



wasatch range writing project

Lesson Title: Eating the Alphabet

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Burning Question:

Can young children be taught the basic research skills of inquiry and use them to create a page representing what they have learned?

Objectives:

- Students will learn the basic research skill of observation.
- Students will learn to form good questions to drive their research.
- Students will present their research in a form that is accessible to others.

Context:

This lesson is written for a Kindergarten class with extensions that can make it easily adaptable to other grades.

Materials:

- *Eating the Alphabet* by Lois Ehlert,
- A variety of fruits and vegetables
- Paper, crayons, pencils, chart paper, markers
- List of food allergies of students in the class

Time Span:

5 Days with approximately 20 minute sessions each day.

Procedures:

Day 1

1. Begin by telling students, “As a class, we will be making an alphabet book using fruits and vegetables. Together we will explore the book *Eating the Alphabet*. As we see and talk about various fruits and vegetables, choose 3 that are your favorite.”
2. Read the book to the students. Take time to explore the pictures, letters and words. Some of these foods will be new to students, teach and talk about foods the students aren’t familiar with.
3. After the reading, discuss with students some of their favorites. Assign each student a produce item for their research based on their choices. Assign students to bring this fruit or vegetable to class in two days’ time. If this is not possible be prepared to bring these foods yourself.

Day 2

1. As a class discuss what information would be important to make a good description of your fruit or vegetable. Make a list of these ideas on chart paper in the form of a question. Help students dig beyond

the obvious for things that will make their food stand out. For example: What color is it? Where are the seeds located? How does it taste? How does it feel? What part of the plant is it? What does it sound like when being eaten? Reserve this list for another day.

2. Talk with students about how we learn about things. We can read information in books or on the internet, we can talk to other people or we can make observations ourselves. All of these are methods of researching and each is appropriate for different situations. We will be researching our food using observations.

Day 3

1. Review with students the list of questions from the day before. Add new ideas. Encourage children to keep asking questions.
2. Explore an example fruit or vegetable together in order to model for the students what they will be doing.
3. Give each student the fruit or vegetable of their choice with instructions to study that food in order to find the answers to their question. Today's session will focus on sight. Some answers will be very obvious, others might be more difficult to discover, such as what part of the plant the food is. Instruct students to begin to draw their food as they make discoveries. Tell them to label parts of the food as they are able. They can make a second picture of the location of the food on the plant. Walk around the room and encourage the students to look closely at things and go beyond the obvious.
4. Collect food and pictures at the end of the time.

Day 4

1. As a group come up with a list of words to describe various tastes the foods could have. Also come up with a list of words that could describe the various textures of these foods. Take words from student suggestions so they will be able to understand and use the list.
2. Once again use a sample food to model what you expect students to do.
3. Hand out the food again. Encourage students to taste the food, feel it, smell etc. and then look to the word list for a word that would describe their experience. Use these words to label the picture.
4. When students are happy with their drawings, collect the food and art work to assemble together as a book.

Day 5

1. Read the book to the students exploring all the art work and labels.

Extensions:

- 1st grade students could have a brief paragraph accompany their picture with more specific answers to their questions.
- Assign older students to search given websites or recipes books and find a recipe using their particular food.
- The back of the book has historical information about each fruit and vegetable in the book. Give this information to students and help them learn how to incorporate it appropriately in a short written paragraph.
- Use their art work to have students complete a sorting activity exploring the differences between fruits and vegetables and what makes each group unique.

Rationale:

Although young children may lack the motor skills to write a formal research paper, they are primed to learn the essential skills of inquiry. They are already anxious to ask questions. When these questioning skill are encouraged

and then fine-tuned by teachers, they can service students when they begin writing formal papers and throughout their lives. As students grow older much of the wonder seems to be taken out of learning. We can begin to change this by teaching students the value of good questions at the very beginning and then supporting it throughout their formal education. Hopefully it will be one of those things they take away with them when they leave the halls of our schools.

Resources:

Ehlert, Lois. *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z*. New York: Scholastic, 1989. Print.
McKenzie, Jamie. " The Question Mark." *Teaching Questioning Skills.*, Mar. 2006. Web. 07 Mar. 2013.