Cluster:**

Reason with shapes and their attributes. 1. Distinguish between defining attributes (e.g., triangles are closed and three-sided) versus non-defining attributes (e.g., color, orientation, overall size); build and draw shapes to possess defining attributes. 2. Compose two-dimensional shapes (rectangles, squares, trapezoids, triangles, half-circles, and quarter-circles) or three-dimensional shapes (cubes, right rectangular prisms, right circular cones, and right circular cylinders) to create a composite shape, and compose new shapes from the composite shape.4 3. Partition circles and rectangles into two and four equal shares, describe the shares using the words halves, fourths, and quarters, and use the phrases half of, fourth of, and quarter of. Describe the whole as two of, or four of the shares. Understand for these examples that decomposing into more equal shares creates smaller shares.

▼ **Cluster:** Reason with shapes and their attributes.

**Standard:**

1. Distinguish between defining attributes (e.g., triangles are closed and three-sided) versus non-defining attributes (e.g., color, orientation, overall size); build and draw shapes to possess defining attributes.

**Standard:**

2. Compose two-dimensional shapes (rectangles, squares, trapezoids, triangles, half-circles, and quarter-circles) or three-dimensional shapes (cubes, right rectangular prisms, right circular cones, and right circular cylinders) to create a composite shape, and compose new shapes from the composite shape.4

## Objectives

### Part A

#### Students will know or understand:

Day 1:

1. The differences between pattern block shapes and attribute blocks
2. How to observe and discuss the differences between different pattern block shapes and attribute blocks

Day 2:

1. The names of different shapes.
2. Rotation of shapes.
3. Differences between shapes.

Day 3:

1. What attributes are
2. Shape Combinations

Day 4:

1. What attributes are
2. know specific shape attributes
3. How to compare shapes



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Day 5:

1. How to manipulate shapes
2. How to use and recognize shapes
3. How to use shapes in different ways

**Part B**

**Based on what the students know and understand they will be able to:**

Day 1:

1. Discuss different attributes that the pattern blocks have differences between the pattern blocks.
2. Make a list of the different shapes they recognize and describe the shape.

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Day 2:

1. Name shapes
2. Rotate shapes
3. Identify rotated shapes
4. Trace/Draw different rotations of shapes
5. Compare shapes

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Day 3:

1. Combine shapes to create more complex Shapes.
2. Recognize the different attributes
3. Differentiate attribute blocks
4. Identify shapes that match
5. Compare shapes
6. Notice attributes that are similar and different

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Day 4:

1. Recognize different attributes
2. Compare shapes based on attributes
3. Identify shapes
4. Talk about different shapes
5. Differentiate between shapes

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Day 5:

1. Create a scene using shapes
2. Understand how to create other shapes and more complex shapes using basic shapes
3. Notice different attributes
4. Draw different shapes
5. Talk about what they have learned

**Materials and Resources**

Pattern Blocks, Attribute Blocks, Worksheets, Regular School Supplies, **White boards???**

**Proactive Management**

- Discuss appropriate manipulatives behavior before starting

- Make consequences clear
- Play time (experimenting time) before starting
- During lessons point out model students
- Seating/grouping students
- 

## Learning Experiences And Resources

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### Introduction

The First day will be our Introduction and our anticipatory set. There will be two stations, one with pattern blocks and one with attribute blocks. The students will spend 10 minutes at each station just experimenting with the blocks. They will be told to try and see what they can figure out about shapes. There will be pieces of paper and pencil at each station if the students want to record anything. This activity will introduce them to the geometry unit. It will give them a chance to experiment, observe, and "play." It will also allow the teacher to get an idea of what her students know or can figure out. After the whole class has been at each station, students will gather together for a discussion. The teacher will make a list of all the things the students have learned and discovered during their "play time." The teacher will label the list geometry and tell the students what geometry is.

### Development

Day 1:

- Students will be split up into 4 groups. Two of the groups will start out with some pattern blocks, and the other two with attribute blocks.
- Each group will have paper, pencils, and crayons on their tables.
- Acceptable behavior when playing with blocks will be discussed.
- Students will be told to observe and play with the shapes. They can use paper, pencils, crayons and the blocks they have in front of them. They will also be told to notice differences between the shapes.
- After ten minutes the groups will rotate. Those that had the pattern blocks will now go to the attribute blocks and vice versa. The same instructions apply.
- The students will stay at this station for another ten minutes before gathering on the floor for discussion.
- The teacher will start a list and name it "Geometry." Students will then talk about what they did at their stations and what they observed. (The teacher will make a list of what they said)

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Day 2:

1. The class will start with an active activity that requires students to sing and move. This song is about shapes and their traits. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUMUaxiPUlo&feature=related>
2. Students will be directed to the grid on their Math Board. The squares will be pointed out and described as being one inch wide by one inch high (demonstrate on teacher Math Board). The teacher will then ask children to draw a rectangle on the grid that is 4 inches long and 2 inches high. Rotate the Math Board one quarter turn clockwise,

- and ask children to do the same with their grids. Call on some students to describe the rectangle now. Demonstrate to the students how to draw the new rectangle on the board. *How is the second rectangle different from the first rectangle?* Do another example.
3. Students will then clear their desks and get ready to move onto the next activity.
  4. In partners the class will use pattern blocks to trace shapes. The students will pick one shape and trace it onto a piece of paper. Next, they will use the same shape, rotate it, and trace it again. The students will be told to trace as many different looking rotations that they can using that one shape. Next they will move onto another shape.
  5. After they have had time experimenting with the rotation of shapes they will get Worksheet 7+8\*. This worksheet requires them to color all of the same shapes in the same color. The worksheet will help teachers identify those students who have an understanding of shape rotations and those who do not. (Worksheet pages 7 and 8).

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Day 3:

1. Start with the shape song for review <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUMUaxiPUlo&feature=related>
2. Students will get Worksheets 18 and 19\*. They will use pattern blocks to help them cover and trace the shapes.
3. Students will discuss and share what shapes they used to fill the shapes on the worksheet
4. On a blank piece of paper students will come up with their own complex shapes by combining shapes.
5. The teacher will provide students with the goal of creating a square using other shapes. Students will be challenged to create rectangles, trapezoids, and hexagons using other shapes.
6. Students will then partner up and share their findings with their partners
7. The class will then move on to start the next lesson, which will be continued the following day: talking about different attributes
8. Hand out attribute blocks and have students discuss with their shoulder partners differences and similarities.
9. Discuss the similarities and differences that were observed
10. Go over Worksheet 21\*. *Cover the shapes with blocks that match. Circle the word that tells how each pair is different.*
11. Have students make a list of the different attributes they noticed and then create a list with the whole class.

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Day 4:

1. Start with the shape song for review: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUMUaxiPUlo&feature=related>
2. Have students pull out the list of attributes from the day before and discuss what the attributes tell us. (*They tell us different ways to describe and compare shapes*).
3. Hand out Worksheet 22\* and have students work independently using attribute blocks.
4. Go over worksheet as a class.
5. Have students do Worksheet 26 and 27\* in groups and collect the worksheet.

- To challenge students who are ahead, or if other students finish early have them work on Worksheet 27\*.

Day 5: Review and reinforcement

This day will be split up into stations:

- Station 1:** Students will complete Worksheet 16 and 17\*. They will have to select different attribute blocks that match what is written in the box. For example, if the box says All Y blocks with 4 sides, students will have to select and trace all the attribute blocks that fit that description.
- Station 2:** Students will create an artistic scene using pattern blocks. They will get a large piece of white paper and need to trace pattern blocks to make a picture. They also need to color in the picture and make a list of the shapes they have used.
- Station 3:** Students will work on recognizing different attributes on shapes. They will complete Worksheets 28, 31, and 32\*.
- Station 4:** Students will find the mystery blocks based on a series of clues (Worksheet 38-39\*).
- Station 5:** Students will play the shape train game (*see below for instructions*).
- After completion of the stations, students will gather together and discuss the stations and the geometry unit. As a whole class, the students will create a list of things they have learned.
- The shape song will be played again: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUMUaxiPUlo&feature=related>

SHAPE TRAIN GAME INSTRUCTIONS:

1.) Hold up two attribute blocks. Ask children how the blocks are alike and different. Tell children that they will be playing a game that will ask them to tell how the attributes of one block differ from the attributes of another block.

Directions:

- The blocks are placed in the center of the playing surface.
- The first player takes a block and puts it down to start a train.
- The second player chooses a block that is different in only one way-- in shape, size, or color--from the first block. The second player adds that block to the train.
- Players continue to take turns until no more blocks can be played.

\* Worksheets are attached at the end.

### Conclusion

To conclude students will present their scenes/ pictures they created by tracing pattern blocks (this was done in station 2). During their presentation, they will talk about the different shapes they used, how they rotated shapes to fit their picture, and what some shape attributes are.

### Differentiated Instruction

This unit contains visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and hands-on instruction.

Topics are introduced and revisited as well as built upon. If students are unable to grasp a concept the first time around, they will have another chance and more time to experiment with manipulatives to gain a deeper understanding.

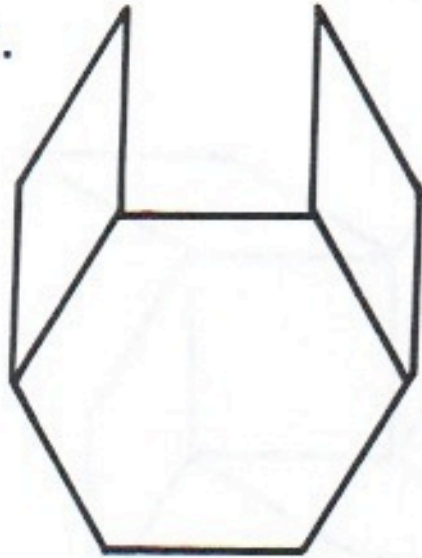
**Assessment**

Students will be assessed on their work, participation, effort, and worksheets that they complete during this five day unit.

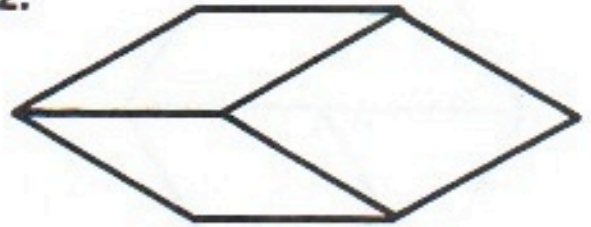


Cover with blocks that match.  
Color the shapes to match the blocks.

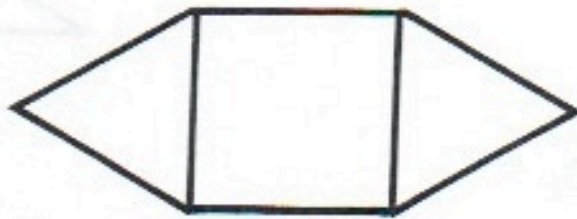
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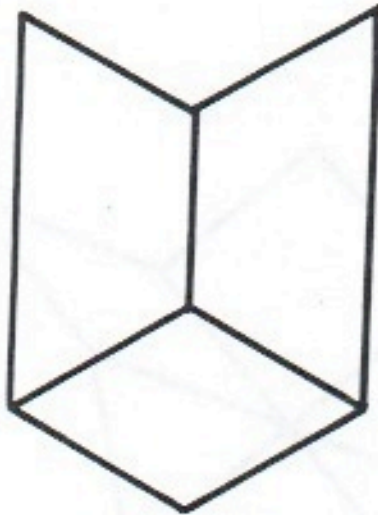
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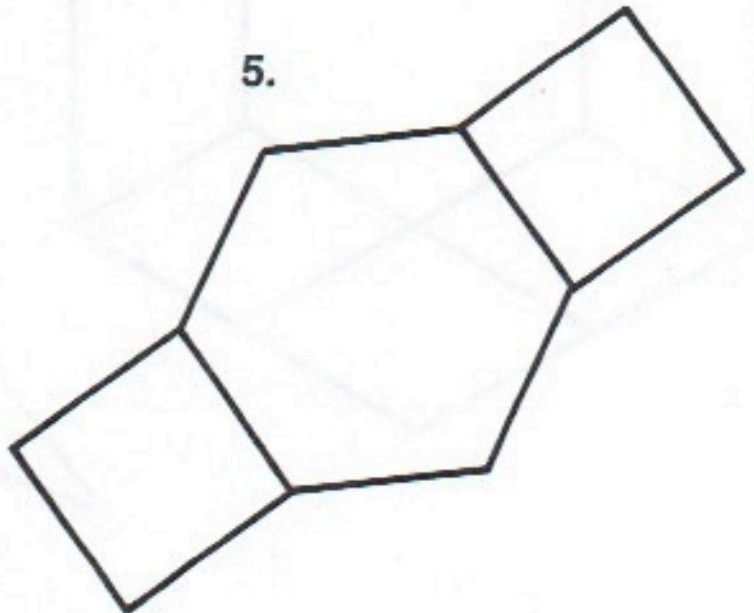
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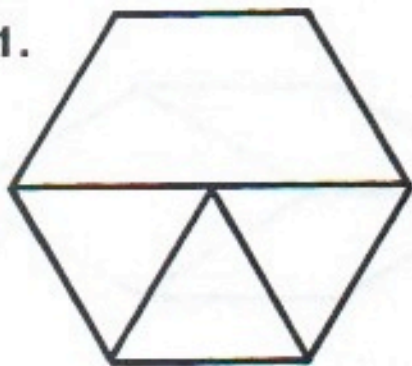
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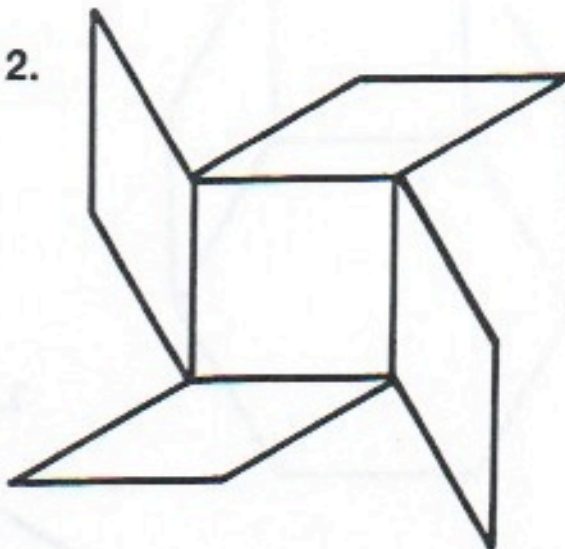


Cover with blocks that match.  
Color the shapes to match the blocks.

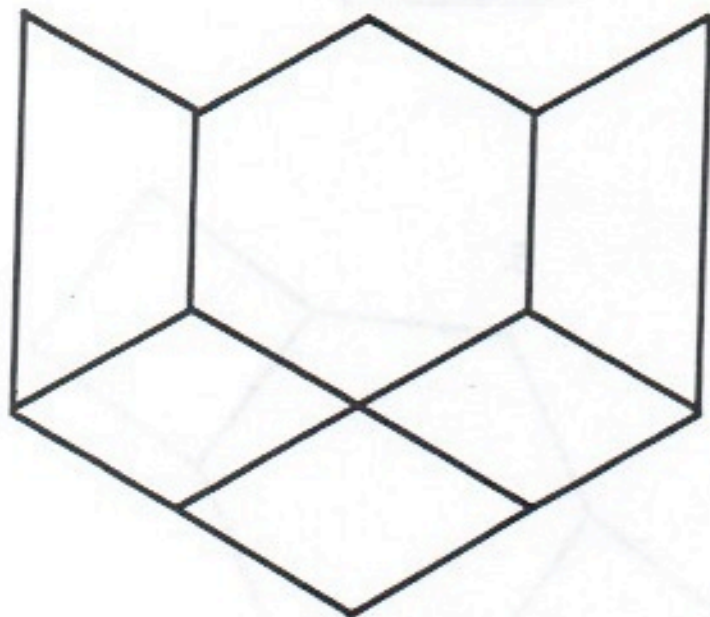
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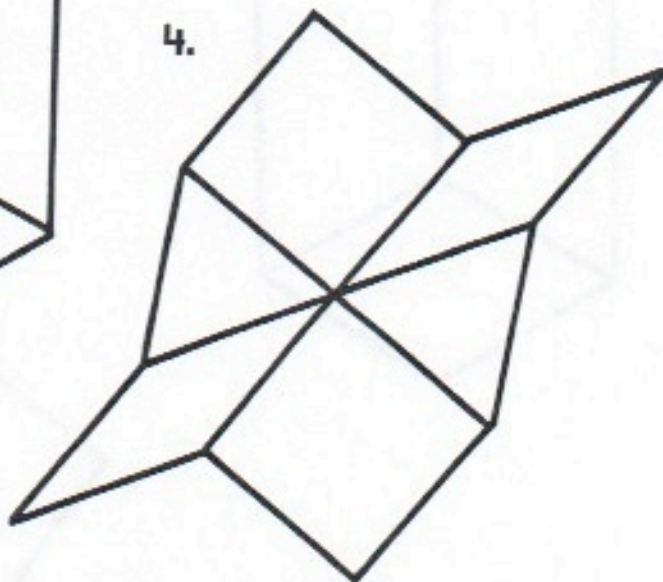
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Cover with blocks and trace around them.  
Color the shapes.

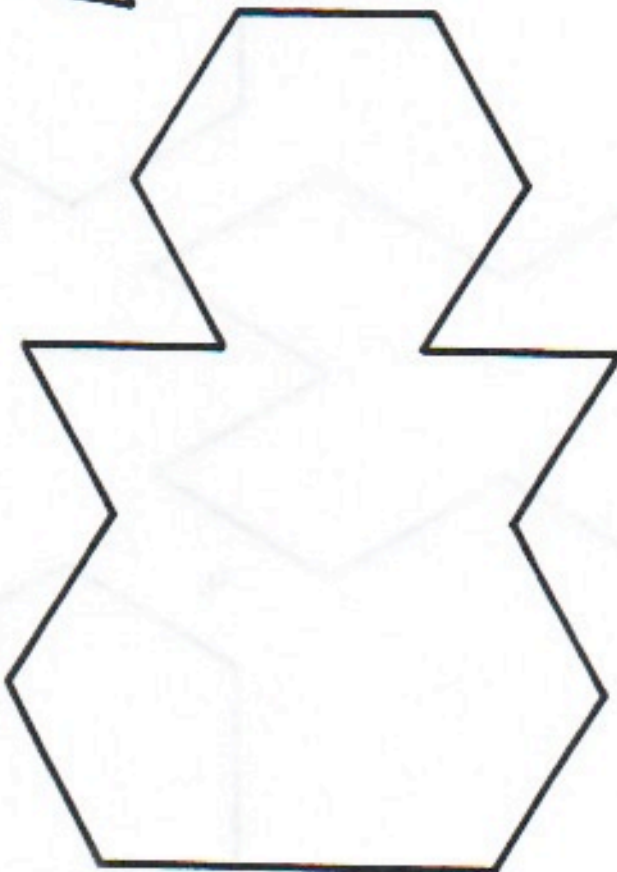
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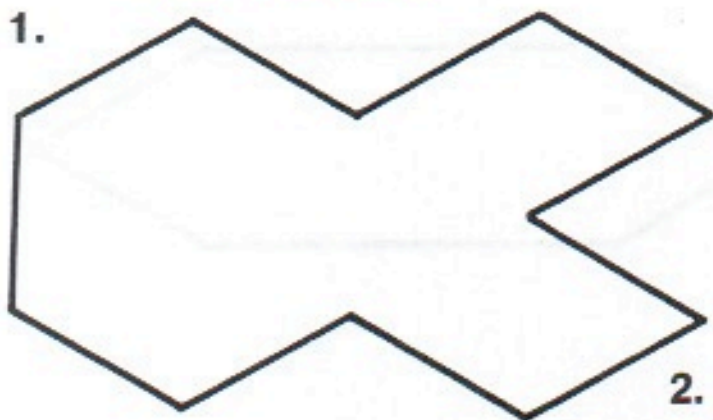




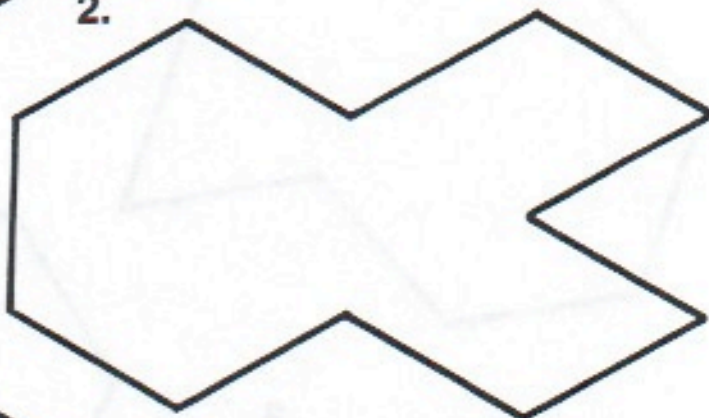


Cover with blocks in 4 different ways.  
Trace and color.

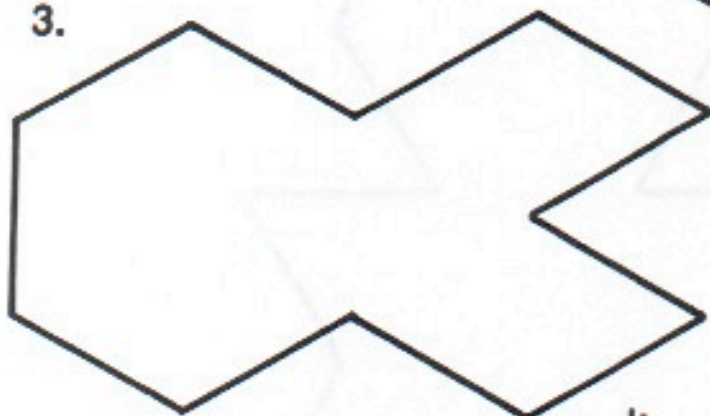
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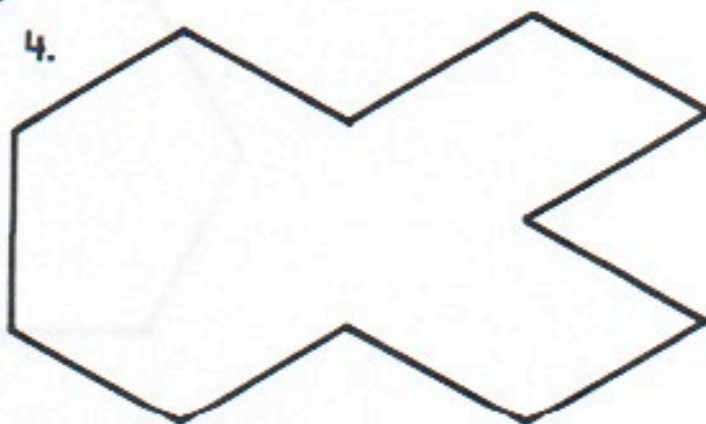
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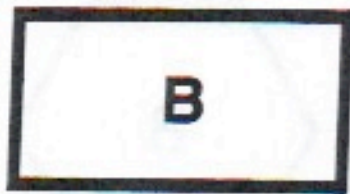
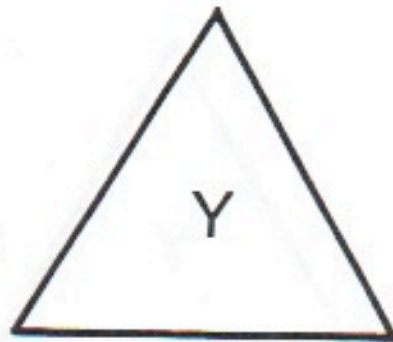




Cover the shapes with blocks that match. Circle the word that tells how each pair is different.



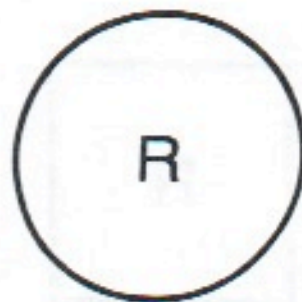
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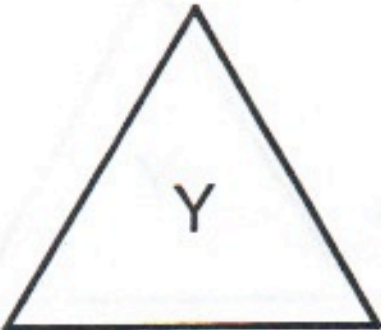


color  
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Cover the shapes with blocks that match. Circle the word that tells how each pair is different.





color  
shape  
thickness



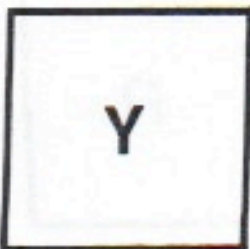


color  
shape  
thickness



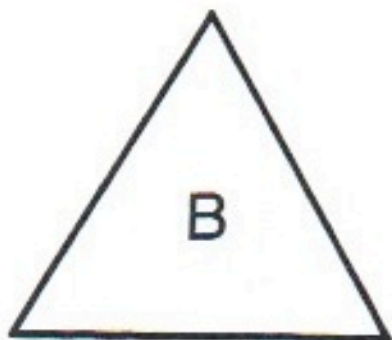


color  
shape  
thickness

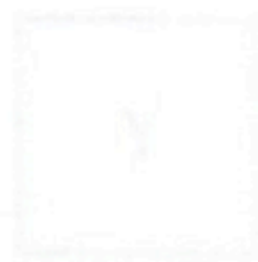




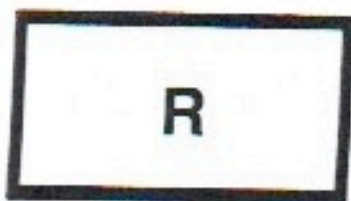
Find a block that is different in 1 way from the block in the box. The word tells you how the blocks are different. Trace and color.



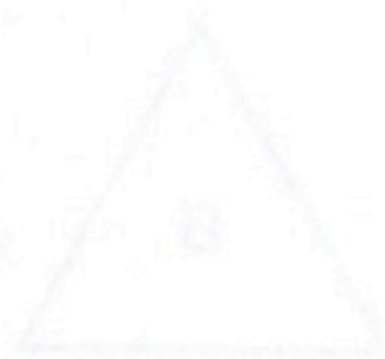
shape



shape



shape





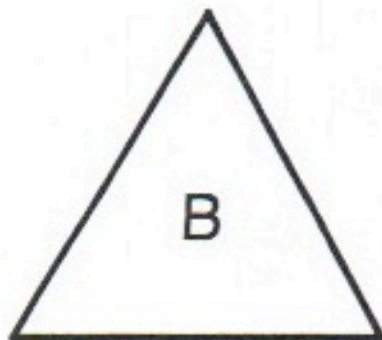
Find a block that is different in 1 way from the block in the box. The word tells you how the blocks are different. Trace and color.



shape



shape



shape





Put the blocks in the boxes.  
Trace and color.

All blocks with 3 sides

All R blocks with 3 sides



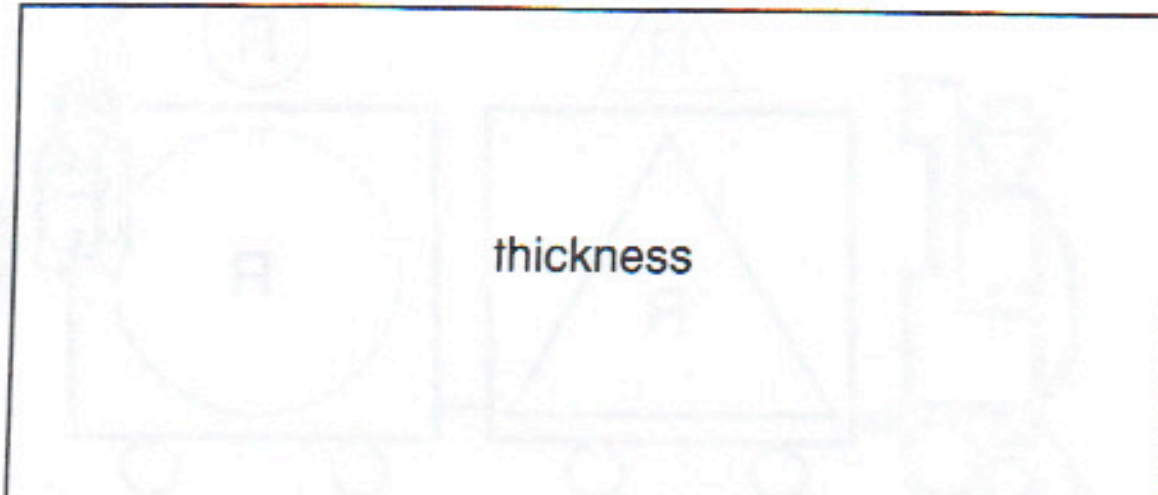
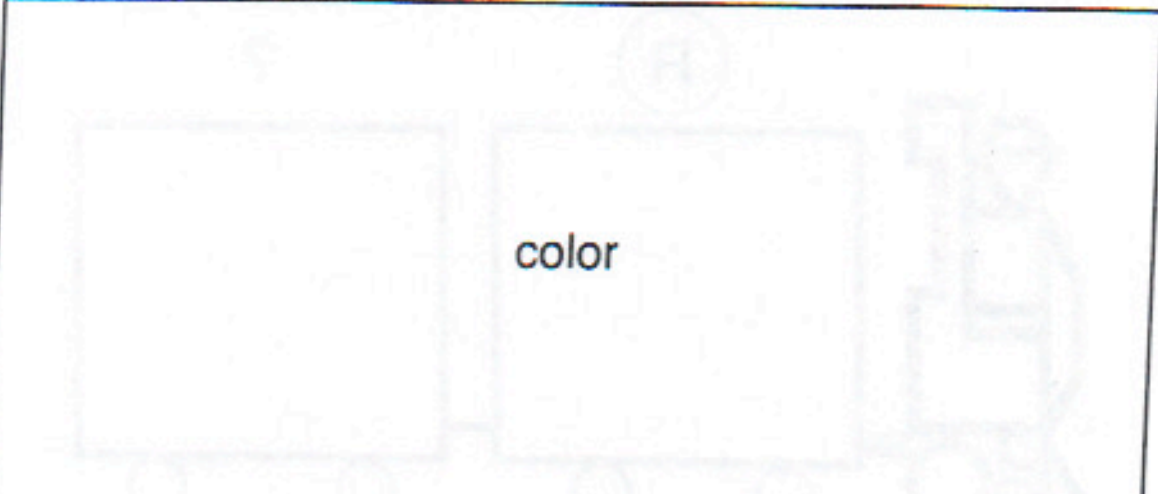
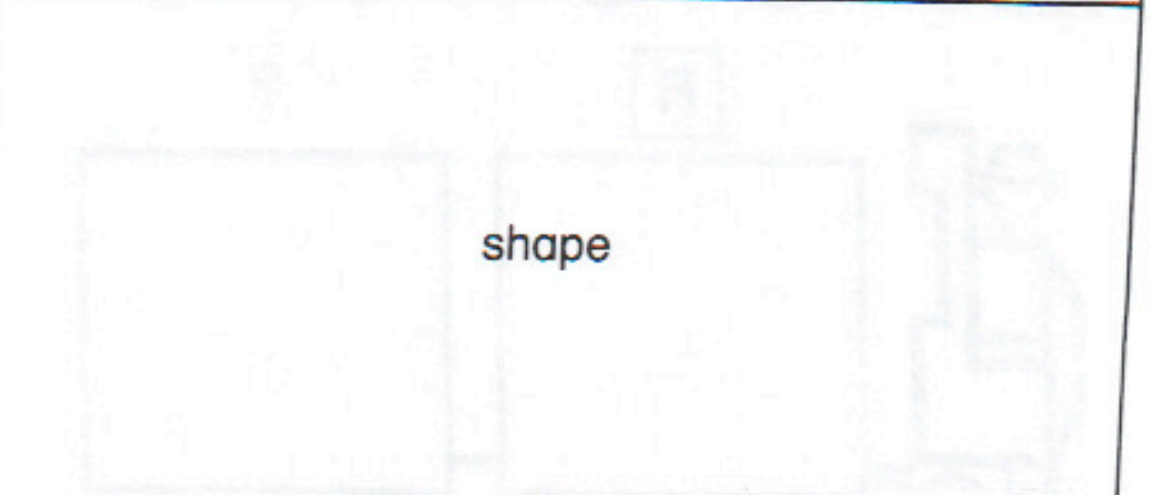
Put the blocks in the boxes.  
Trace and color.

All Y blocks with 4 sides

All — Y blocks with 4 sides



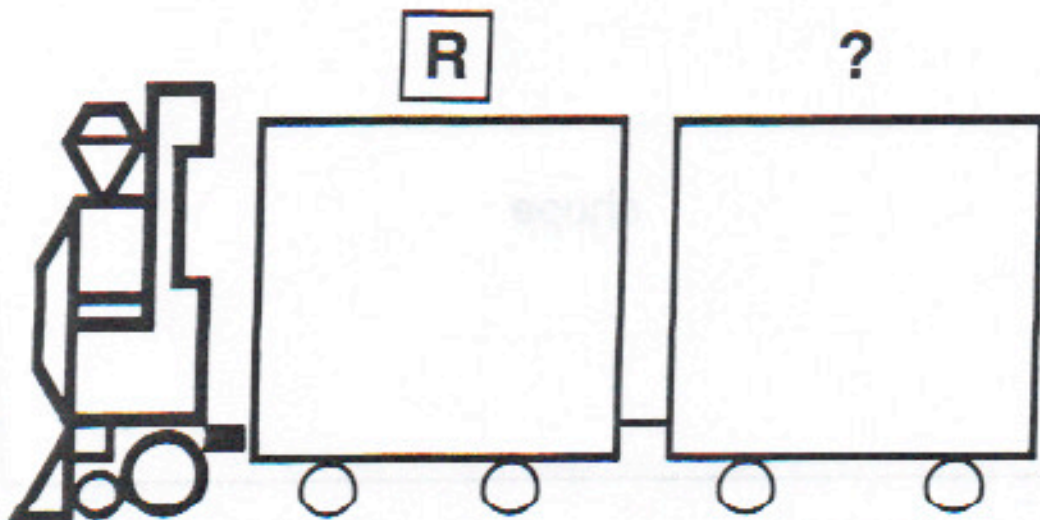
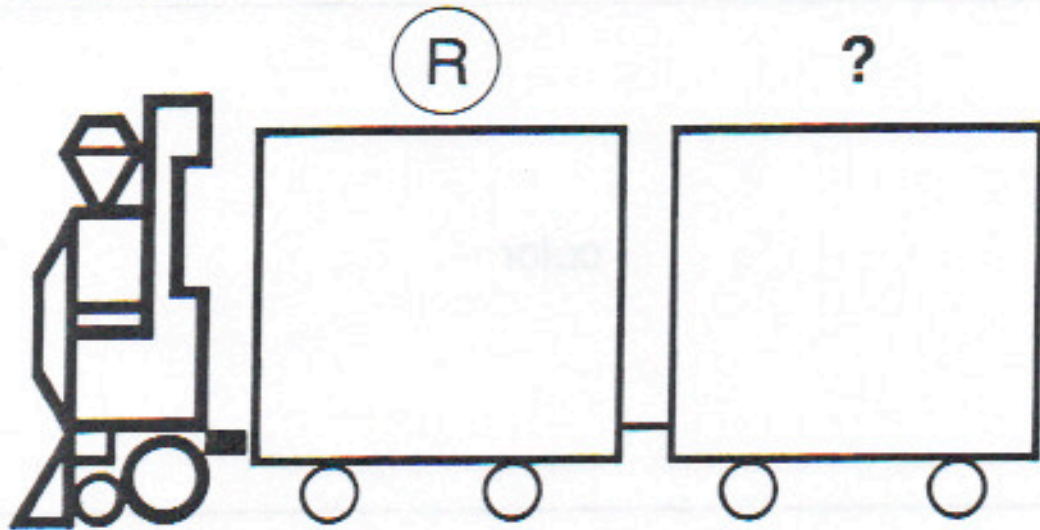
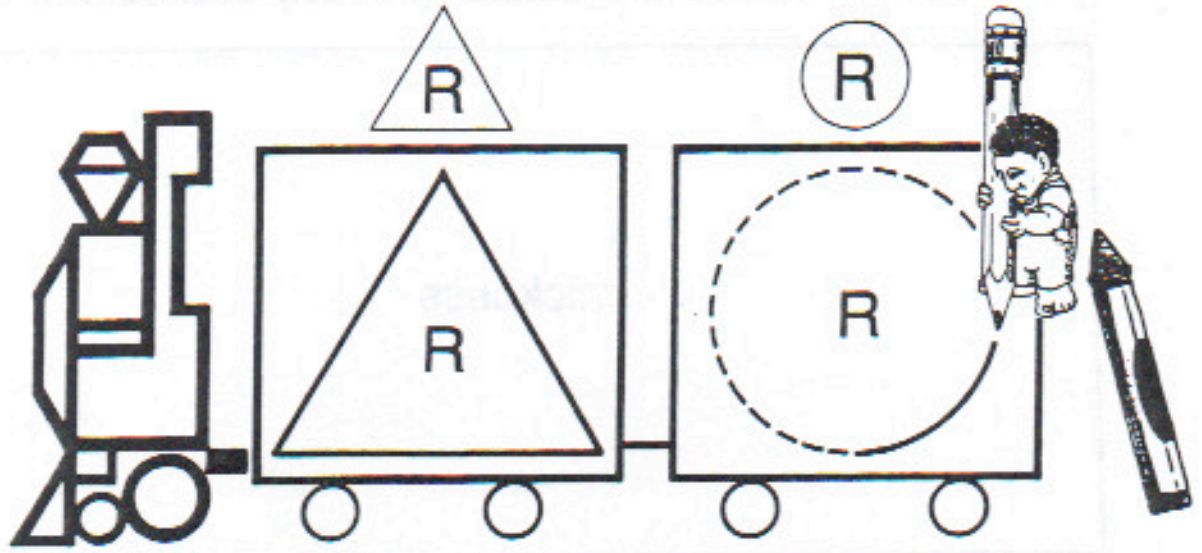
Find 2 blocks that are different in 1 way. The word tells you how the blocks are different. Trace and color.

	thickness
	color
	shape



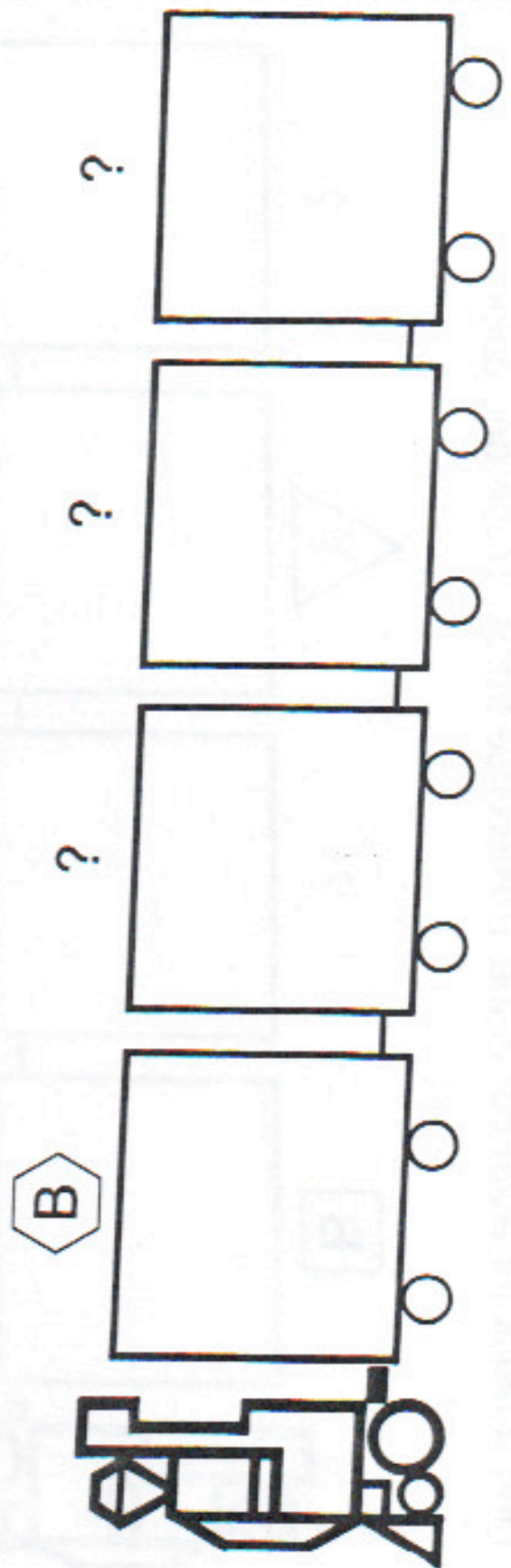
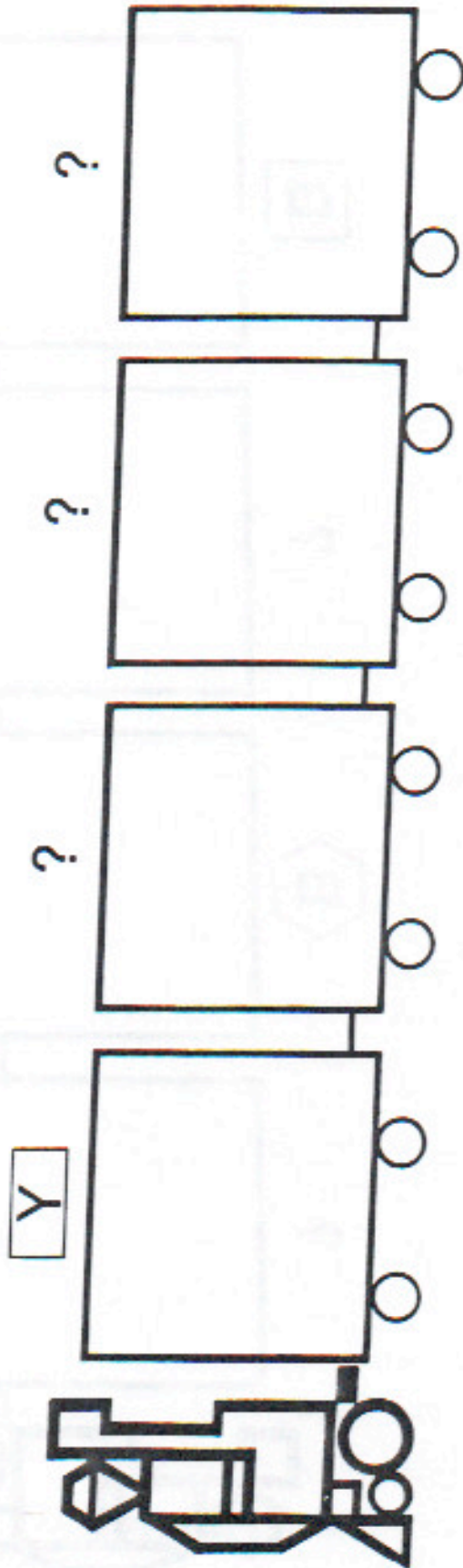


Find a block for each car. Every block should be different in 1 way from the block next to it. Trace and color.



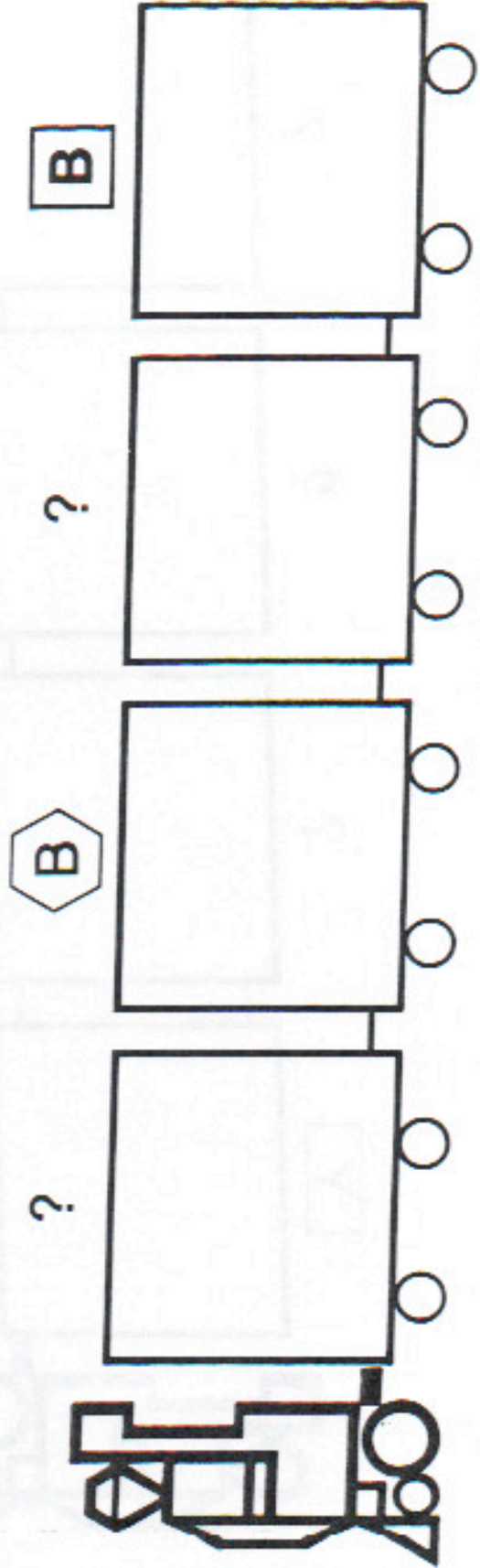
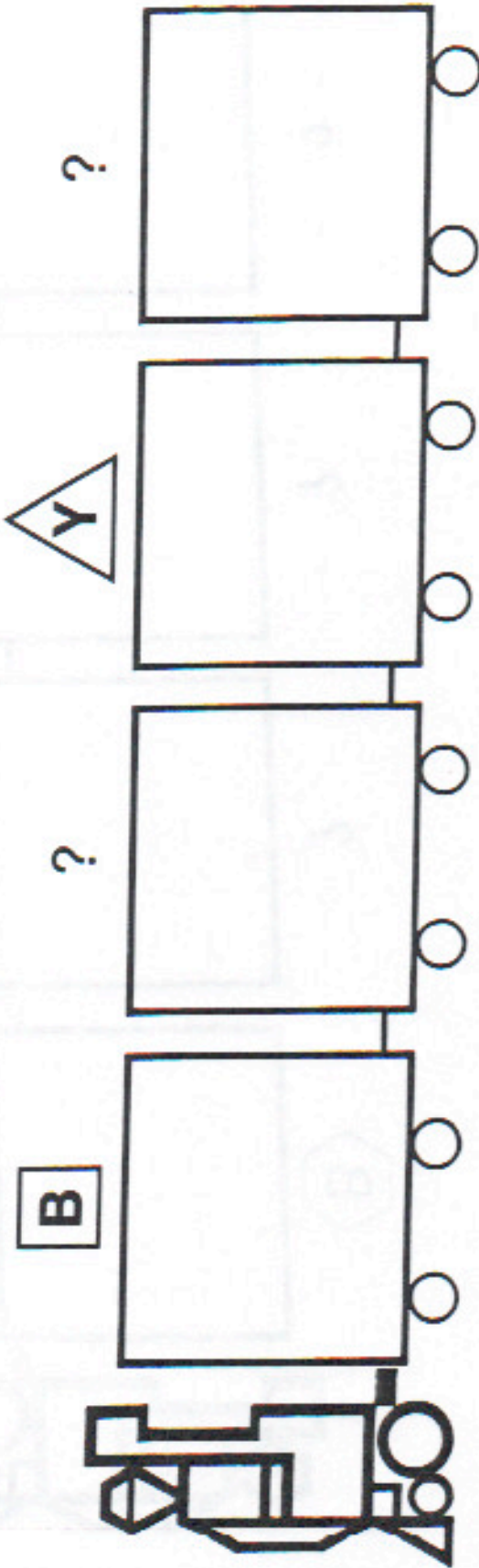


Find a block for each car in the 1-difference trains. Trace and color.





Find a block for each car in the 1-difference trains. Trace and color.





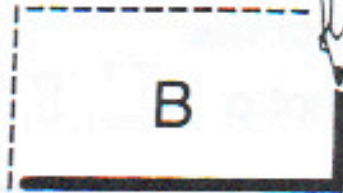
Find the mystery blocks! Trace and color.



1. It is B.

It is a  .

It is  .



2. It has 3 sides.

It is Y.

It is  .

3. It is R.

It has 1 side.

It is  .

4. It is B.

It is a  .

It is  .

5. It has 6 sides.

It is R.

It is  .



Find the mystery blocks! Trace and color.

1. It is not B or R.

It is not .

It is not a , , , or .


---

2. It is not .

It is not R or Y.

It does not have 4 sides.

It does not have 3 sides.

It is not a .

---

3. It is not B or Y.

It does not have sides.

It is not .

---


4. It is not B or R.

It is not .

It is not a , , , or .

---

5. It is not a , , or .

It is not a .

It is not R or Y.

It is not .

# Appendix B

# What would you Celebrate?

created with  taskstream

**Author:** Ronit Pitrone

**Based on lesson by:**

**Date created:** 11/11/2012 7:41 PM MST ; **Date modified:** 02/05/2013 6:31 PM MST

## Basic Information

<b>Summary</b>	With this lesson the writers workshop method of teaching begins. This lesson will start the theme of "Inspiring Ideas." Students will learn about different ways to get ideas for their writing. The writing process is very free, which means students can write about whatever they want. Learning to come up with a clear idea or message for a piece of writing can be challenging. This lesson will demonstrate and show students how to find the right topic and select interesting details that go along with the topic.
<b>Grade/Level</b>	Grade 1
<b>Time Frame</b>	1 hour
<b>Subject(s)</b>	Writing, Language Arts (English)
<b>Topic(s)</b>	Writing Ideas

## Standards And Key Concepts

### Standards

**Display:**  Collapse All  Expand All

#### ▼ CO- Colorado Academic Standards (updated)

▼ **Subject:** Reading, Writing, and Communicating

▼ **Standard:** Writing and Composition

▼ **Grade/Level:** First Grade

▼ **Concept:**

1. Exploring the writing process develops ideas for writing texts that carry meaning

**Evidence Outcome:**

a. Clarify purpose and brainstorm about a topic for writing

**Evidence Outcome:**

c. Use pictures or graphic organizers to plan writing

▼ **21st Century Skill/Readiness Competency:**

Nature of Reading, Writing, and Communicating:

**Expectation:**

- Writers must express ideas clearly because the reader cannot ask the author for clarification.

## Objectives

### Part A

**The students will know or understand:**

1. How to ask questions to find an idea for their writing
2. One way to find a topic to write about
3. How pictures can help create and expand ideas

**Part B**

**Based on what the students know and understand they will be able to:**

1. Find the right topic to write about
2. Write at least three sentences about that topic
3. Ask questions and make lists about what interests them
4. Draw a picture to go along with their writing

**Materials and Resources**

Book: I'm in Charge of Celebrations by Byrd Baylor

Notebooks/writing pad

Pencils

**Proactive Management**

Go over the rules with the students, and warn them about the consequences if rules are broken. If all students behave, they will get some marbles.

## Learning Experiences And Resources

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**Introduction**

To start of, go over the learning targets for the week. Discuss the importance of capitalization, punctuation, and other parts of the writing rubric that are currently relevant. Then read the book I'm in Charge of Celebrations. After the book is read, ask the students to name their favorite celebrations from the book. Reread some of the celebrations and help students become aware of how the author gets inspired by events in life. Point out to the students that these events are used as ideas and topics to write about. Tell students they will try to do the same.

**Development**

Have student get out a notebook and turn to a clean page. Explain to the students that they are going outside to look around and notice things that catch their attention. Be clear that this is not a time to play or hang out with your friends. They are supposed to walk around individually and make a list of things they notice, just like the girl in the book. Give them 10 minutes.

Back inside, demonstrate to the class how to go over their lists and draw some pictures to go along with a few ideas. Demonstrate how to star their favorite ideas. Send the class back to their desks and allow them to do the same. After 5-7 minutes have students pair up and share their ideas. Allow students to share with different partners.

Lastly, instruct students to go back to their seats, pick out their favorite idea and start drawing a picture that represents and reflects that idea. If they finish early have them start writing. Most students will probably not finish and this lesson will continue tomorrow.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, gather students back on the carpet to discuss what they found and what inspired them. Talk about how to expand on that idea and include details to make the writing interesting.



**Differentiated Instruction**

This lesson involves different types of learning. Movement, auditory, and visual. Extra assistance will be given to students on IEP's as needed and to others that need extra help.

**Assessment**

Assessments will be informal as the teacher walks around to see how students are doing on their lists of ideas. As students share their ideas with one another, the teacher informally gets an idea of how students are doing.

# Appendix C

# Writer's Workshop Implementation Day 5: Something out of Nothing

created with  taskstream

**Author:** Ronit Pitrone

**Based on lesson by:**

**Date created:** 11/12/2012 3:58 PM MST ; **Date modified:** 02/18/2013 3:06 PM MST

## Basic Information

<b>Summary</b>	This lesson continues to build on students coming up with ideas for their writing. The goal is to show students the excitement and possibility of creating something out of nothing. The activity following the story gives students the opportunity to be creative and come up with their own writing by imitating what the main character did in the story.
<b>Grade/Level</b>	Grade 1
<b>Time Frame</b>	1 hour
<b>Subject(s)</b>	Writing, Language Arts (English)
<b>Topic(s)</b>	Writing and coming up with ideas to write about

## Standards And Key Concepts

### Standards

**Display:**  Collapse All  Expand All

#### ▼ CO- Colorado Academic Standards (updated)

▼ **Subject:** Reading, Writing, and Communicating

▼ **Standard:** Writing and Composition

▼ **Grade/Level:** First Grade

▼ **Concept:**

1. Exploring the writing process develops ideas for writing texts that carry meaning

**Evidence Outcome:**

a. Clarify purpose and brainstorm about a topic for writing

**Evidence Outcome:**

c. Use pictures or graphic organizers to plan writing

▼ **21st Century Skill/Readiness Competency:**

Inquiry Questions:

**Expectation:**

- How can thoughts and ideas be organized to prepare for writing?

▼ **21st Century Skill/Readiness Competency:**

Relevance and Application:

**Expectation:**

- Simple sentences can be expanded using adjectives or phrases. (The boy plays. The strong boy plays. The strong boy plays in the sandbox.)

▼ **21st Century Skill/Readiness Competency:**

Nature of Reading, Writing, and Communicating:

**Expectation:**

- Writers must express ideas clearly because the reader cannot ask the author for clarification.

▼ **Concept:**

2. Appropriate spelling, conventions, and grammar are applied when writing

**Evidence Outcome:**

a. Apply appropriate spacing between words

**Evidence Outcome:**

b. Begin to identify and use capitalization in proper nouns

**Evidence Outcome:**

c. Write letters and other symbols with correct and legible formation

**Evidence Outcome:**

d. Spell high-frequency words with accuracy

▼ **21st Century Skill/Readiness Competency:**

Inquiry Questions:

**Expectation:**

- How do punctuation marks show expression and pauses in writing?

**Expectation:**

- How do capital letters show importance?

**Expectation:**

- How can a writer show excitement in a sentence? (exclamation mark)

▼ **21st Century Skill/Readiness Competency:**

Nature of Reading, Writing, and Communicating:

**Expectation:**

- Writers know how to spell many words.

**Expectation:**

- Writers use capital letters at the beginning of sentences.

## Objectives

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**Part A**

**The students will know or understand:**

1. How to create something from nothing
2. Where writing ideas can come from
3. How to type up a piece of writing (4 students)

**Part B**

**Based on what the students know and understand they will be able to:**

1. Create a piece of writing from a scrap piece of fabric
2. Come up with a writing idea
3. Write at least three sentences to go along with their idea
4. Draw a picture to go along with their writing

**Materials and Resources**

Book: *Joseph had a little Overcoat* by Simms Taback

Writing Journal

Modeling writing pad

School supplies

Back of scraps of fabric

**Proactive Management**

Go over the rules and procedures for writers workshop.

## Learning Experiences And Resources

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**Introduction**

Quickly go over the learning target and rubric for writing. Read the book to the students. Have the students predict while reading what Joseph will make next. After reading the story ask the students what their favorite thing was that Joseph made. Talk about the ending of the book. "How did Joseph make something out of nothing?"

**Development**

Tell students they will be able to create something out of nothing too. Model to the students how you will pull a piece of fabric out of the bag and write about it. They can manipulate (cut or color) the fabric any way they want and then write about it. Remind them that it helps to draw a picture first.

Model the writing process to them. Pass out a piece of fabric to each student.

Have students *Peanut Butter & Jelly* share their ideas with a neighbor.

Remind students that they need to stay seated and write.

Choose four students to "publish" or type up their favorite writing from this past week. These students will go to the computer, open up Microsoft Word, and type. If they finish quickly they will go to clip art and find a picture to go with their writing.

**Conclusion**

After writing time have students do musical share. When the music is playing they find a partner, when the music stops they and share. After a few minutes the process repeats and they share with someone new.

Published students get to come up to the front of the class and share with everyone.

**Differentiated Instruction**

Students will be instructed verbally what to do. The writing will also be modeled for visual learners. There is movement throughout the writing time (students go from floor to desks). There is whole group instruction, one on one instruction, and then partner share time.

**Assessment**

Three sentences lets kids go on for a quick brain break. During the writing time, the teacher will go around to check on students, offer feedback, and assistance. The teacher will make note of students who need extra help. Writing folders/journals will be collected and looked at over the weekend.

# Appendix D

# Marshmallow Story Problems: Subtraction and Addition created with

**Author:** Ronit Pitrone

**Based on lesson by:**

**Date created:** 12/04/2012 6:37 PM MST ; **Date modified:** 02/05/2013 6:35 PM MST

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## Basic Information

<b>Summary</b>	The purpose of this lesson is to keep working on story problems. Students will be working as a whole class to solve story problems in a step by step format. They will practice solving story problems as well as solving story problems using unknown partners, math mountains, equations, and/or picture representations. The Marshmallows will serve as counters and picture representations as a hands-on method to use.
<b>Grade/Level</b>	Grade 1
<b>Time Frame</b>	45 minutes
<b>Subject(s)</b>	Mathematics
<b>Topic(s)</b>	Word problems involving addition and subtraction.

## Standards And Key Concepts

### Standards

**Display:**  Collapse All  Expand All

#### ▼ CO- Colorado Academic Standards (updated)

▼ **Subject:** Mathematics

▼ **Standard:** Number Sense, Properties, and Operations

▼ **Grade/Level:** First Grade

▼ **Concept:**

2. Adding and subtracting involve composing and decomposing using a variety of strategies

**Evidence Outcome:**

a. Use addition when putting sets together and subtraction for breaking sets apart or describing the difference between sets

▼ **21st Century Skill/Readiness Competency:**

Inquiry Questions:

**Expectation:**

- What is addition and how is it used?

**Expectation:**

- What is subtraction and how is it used?

**Expectation:**

- How are addition and subtraction related?

## Objectives

### Part A

**The students will know or understand:**

1. How to solve addition and subtraction story problems
2. Solve story problems using the numeric methods
3. Solve story problems involving nickels and pennies

**Part B****Based on what the students know and understand they will be able to:**

1. Create and solve stories with unknown partners
2. Identify and find unknown partners
3. Solve Subtraction story problems involving nickels and pennies.

**Materials and Resources**

- School Supplies
- Document Camera
- Math Packet
- Marshmallows
- Math worksheets
- If time: White Boards and markers
- Math choice games

**Proactive Management**

Students will be reminded of the rules, and positive behavior will be noted and rewarded. Students will be motivated to do their best and stay on task, otherwise they lose their tools.

**Learning Experiences And Resources****Introduction**

Math Warm up sheets: Factor Families and Number Sense

(These sheets are in plastic covers because they are reused)

The warm up will be done at the desks. Following the warm up students transition to the floor.

**Development**

Following the math warm up, students will gather on the floor for whole group review and instruction.

Instructor will give an example of an addition story problem and the class will solve it as a whole. If it goes well and the teacher does not feel another example is necessary, the teacher will demonstrate a story problem with a missing partner. More than one example will probably be needed. Lastly teacher will demonstrate a subtraction story problem. As a class the three different story problems will be compared.

If it seems that the students understand the differences, give a few more examples of subtraction story problems and go over solving subtraction equations.

Next, have students go back to their seats and take out their Pink Math Workbooks. Work through some story problems as a class. Allow students to try one on their own.

Have students clear their desks and hand out Math Journal worksheet and Marshmallows. As a class, have students create their own word problem using marshmallows. Then have them solve the problem.



Next let students know that they will be eating their marshmallows in a very special way. Let them know that they have to listen carefully otherwise they might mess up and end up with the wrong amount of marshmallows.

Tell students to repeat and do what you say: "Take out five marshmallows" *students repeat and do* "Oh my, I have five marshmallows and I ate one!" *students repeat and do* "How many do I have left?" *students repeat*.

Now the teacher calls on a student to answer the question or has the class say the answer together.

Tell students to repeat after you: "I have 4 marshmallows in a pile." *students repeat* "I have some more marshmallows in another pile." *students repeat* "Altogether I have 9 marshmallows!" *students repeat* "How many marshmallows are in my second pile?" *students repeat and do*. Call on a student to show how they found the answer.

Continue in this method doing addition, subtraction, and missing partner problems until all the marshmallows are eaten.

### **Conclusion**

Students will have another worksheet of practice to complete. If some finish early they can go to math choices.

Clean up...

Gather on the floor for debriefing and discussion

### **Differentiated Instruction**

Auditory, visual, kinesthetic

Students will be listening, the work will demonstrated for the visual learners and marshmallows are used to reinforce their work.

### **Assessment**

Worksheets will be checked for completion and correctness. Their word problems will be collected.

