



Kindergarten Writing: Writing as a Form of Art

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by Anna Tom

Introduction

The power of writing is evident in a world where poetry can make a heart swell with emotions, where cook books can teach someone how to make a specific dish, where political speeches can inspire people to action, or where biographies can give a glimpse of another person's life stories. Knowing that writing is a powerful lifelong tool, I want my kindergarteners to harness this skill and feel the impact they can make on their communities.

Eighteen little kindergarteners entered my classroom with vastly different levels of knowledge. Some of my students had preschool experiences, while others, upon leaving my kindergarten class, had just experienced their very first day of school. Some students were raised with English as their first language, while some entered not knowing more than a few words. All of these diverse experiences contributed to their academic repertoire. Interestingly, what I have observed in my classroom is that writing, regardless of factors such as their English level or preschool experiences, remains one of the most challenging subjects for many of these young scholars.

Writing requires a tremendous number of prerequisite skills such as memory of letters, phonic skills for spelling, and fine motor skills for handwriting. There are also social-emotional skills to work on such as stamina to continue writing and the motivation to find writing meaningful. Writing is such a powerful tool, yet it is something that many, if not all, of my students find most challenging. I wanted to choose a focus that supported my students to feel confident as writers and to use writing as an avenue to express themselves, tell stories, fight for justice, and lead their communities.

Background

Emeryville is a tiny city wedged between Oakland and Berkeley in Northern California. If you blink, you might miss the city. What would likely catch your eyes are the big corporations that Emeryville houses such as Pixar, Ikea, and Cliff Bars, and the newly built 7.6 acres of land that contain the Emeryville Center of Community

Life.¹ Emeryville Center of Community Life is the home of the one K-8 school and one high school that make up the whole Emeryville Unified School District.

The school relocated at the beginning of 2016 school year. That year was also the first year merging all grades into one location. Big changes come with growing pains and decisions to make. Last year, the school piloted comprehensive Benchmark and National Geographic curriculums, both including reading and writing instructions. Since there was not a district-wide mandated writing curriculum at that time, teachers had free rein to decide which curriculum to use. That meant that some teachers used Benchmark's writing curriculum, some used National Geographic, while others continue to use curriculums from the past such as Lucy Calkin's Unit of Study for their classroom's writing program. While freedom to choose was great, the lack of professional development in writing left new teachers, like myself, overwhelmed with questions and scavenging to find the best way to support the students' writing.

Furthermore, last year my kindergarteners had only 1 trimester of art, which happened once a week for 50 minutes. Starting next year, because of hiring issues, my school will not have an art teacher, which means that my students will not be having any art classes. I can foresee that not having art can be harmful for my students' development because some students learn best through the arts.

Anna Yates, my elementary school, has a diverse population of 262 students.² The majority of the students at the school are African American students, with a mix of Hispanics, Whites, Asians, two or more race and Pacific Islander. The school diversity is reflected in my classroom, which is a factor I constantly keep in mind as I plan my lessons, to ensure that the lessons are culturally and personally relevant to my students.

For many of my kindergarteners, their first exposure to formal writing is when they step into the class on their first day of kindergarten. While some of my students are English-speaking students, I also have students who recently emigrated from countries such as India and Yemen. 20% of my students speak a second language at home such as Punjabi and Arabic and are identified as English Language Learners. Although writing presents special challenges for the English Language Learners, writing is still one of the most challenging subjects for everyone to grasp and master.

Rationale

From my morning check-in with my students, I find that my students love sharing about themselves to their peers and me, whether it is eagerly sharing about their birthday through ecstatic anecdotes about their birthday parties (which seems to happen every day), or sharing what is happening in their family through picture drawing. My students all love to express themselves, though they differ in their unique stories and their cultures. Since many of my students find text writing challenging, they share their lives orally and through drawing pictures. They are experts on their life, even at a young age, through methods of expression that they know best. Through this unit, I hope to add to my students' academic repertoire through the connection between the arts and writing.

At the beginning of the school year, I was using Benchmark curriculum. The writing instructions focused on responding to the reading, such as labeling the main idea of the story. While there is value in responding to reading, I saw that my students were not enthusiastic about writing: their heads were lying on one arm, their

eyes droopy, and their pencils barely moving. That was a sign of boredom that was agony for me as a teacher. Furthermore, Benchmark did not provide an explicit bridge between picture writing and text writing—something that I believe needs to be provided, since picture writing is one of young children’s strengths. This made writing challenging for many of my students, especially for those who entered the class with little writing background.

I see the obstacle of finding the ‘right’ curriculum and the absence of an art teacher as an opportunity to finally put the arts in Language Arts into action. This means that the arts do not have to be done in isolation from the core content, in this case writing. Instead, the arts and writing can work together. Taking into account my students’ strength in picture writing and their eagerness to share their experiences, this unit will focus on the interlaced relationship between the arts and writing for students to express themselves. This will hopefully enable them to find writing meaningful. The content of this unit will explore young children’s picture writing and text writing development, historical connections that view arts and writing as intertwined, and what education research says about using arts in writing. The activities for this unit will help students view and engage writing as a form of art.

Content

Drawing and Writing Development in Young Children

Whether it is on paper or the walls, 15 months-2.5 months old babies’ first attempt to writing is scribbling.³ As the toddlers enter stage 2, about 2-3 years old, they gain more fine motor skills. ³ They continue to scribble but cover more surface with their artistry and experiment with different types of lines including open circles, diagonal, curved, horizontal, or vertical lines. From 2.5-3 years old, they go from scribbling to lines and patterns. ³ When asked about their pictures, what may look like bigger scribble curves, they are likely to tell a more elaborate story than their art/writing. By the time toddlers are between 3-5 years old they are planning their pictures, giving more details to the pictures, and representing their surroundings such as the sun represented by a circle. Young students, even prior to entering formal school, seem to already have curiosity about writing in connection with their drawing. As these young toddlers enter kindergarten, these skills are used to help with their writing progression.

Kindergarten Writing Progression

Many students enter kindergarten with limited exposure to formal writing or phonic skills. The progression explains the stages of writing development that kindergartners go through. The kindergarten writing progression shows that pictures and writing is intertwined. Students’ early instincts for picture drawing help support students’ early writing development. Kindergarten writing progression can be broken down into 5 stages. In stage 1, the pre-phonemic stage, students are scribbling, drawing, and writing mock letters, still trying to understand that the English language has directionality (from left to right) and that letters have a certain shape.⁴ At stage 2, the early phonemic stage, students are writing in letter strings in which actual letters move from left to right, and some students are writing in groups of letters with spaces in between.⁴ Stage 3, the letter name stage, is the early phonemic stage in which students use pictures. In stage 4, the transitional stage, students can write the beginning and ending sound for the word they are trying to spell.⁴ In stage 5, the conventional writing stage, students are beginning to write the middle sound as well, and are

starting to write beginning, middle, and ending sounds.⁴ They are also starting to write phrases and whole sentences.⁴

Each writer progresses at a different pace, so while one student may be at stage 1 of writing another may be in stage 4. Throughout most of the progression, students' use of art including lines and picture drawing is evident as they try to learn how to write in text. The progression is deliberate to show both picture writing and text writing in the progression because it shows that that art and text works collaboratively. This picture and text relationship is something that has also been seen throughout history.

Historical Connection: Chinese Pictographs to Modern Writing Systems

Pictures and text have been intertwined throughout history. In ancient Chinese civilization, for instance, many Chinese characters originated from pictures of objects, and as time went by, "the characters became more stylized and less pictorial."⁵

In the late Neolithic period, the ancient Chinese commonly engraved pictographs, or pictures that represented a word or phrase, on jades and potteries to show ownership.⁶ From those pictographs evolved the earliest forms of Chinese writing: oracle-bones scripts.⁷ The oracle-bones scripts, written on turtle shells and animal bones, answered questions that ancient Chinese had about their lives and about life after death.⁶ Pictures along with the earliest form of Chinese writing helped to make sense of the world.

As the Chinese language evolved, the language's artistic and visual elements remained. Unlike the modern English alphabet where there are letters and a phonetic system, each modern Chinese character still has a distinct visual form and every word has a special symbol. While some Chinese words still shows pictograph origin, many Chinese characters have become more abstract.⁸ Unlike compound words in English where knowing separate words can be helpful to decipher a compound word—trash and can making the word trashcan—Chinese characters are all learned in isolation because each word is a stand alone.⁹ This means that there are thousands of Chinese characters instead of the 26 letters that can be mixed and matched to create a word.¹⁰ Therefore, it takes a lot of time to learn how to read and write the language through rewriting and memorizing the symbols.¹¹ The current Chinese language has two systems of writing. One traditional and one simplified. Traditional Chinese is an older form of writing and has many more character strokes than simplified Chinese. In 1958, the Chinese writing system made massive changes to the traditional characters and found ways to simplify the Chinese characters.¹² As the name suggests, simplified Chinese is a simple version of the traditional Chinese because it has fewer strokes, which meant it was easier to learn how to read and write. Despite many political debates over the two forms, it was important to cultivate literacy in China. Nonetheless, the Chinese language shows that the language originated from pictures and even after changes to the language; there are still artistic and distinct flare to the thousands of unique Chinese characters.

Chinese Calligraphy

Someone who may be unfamiliar with Chinese calligraphy may lay their eyes on the piece of work and wonder what are all squiggles that go up and down instead of side to side as seen in the English written language. Are they art or are they words?

Chinese Calligraphy or "the art of writing"¹³ has no distinction between whether it is art or words and has been found on wooden tablets, silk, and paper throughout history.¹⁴ In fact, Kwo Da-Wei, author of *Chinese Brushwork in Calligraphy and Painting: Its History, Aesthetics, and Techniques*, wrote

“Chinese artists have all along been ready to exploit the advantages made possible by the close relationship between calligraphy and painting. In fact, they use the theories of painting and impart the techniques of calligraphy to their painting. The same strokes are evident in both. Thus, the two arts blended into one.”¹⁵

Chinese calligraphy brushwork has been dated back to the Shang Dynasty (14th century), even before brushwork and painting were introduced together.¹⁶ Calligraphy requires brushes and ink, more specifically black ink. Calligraphy is a thoughtful process for every stroke. It is intricate because the calligrapher has to determine the varying speed, pressure, and movement for the particular effects that that the writer-artist wants to produce.¹⁷ Depending on the brushwork, it can give dry, moist, heavy, light, swift, slow, diluted, shallow, deep, scattered, clustered, or flowing effect.¹⁸

The calligrapher is aware of the impact of the brushwork and “reveal(s) much more than physical motion; they reveal much of the writer himself—his impulsiveness, restraint, elegance, rebelliousness.”¹⁹ It is almost as if the art within the writing is speaking to the audience of who the author is through the brushwork.

Dawn Delbanco, a professor of Western and Eastern art at Columbia university notes how calligraphy have this push pull motion where the calligrapher expresses within limits but also with freedom. She compares calligraphy to dancing, that

“The calligrapher and the dancer have much in common: each must learn choreographed movements; each must maintain compositional order. But once the rules have been observed, each may break free within certain boundaries to express personal vitality.”²⁰

Chinese calligraphy has shown that writing and art are intertwined—not separate but working together to produce self-expression.

Historical Connection: Egyptian Hieroglyphs

While the ancient Chinese used pictographs and calligraphy to express and explain the world around them, the ancient Egyptians also used a type of picture writing system famously known as Hieroglyphic. Similar to the ancient Chinese pictographs, hieroglyphs consisted of pictures, a beautiful visual communication system. It differs from Chinese pictographs because while pictures can be symbols that represent the object, Hieroglyphs were pictures of real things in the ancient Egyptian’s world that represented an idea, also known as ideogram or idea writing.²¹ For example, hieroglyph of a mouth would be depicted as an oval with two sharp ends or hieroglyph of their Gods.²² It also had symbols for letters, similar to the 26 letters in English.²³ Hieroglyphs also consisted of phonograms, which are signs that constitute a sound.²⁴

The word Hieroglyphs derived from the Greek words meaning sacred carving and to the Egyptians means divine speech because they believed that those were God’s words.²⁵ Only people with high status such as the royals, nobles, priests, and scribes were able to read hieroglyphs.²⁶ The priest used hieroglyphs to write prayers and text about the after-life. Pharaoh’s tombs were commonly decorated with hieroglyphs that described their life and their afterlife.²⁷ Civil officials also used hieroglyphs to document historical events and calculations crucial for knowing the Nile’s depth for agricultural purposes.²⁸ It was through the pictures of

hieroglyphs that helped the ancient Egyptians understand the unknown and creates meaning just as the ancient Chinese did with their pictographs.

Hieroglyphic writing was a mystery and a challenge for archeologist to decipher the meaning for several reasons. Hieroglyphics could be read side-to-side, up and down, right to left, or left to right with no spaces ²⁹ which left early archeologists in wonder. For some time, scholars studied hieroglyphs in their pictorial aspect because it was an integral part of the language. It was not until later that scholars started to look at Hieroglyphic with the idea that it represented sounds and ideas. ³⁰ The discovery of the Rosetta Stone shed some light on the unsolved puzzle in 1799.³¹ The Rosetta stone had hieroglyphs on the top third of the stone while the bottom had a Greek translation that scholars were able to use to understand the mysterious Egyptian language.³²

The examples of the ancient Chinese and Egyptian Hieroglyphs show that writing and art are closely related. These two ancient civilizations used pictures as a system of visual communication to help make sense and meaning in their lives. Picture writings from the ancient civilizations parallel kindergarteners' writing progression because students' picture writing is not perceived as a separate entity. In fact, the pictures or the art are viewed as writing just as the ancient Chinese viewed their characters and the Egyptian viewed their hieroglyphs. It is art and also writing.

Historical Connection: The Latin alphabet

Many kindergarteners enter the classroom needing to learn how to write the Latin alphabet; also known as the Roman alphabet; it seems to be a rote chore. However, as we explore the evolution of the Latin alphabet, we see that, like Chinese pictograms and Hieroglyphics, the alphabet derived from pictures. Learning to write is more artistic than the rote skill that one may perceive learning the alphabet to be.

Egyptian Hieroglyphs were amongst the earliest known alphabet in which each hieroglyph represented a letter. Egyptian hieroglyphs influenced people including the Ancient Hebrews, Phoenicians, and Canannites to create a rendition of their own and use their own pictures to signify a consonant sound. They differ from Egyptian hieroglyphs, though, by using their own pictures to signify a consonant sound. The Phoenicians, from modern day Syria, Lebanon, and Northern Israel, ³³ took it one step further and simplified the pictures even more and rotated the pictures.³⁴ Even now, one can look at the alphabet and see reminders of the pictures that the letters were based on. For example, the letter A started out as a picture of an ox's head, and the letter k looks like a hand's palm.³⁵

The alphabet later on evolved because while the Semitic languages like Phoenician, Hebrew, Arabic, and Egyptian languages had no problems having only consonants, the Greeks needed some vowels. Therefore, the Greeks took matters into their own hands, and took unnecessary consonants and created vowels. They even added a few more symbols for sounds that they needed for their language.

Unlike hieroglyphics where there are various word directionalities, the Phoenicians wrote from right to left. The Greeks initially followed the Phoenicians, but then later experimented with multiple directionalities. The Greeks changed direction for every new line, but then changed the system again where they started to write from left to write, a directionality that all alphabets since have adopted.³⁶ Kindergarteners and Latin alphabet pioneers are similar in that as they are experiencing and creating words and language, they are also experimenting with it in various ways to fit their style and needs.

Western Calligraphy

Prior to the technology shift in school, many schools required students to learn how to write in cursive, Western calligraphy. In fact, as a young child, I looked forward to learning cursive because it was beautiful, loopy, and artistic; I had a feeling of maturity because I saw a lot of adults wrote in cursive.

It was with the development of cursive writing that lower case letters came about, thanks to the Romans. ³⁷ Even after the fall of the Romans, cursive was still prevalent and became part of religious texts such as the beautiful illuminated text, The Book of Kells. The Book of Kells is an example of a text that is hard to separate to separate the art and text because the words are is beautifully decorated and evidently carefully and thoughtfully written out. In the United States, cursive writing was used for important private and official documents such as the Declaration of Independence. ³⁸ Although cursive is not commonly used in in the 21st century, it is undeniable that cursive has been part of our rich history and intertwined with art.

Unlike Chinese calligraphy which relies heavily and solely on brush and ink, cursive letters were typically written in pen or ink on paper or parchment unless cursive was written in large forms, then the calligrapher would use a large brush or chisel. Just as the type of brush and ink were very important for the effect of Chinese calligraphy, the type of pen for Western calligraphy was also very important. The precision of how the pen, or quill, is cut, the quill's angle as it writes, and when the calligrapher should lift the quill up all impact the letter formations. ³⁹ Cursive, like Chinese calligraphy, is very artistic in that the medium being used is not taken lightly because the effect of the product partially relies on the medium being used.

The Arts' Academic and Cultural Benefits

Some teachers may be hesitant to incorporate art into their lessons because of the limited time to pack in so many curriculums and standards that are mandated by the state or district. But to think of using art as an add-on neglects its academic benefits. The arts can stimulate higher level of thinking because it can

“provide the tools to help students develop intellectual muscle for paying careful attention, recording accurately, and analyzing from multiple points of view. And they might offer one of the few reliable routes to understanding the world not only as it is, but as we might imagine it to be. The arts will help our students develop minds spry and courageous enough to function at a high level in a world constantly in a flux.” ⁴⁰

To help students feel personally invested in their learning we need culturally responsive teaching. Researcher Geneva Gay defines culturally responsive teaching “as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them.” ⁴¹ Geoffrey Caine, a researcher who mingled brain research, psychology, small group processes, system thinking, and education otherwise known as natural learning, stated in one of his 12 principles that, “People are born with an explanatory drive. This means that everyone tends to filter input, organize information and experience, and ask questions according to what they are interested in and care about.” ⁴² In thinking about culturally responsive teaching, Gay and Caine seem to both agree that the learning needs to be personally and culturally relevant to make the content stick for the students. This is where the arts can be a tool for self-expression to explore who they are and create connections from their own lives through meaningful arts activity that can bring out the students' individual cultural and personal beauty.

Last year, I had a unit on Lunar New Year in which I first showed different pictures and had students discuss. Vividly, I remember when my students saw the firecracker pictures, many little hands shot up into the air, eager to explain what that picture was. One little boy in a rocking chair explained that, “It’s fireworks! You can see it during bbq day.” Prompting more about bbq day, I learned that he meant July 4th. Another student with a Vietnamese background could not retain his eagerness anymore so he blurted out, “No, that’s firecrackers for Chinese New Year! It’s is very loud!” This little episode zooms in a scenario where students were ecstatic when they were able to give their cultural perspectives and sharing their personal experiences about it through an image.

Half the battle of teaching is engagement, and using the arts is part of that piece that can help bring excitement and relevance to students.

Arts as an Entry Point

It is common that people think kindergarteners play and draw all day, and not a lot of core academics like writing are happening. But if we think about how the arts work hand in hand with writing development, we can see how drawing is a part of the core academics, and we can use students’ multiple intelligences to support their learning in their writing process. Beth Olshansky author of *Making Writing a Work of Art: Image-Making within the Writing Process*, explains that “ Highly visual and kinesthetic by nature, the image-making process provides an enticing alternate pathway into writing for children with a variety of learning styles.”⁴³ This means the arts can help students with a variety of intelligences: visual learners may need to draw first before writing, and kinesthetic learners may need to act out their thoughts before being able to articulate them. The art can create joy and motivation for the writing process as well as entry points for students with different strengths and intelligences to become better writers.

Furthermore, pictures create sensory context that is exceptionally helpful when English Language Learners’ language understanding is limited. They can use other senses through the arts to understand what they are having challenges to understand in English. Pictures also tap into English Language Learners’ prior knowledge, which can help develop vocabulary, necessary for reading and writing. In thinking about my own students, of whom 20% are English Language Learners, I realize that the arts provide an entry point for various types of learners.

Strategies

From my research and the Illustrated Page seminar, I learned that pictures and text have a complicated but also a collaborative relationship. My unit activities will be based on using the collaborative relationship between the arts and writing to show that writing is art and art is writing. The subjects for the read aloud activities were carefully and thoughtfully chosen to ensure that students would feel culturally and personally related to the stories. Each art project is connected to the reading and directly works in conjunction to their writing. This will create entry points to writing for a range of students with different intelligences and needs. The writing activities get progressively harder. Activity 1 and 2 focuses on teaching the concept that words are art and that they work together through simple cultural drawing activities with words. Activity 3 and 4 progresses to more advanced projects including creating acrostic poems with illuminated text and creating a family tree with labels and sentence. Below are the strategies that I will be using in order to successfully

teach the activities.

Picture Walk Strategy

What is it: A picture walk is done before reading the book to preview the book.

Why do it: Picture walk can help students learn how to use visual cues for reading strategies, organize information, help with comprehension, set the purpose for reading, and spark students' interest, tap into their prior knowledge or experiences.

How is it done: The teacher will pick meaningful books for the students. The teacher will flip each page and showing the pictures only. Prior to reading the book or the read aloud, students are asked to look at the pictures and make predictions of what will the book be about and why they think that. The teacher also sets the purpose to see whether the students can make any personal connections to the pictures.

Interactive Read Aloud Strategy

What is it? Interactive Read aloud is a systematic method of read aloud. This includes stopping during appropriate pages to ask meaningful questions for analytical talk and vocabulary building.

Why do it? Read Aloud is an instrumental part of literacy. Socially and emotionally, when a book is thoughtfully chosen students can relate to the character or the events of the story. It is engaging and empowering. Students are eager to dive into a meaningful and self-reflecting discussion and share their life experiences. The more students read, the more foundational skills and vocabulary knowledge they can gain.

How is it done? The teacher will be pairing each activity with a read aloud book that is culturally and personally relevant or revolves around the topic of self and family. This will include the following books: *Hieroglyphs from A to Z*, *Families Around the World*, *Chrysanthemum*, and *My Pet Dragon*.

Mini Lessons Strategy

What is it? A mini-lesson is where a teacher explicitly teaches a specific skill for about 10-15 minutes. The time is dependent on the student's' age and attention span.

Why do it: If the lesson goes beyond the students' attention span, they may have challenges staying seated or paying attention.

How is it done: The teacher will be following the mini-lessons components. This includes connection, which helps students make the connection from what they were learning previously to that day's learning objective. The second component is explicit modeling and explaining what writing skill or strategy they can try for that day's independent writing time. The last component is linking what they learned that day to what they can do during their independent writing time.

1:1 Teacher Student Conferences

What is it? The teacher will confer with individual students about their writing.

Why do it: This helps to differentiate, strengthen, and target students' area of weakness which is hard when teaching the whole class. Conferences also set the tone that the writing process is a road to discovery, where

the teacher asks guiding questions.

How is it done? Prior to looking at their writing, the teacher will first ask open-ended questions such as, “How are you? What are you doing as a writer today?” Then the teacher will then look at the students’ work and identify where they need more support. The teacher will then give feedback and teach a specific strategy by defining it, explaining why it is important, and making sure the student understands how to use the strategy. Lastly, the teacher will connect the discussions during the conversations directly back to the students’ writing.

Partner Selecting

What is it? Students will be strategically partnered up for their gallery walk.

Why do it? This will ensure that students with limited English are partnered strategically with someone who can guide them through the discussion. This will also ensure a safe partnership for discussion.

How to do it? For some activities, the teacher will be partnering the students up heterogeneously by their English language level. They will be partnered up with someone of the opposite gender. I will also be considering their personalities and behaviors such as partnering a shy student with someone who is more nurturing in order to create a safe space for their partner to feel comfortable to discuss.

Gallery Walk

What is it? A gallery walk is where the students’ work is laid in plain sight around the room, and students get the freedom to choose what they want to see first. They also get to whisper talk with their classmates about their thoughts on the work. One method they can practice is “I see, I think, I wonder.”

Why do it? It’s an interactive way to share work especially for kindergartners who have a shorter attention span. This creates the sharing process as an active one. Students also have opportunities to share in an intimate setting, which helps students who are shy to speak in a whole class setting.

How to do it? Lay students’ work in the desired pattern around the room. Then set expectations for the gallery walk. One example is to set a time limit per work. When the time is up, then the student can go to another piece of work to examine it.

I think, I see, I wonder

What is it? Students explain what they see on the image, what they think about it, and what they wonder after seeing and thinking about the image.

Why do it? It helps with visual literacy and allows students a systematic way to be more observant of the images. This also creates curiosity and allows for an ongoing dialogue even outside of the classroom.

How to do it? The teacher will model during interactive read aloud using the think aloud method. Carefully picking a page from one of the interactive read aloud books, the teacher will think out loud by stating what s/he see on the page. This may sound something like, “I see the pet dragon and there is something on the pet dragon.” The teacher will then say what s/he think about the pet dragon such as, “I think that it is a Chinese character because the title mentions something about Chinese characters. So I am using the title to help me understand what I am seeing on the page.” Lastly, the teacher will model how s/he extend their thinking by asking wondering questions such as, “I wonder why the author put the picture and the Chinese character

together like that?

Activities

Activity 1

Duration: 4-5 Days

Lesson 1: Students will learn about Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphs through the book *Hieroglyphs* by Joyce Milton. They will engage in “I see, I think, I wonder” discussion. This will help start a dialogue about how words can be a form of art and in this case in picture form. They will learn that words and pictures can work together instead of in separation.

Lesson 2: Students, with adult assistance, will create stone tablets. They will be writing their name in Latin alphabet on one side and their name in hieroglyphs on the other. This can be done by either buying self hardening clay or do it yourself sand dough or salt dough.

Lesson 3: Students will have a reference sheet in which each hieroglyphic symbol represents a letter in the alphabet. They will then create their names on the dough using a popsicle stick based on that symbol/alphabet sheet on papyrus paper in cartouche form. Students will do a gallery walk.

Activity 2

Duration: 4 days

Lesson 1: The concept that words are a form of art and that pictures and words work together continues through doing a picture walk and an interactive read aloud called *The Pet Dragon: A Story about Adventure, Friendship, and Chinese Characters* using the “I see, I think, I wonder” discussion method.

Lesson 2: Students will be given a Chinese character in a clear folder slip. There, they will practice creating a pictograph using that Chinese character using a white board marker and eraser. Once they are ready, they will transfer what they practiced on the clear folder slip onto a medium length vertical paper where they will once again create a pictograph for the Chinese word. They will then, with adult assistance, create a hanging scroll, a traditional way to display Chinese painting and calligraphy, for their art piece by rolling the top of the vertical paper around a suitable branch. You apply glue where it is needed. Then you tie one end of a string on each end of the branch to create a hanging string for the scroll.

Lesson 3: Students will do a gallery walk.

Activity 3

Duration: 5 Days

Lesson 1: The teacher will be doing a picture walk first and then an interactive read aloud on the book *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes focusing on appreciating individual uniqueness.

Lesson 2: Students will ask their parents the origin of their names for homework.

Lesson 3: Mini lesson on what and how to create an acrostic poem. This will include creating a class anchor chart of adjective students can use and refer to later.

Lesson 4: Students will create a first draft of their acrostic poem and I will be conferring with students that may need more support.

Lesson 5: Students who are ready will be given a paper with their names in illuminated letters. They will create an acrostic poem using 3 adjectives that are on the anchor chart or other adjectives they can think of. After, they will color in the illuminated letters

Activity 4

Duration: 7 days

Lesson 1: The teacher will be doing a picture walk first and then an interactive read aloud on the book *Families Around the World* by Margriet Ruurs. To create a safe space we will be focusing on how families can look different and all types of families are beautiful.

Lesson 2: Students will be put into a group of 4. Each student in the group will be responsible for creating one type of brush. This will put emphasis on how the medium used to write for Chinese, Hieroglyphic, and Latin alphabet were very important to get that effect the writer/artist wanted. Lesson 3: They will use the brushes to write in Latin alphabet for their family portrait labels.

Lesson 4: The teacher will be doing a mini-lesson on sounding out words for labeling.

Lesson 5: The students will create a family tree. The students will be drawing each of the family members on a piece of circle paper and they will label who that family member is using the preferred brush. The students will confer with students that need more support with labeling.

Lesson 6: Students will glue those circles onto the construction paper with a tree trunk to create a family tree.

Lesson 7: The teacher will do a mini lesson on sounding out words to write sentences about their family on sentence stripes to go with their family tree. The teacher will also confer throughout the writing days to focus on labeling or extending the sentence depending on where the students are.

Appendix: Implementing District Standards

California Common Core State Standards (CA CCSS)

Foundational Skills ⁴⁴

Students will be targeting the foundation skills when working on their acrostic poem and family tree project.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.1 Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.

- a. Follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.
- b. Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.
- c. Understand that words are separated by spaces in print.
- d. Recognize and name all upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

- a. Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary sound or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.4 Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.

Writing ⁴⁵

Students will be targeting this skill when writing their acrostic poem and family tree project.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

Reading: Literature ⁴⁶

Students will be targeting these skills during interactive read aloud.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.7 With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.10 Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Visual Arts Content Standards ⁴⁷

Students will engage in art projects for each activity that targets these standards.

2.0 Creative Expression: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Visual Arts

Students apply artistic processes and skills, using a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art.

Skills, Processes, Materials, and Tools

- a. 2.1 Use lines, shapes/forms, and colors to make patterns.
- b. 2.3 Make a collage with cut or torn paper shapes/forms.

Communication and Expression Through Original Works of Art

- a. 2.4 Paint pictures expressing ideas about family and neighborhood.

b. 2.6 Use geometric shapes/forms (circle, triangle, square) in a work of art.

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