

Reaching Out to Others
Themed Literature Unit
Designed by Carrie Riggs
For Use in a First, Second, and Third Grade Special Needs Classroom
TEED 521 Fall 2007

Thematic Framework

The theme that forms the basis for my Themed Literature Unit is reaching out to others. Components of this theme will be discussed in the context of two central questions:

- What does it mean to reach out to others?
- What does it take to reach out to others?

In order to make this theme concrete for students, the class will be focusing on formatting conclusions to these questions. From my own exploration of the literature that I will present to my students I have found that these questions are further segmented. Within the theme of reaching out to others and the two questions above, students will glean multiple messages (generalizations) from the text they interact with in this unit. Those messages are:

- We reach out to others because we are able to empathize with them or their situation.
- In order to reach out to others we must recognize what makes us alike, as well as acknowledge what makes us different.
- Reaching out to others can take many forms including friendship, kindness, and service.
- All of us have the responsibility to reach out to others when we are able.

Rationale

This theme compelled me for multiple reasons. First, from my experience in the field I have found that students are not often taught how to interact with each other. Much of the school day is crammed full of independent seat work aimed at test taking. The lack of instructional time that asks children to reflect on other people and their relationship to themselves frightens me. I feel that in an increasingly global society we need to spend time helping children understand who they are and what responsibility to others they possess. In framing this unit around the idea that people need to reach out to others I hope to give students a foundation to reflect upon themselves and their role in society.

The second reason this theme compelled me is similar to the first. To make this unit practical, I have designed it for use in my special education classroom. I have found, in my experience with special needs students, very little inspirational instruction in social interactions. Social skills are often part of a curriculum for special needs students. This instruction takes the form of role plays and memorization of appropriate language. While this format is necessary to teach the exact form of social interaction to students who do not pick up on it naturally, it very often lacks the purpose. Teachers often think that students will be able to generalize the skills to many areas of practice. There is not

enough time in the school day to practice every situation where social skills are needed. In framing a literature unit around the practical application of a very crucial skill I am opening up situations that may never arise in the classroom, but may arise in the life of the student. This unit provides more contexts for application of knowledge that is being learned elsewhere.

As mentioned before this unit is designed for a special education population. This unit is based upon a framework that invites a multitude of life to literature connections. By giving students literature that they can easily connect with their own experiences I am engaging them in the reading process. Within this population there are many different challenges in reading and writing. I believe that this unit allows every ability level to participate and engage in the purpose of reading and writing. That purpose, to communicate and inspire with ideas, can be reached by every student. It would be silly to think that this unit will be able to overcome the neurological, biological, and environmental challenges that made reading and writing difficult for some students. I believe that it will inspire the desire to continue with efforts to build their abilities within reading and writing because the purpose is so clear and engaging.

The skills that I am targeting within the thematic framework give students who are capable of reading more tools to engage with their own reading. Students who are still building their reading abilities are also benefited since the tools are helpful at any level. Most of all, the tools are interwoven with purpose. They give all children a chance to engage, think about, and discuss what the class is reading with intent and a connection to their own life.

This unit could never be the only time spent on literacy in a day. The students this is designed for need much more than what this can provide. What this unit does is provide a framework of purpose, inspiration, and context in which students can apply their developing skills. It would be unethical of me not to mention this facet since this unit alone would not come close to addressing the needs of the students it was designed for.

It is also worth noting that my classroom is a first, second, and third grade environment. The standards that students are held to vary from grade level to individualized goals. What often ends up occurring in mandated curriculum is an incredible amount of differentiated instruction based upon the first grade model. For the purpose of this lesson, based upon my student's abilities and the content being taught, I have aligned the learning targets with the second grade state standards.

This unit aligns with the state standards as outlined on pages 6 and 7.

Learners

It is an understatement to say that the students in my special education classroom are incredibly diverse. The cultural, socioeconomic, and home background of all of my students is varied; the individual abilities and challenges also run the gamut. Though there is not enough room or time to discuss individually the ten first, second, and third grade students in my classroom, I can discuss the similarities between the student's ability levels that have provided the basis for this unit creation. All students in this classroom are verbal. This has led to the unit foundation in discussion and cooperative learning. Each of my students is able to convey ideas and desires, which allows this theme to both be investigated with, and related to, their own life as a context. The

reading and writing abilities within this classroom vary widely. Some students are at or above grade level, some are still within the preconventional stage on the continuum, while others are somewhere in the middle. Luckily, the classroom I am involved in has an incredible team of three paraeducators who are able to spend individual time with students who need extra support in these areas. Around eighty percent of the students in my classroom qualify for free or reduced breakfast and lunch. The racial makeup includes African American, Caucasian, Samoan, Ukrainian, and Iranian backgrounds.

The classroom has been established as a place of support and diversity. Student achievement is celebrated. All students understand that everyone is working for different goals. Respect and safety are non-negotiable standards within the classroom community. Though, cooperative learning is not a regularly practiced event, it seems to be because students are working on different goals at any one time. The introduction to cooperative learning will be difficult because students are not used that form of learning. However, the classroom culture functions in a way which directly supports the essence of cooperative learning. Explicit modeling will help alleviate the difficulty in this change.

Learning Target	EALR/GLE	Assessment format and Evidence of Learning
<p>Students will understand that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We reach out to others because we empathize with them or their situation. (Generalization) 2. In order to reach out to others we must recognize what makes us alike and acknowledge what makes us different. (Generalization) 3. Reaching out to others can take many forms, including friendship, kindness, and/or service. (Generalization) 4. We all have a responsibility to reach out to others when we are able. (Generalization/Disposition) 		<p>Format: Journal, reflection necklace, anecdotal notes (Formative/Performance) See examples 10-19</p> <p>Individual graphic organizer (Summative/Performance) See example on page 9</p> <p>Both the pre and post assessment (format: graphic organizer) is based upon the same rubric. See Rubric following on page 20.</p>

<p>5. Students will be able to participate in literature circles by contributing their own thoughts about the text, responding to peers respectfully, and evaluating their own role within the group. (Skill/Process)</p>	<p>Communication: 1.1.2. Applies a variety of listening and observation skills/strategies to recall and interpret information. 2.2.1.</p>	<p>Format: Self-Assessment form (Formative/Summative/Self-Assessment/Personal Communication) Students will accurately measure performance (as verified by supervising adult) See format on page 21 See Rubric following on page 22</p>
<p>6. Students will be able to make personal connections with texts based upon situations or events they experienced/viewed/learned about reaching out to others to further their understanding of the text. (Skill/Process)</p>	<p>Understands how to show respect for others' input. 2.2.2. Understands how to contribute responsibly in a one-to-one conversation or group setting.</p>	<p>Format: Connection bookmarks, anecdotal notes (Formative/Performance) See format on page 23 Connection Quilt (Summative/Performance) See format example on page 24 See Rubric following on page 25</p>
<p>7. Students will be able to find and summarize the important information in a text that captures the theme of reaching out to others. (Skill/Process)</p>	<p>4.1.1. Understands how to use simple criteria to assess one's own communication.</p>	<p>Format: Graphic Organizer, anecdotal notes (Formative/Performance) See format on page 26 Book Review (Summative/Performance) See format on page 27, Rubric following on page 28</p>
	<p>Reading: 1.3.1. Understand and apply new vocabulary 2.1 Demonstrate evidence of reading comprehension. 2.3.3. Understand literary/narrative devices. 4.2.1. Understand that readers have</p>	

	favorite books. Writing: 1.5.1. Publishes own writing. 2.2.1. Demonstrates understanding of different purposes for writing. Reading: 2.1 Demonstrate evidence of reading comprehension.	
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Assessment

Assessment is a tricky issue in my classroom. The range of abilities and individual goals intimidated me in designing this unit. However, since I based the creation of this unit on the student’s common abilities I am able to use the same basic rubrics for assessment. The form the students present their knowledge within differs, but the basic expectations are the same. Students are not being assessed on their reading or writing abilities, but on their ideas and ability to demonstrate thinking and skills. This means that there are a variety of forms within an assessment vehicle that aim at the same goal, but alleviate issues that could hinder student’s demonstration of knowledge. An example of this is the student journal. As mentioned before I am lucky to have incredible adult support within the classroom. Therefore, students who have challenges with writing can receive the assistance they need to journal. There are two different forms for the student journal. Form A is for the students who are able to sustain longer and more complex thinking and writing periods. Form B is more structured and prompted. Both aim at the same end point and can be assessed with the same rubric. Also, anecdotal notes weigh heavily in the assessment process. This is because with only ten students I am more able to make accurate observations of the individual students. Anecdotal notes also allow me to assess other areas of learning and goal attainment that are not mentioned here, but are an important part of a special needs classroom. All of the forms of assessment are modeled prior to independent practice. As with all students, this format allows my students experience with the format prior to their independent practice. I have also incorporated one of my artistic responses as a summative assessment. There are many students in my class who are incredible artists. In allowing them to demonstrate learning within a format in which they are gifted, not only allows me to see their best work, but also creates a sense of success for the student.

Theme Pre and Post Assessment: Learning Target 1-4

<p>What is empathy? Is it necessary to reach out to others? Provide an example.</p>	<p>What are some ways you can reach out to others?</p>
<p>Do you have a responsibility to reach out to others? If yes, when?</p>	<p>How are we alike? How are we different? How do these help us to reach out to others?</p>

Student Journal
Form A
Formative Assessment
Learning Targets 1-4

Writing About Reading Journal 1

What is empathy? _____

Did a character in your book use empathy to help him/her reach out to someone?

What was the situation the character empathized with? _____

What did that character do to reach out to someone? _____

Anything else you found interesting about your book? _____

Writing About Reading Journal 2

What are some ways to reach out to someone? _____

Did a character in your book reach out to someone?

In what way did the character reach out to this person? _____

Was it helpful? Why? _____

Anything else you found interesting about your book? _____

Writing About Reading Journal 3

Who are the main characters in your book? _____

What makes them alike? _____

What makes them different? _____

Did a character reach out to another character? If so, how? _____

In your opinion, do you think the character reached out to the other because they are alike or different? Explain. _____

Writing About Reading Journal 4

Did a character reach out to someone in you book? _____

_____.

Do you think that character thinks it is good to reach out to others? _____

_____.

Have you ever reached out to someone? _____

_____.

Who did you reach out to? _____

_____.

Explain the situation. _____

_____.

Do you think people have the responsibility to reach out to others? When? _____

_____.

Student Journal: Form B
Formative Assessment
Learning Target 1-4

Writing About Reading Journal 1

What is empathy? **Empathy is** _____
_____.

Did a character in your book use empathy to help him/her reach out to someone?

YES NO

What did the character empathize with?

A Situation

The other person

Write 2 - 3 words that told you that. _____

What did that character do to reach out to someone?

Became their friend.

Gave them kindness.

Performed a service.

Other: _____

Did you like this book?

YES NO

Why? Write two things that show why you liked or did not like the book. _____

_____.

Writing About Reading Journal 2

What are some ways to reach out to someone? _____

Did a character in your book reach out to someone?

YES

NO

In what way did the character reach out to someone? **He/ She reached out to someone by**

Did it help? **YES**

NO

Why or why not? _____

Did you like this book?

YES

NO

Why? Write two things that show why you liked or did not like the book. _____

Writing About Reading Journal 3

Who are the main characters in your book? **The main characters in my book**

are _____
_____.

Name two things that are the same about them? _____
_____.

Name two things that make them different? _____
_____.

Did a character reach out to another character? **YES** **NO**

What did that character do to reach out to someone?

Became their friend.

Gave them kindness.

Performed a service.

Other: _____

Why did that character reach out to the other?

Because they were alike?

Because they were different?

Write two words that tell you that. _____
_____.

Writing About Reading Journal 4

Did a character reach out to someone in your book? **YES** **NO**

Do you think the character thinks it is a good idea to reach out to others? **YES** **NO**

Have you ever reached out to someone? **YES** **NO**

Who did you reach out to? **I reached out to** _____

Why? **I reached out because** _____

Do you think people have the responsibility to reach out to others? **YES** **NO**

When? **People should reach out to others when** _____

Did you like this book?

YES **NO**

Why? Write two things that show why you liked or did not like the book. _____

Theme Rubric Used for Pre and Post Assessment
Learning Targets 1-4

Name:	Excellent	Good	Not There Yet
Learning Target 1	Accurately defines empathy.	Accurately defines empathy.	Does not accurately define empathy.
	Accurately explains why it is important.	Accurately explains why it is important.	Does not accurately explain why it is important.
	Provides more than one example of empathy being used to reach out to others.	Provides one example of empathy being used to reach out to others	Does not provide any examples of empathy being used to reach out to others OR provides inaccurate example
Learning Target 2	Accurately identifies more than 2 ways we are alike.	Accurately identifies 2 ways in which we are alike.	Identifies only 1 way in which we are alike OR Inaccurately identifies ways in which we are alike
	Accurately identifies more than 1 way we are different	Accurately identifies 1 way in which we are different.	Does not accurately identify ways in which we are different
	Accurately articulates how this helps us to reach out to others	Accurately articulates how this helps us to reach out to other	Does not accurately articulate how this helps us to reach out to other
Learning Target 3	Accurately identifies more than two ways we can reach out to others.	Accurately identifies at least two ways we can reach out to others.	Does not accurately identify ways to reach out to others OR Only identifies one way.
Learning Target 4	Affirms responsibility to reach out to others	Affirms responsibility to reach out to others	*
	Identifies that when we are able to reach out to others we should	Identifies that when we are able to reach out to others we should	*

*Because this learning target is a disposition it is not measurable as a “Not There Yet.” All I can do as a teacher is to provide the basis for why this seems reasonable and let students make up their own mind. Students will not be penalized, though they will be acknowledged for understanding. This Learning Target is important in my opinion, but I would be willing to remove it if a parent or administrator decided it was contentious. I believe it is inherent in the texts used in the unit, students may figure it out on their own.

Learning Target 5

Self-Assessment: Working Together

How well did you work with your literature circle?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| 1. I listened to other's ideas. | Always | Sometimes | Never |
| 2. I was respectful to others. | Always | Sometimes | Never |
| 3. I participated with my own ideas. | Always | Sometimes | Never |
| 4. I came prepared. | Always | Sometimes | Never |

Students will fill out the self-assessment for after each literature circle.

Self Assessment Rubric

Learning Target 5

Name:	Meets Expectations	Not There Yet
	Accurately measured performance. (As noted by supervising adult)	Did not accurately measure performance. (As noted, and then discussed with, supervising adult)
By Final Self Assessment Students will have:	Worked at "Sometimes" or "Always" on all four criteria.	Worked below "Sometimes" on any one or more of the criteria.

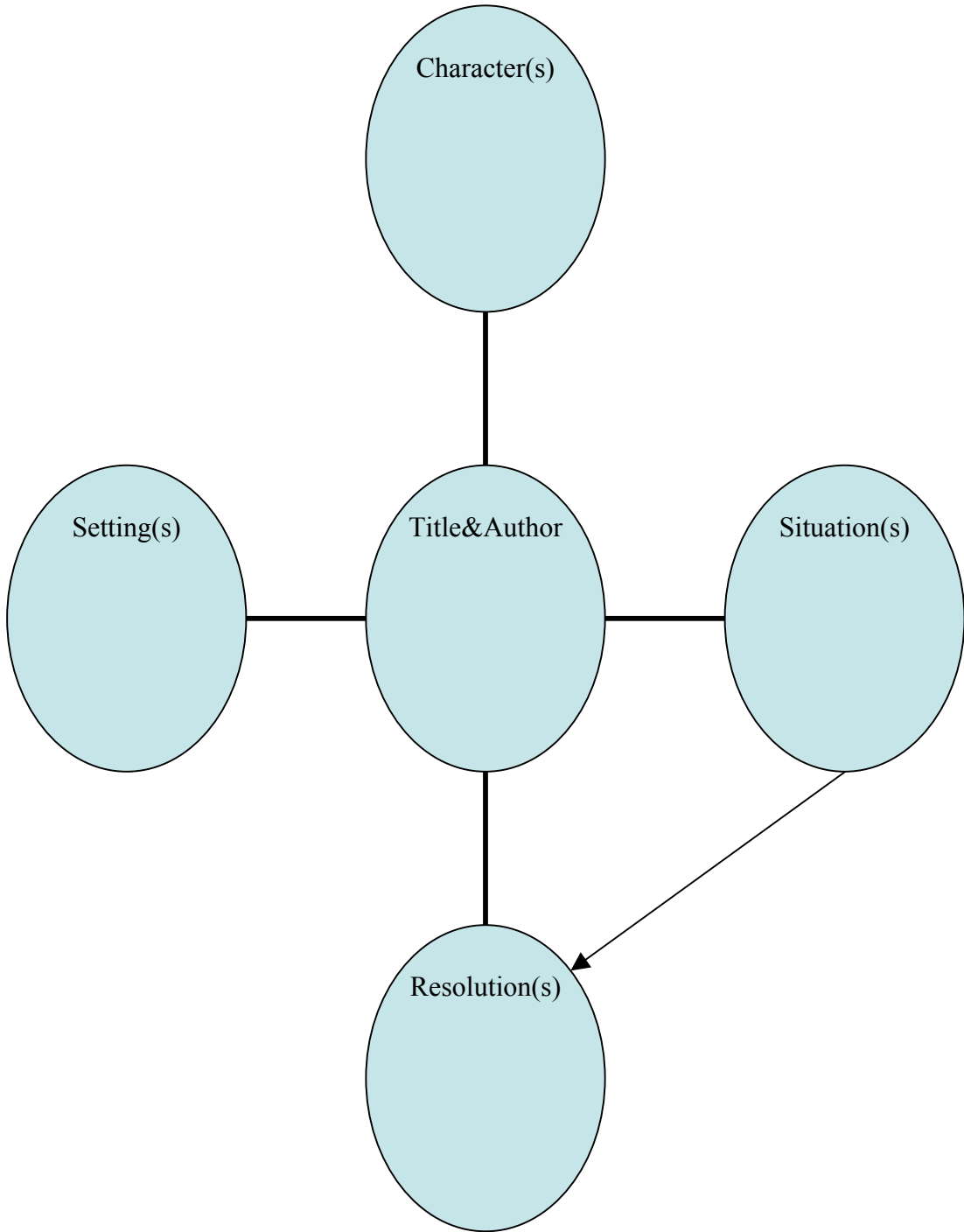
Let's Connect!	Let's Connect!
I found a text to _____ connection on page _____ of _____.	I found a text to _____ connection on page _____ of _____.
This connection reminded me of _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____.	This connection reminded me of _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____.
This connection helped me understand reaching out to others because _____ _____ _____ _____ _____.	This connection helped me understand reaching out to others because _____ _____ _____ _____ _____.

Summative Assessment: Connection Quilt: Learning Target 6

Summative Rubric for Connection Quilt
 Learning Target 6

Name:	Meets Expectations	Not There Yet
	Accurately identifies the book half of the connection through illustration	Does not accurately identify a part of a book to connect with via illustration
	Identifies personal connection to book through illustration	Does not identify personal connection
	Writes sentence indicating how connection helped understanding of theme (reaching out to others)	Does not indicate how connection helped further understanding of theme (reaching out to others)
	Evidence of effort in illustrations	No real effort put into illustrations

Formative Assessment: Learning Target 7 Graphic Organizer used in Summary Lesson



Book Review! (Summative Assessment Learning Target 7)

Pick one of the books we have read to review for the school library. Answer these questions and have a teacher help you type up the final book review.

Title of the book: _____

Author(s): _____

Illustrator(s): _____

Who are the most important characters who reach out to others?

How is the setting of the story important to the theme?

What happens first that is important to the theme?

What happens second that is important to the theme?

(Do not give away the ending!)

What is the questions about reaching out to others might make other readers interested in this book?

Do you recommend the book?

How many thumbs up?

Summative Rubric of Book Review
Learning Target 7

Name	Meets Expectations	Not There Yet
Book Information	Accurately identified Author, Illustrator, and Title	Did not accurately identify any one or more of the following: Author, Title, or Illustrator.
Character(s)	Identifies main character(s) that have an important role in reaching out to others in the book.	Identifies many characters some of whom do not have important roles in the theme OR Did not identify any characters.
Setting	Accurately identifies setting(s) that is important to theme (reaching out to others).	Does not accurately identify setting. And/or identified setting is not important to theme.
Situation(s)	Accurately identifies situations (first, second, next, then...) that are important to the theme of reaching out to others.	Identifies situations and/or details that are not important to theme (reaching out to others).
Resolution	Does not give away end of story.	Gives away end of story.
Question	Leaves reader of the review with a question to peak interest.	Does not leave reader with question OR Question does not peak interest.
Rating	Gives personal rating	Does not give rating

Positive Impact on Student Learning

Besides the active engagement of my students in the thinking and discussing process, I will be able to measure the positive impact of student learning easily. The rubric that I am assessing the theme pre-assessment and post-assessment upon is the same. The actual instrument they are using to demonstrate knowledge is also the same. Students will add to their pre-assessment graphic organizer at the end of the unit. This will allow me to see the growth and depth of my student's thinking in a straightforward way. It will also allow my students to see the growth in their own knowledge in a more purposeful way than a blank test would indicate.

Within the skill based learning targets, I will be able to understand my students' understanding through the use of different summative assessments. These are correlated to formative assessments throughout the lesson that build the students' capacity to understand and perform. The summative assessments are formatted so that all students perform the same task. These tasks are designed so that all the ability levels in my classroom can succeed. The skill is being assessed, not the writing ability.

Through a set of explicit rubrics and opportunities for students to practice, I will be able to modify where I need to within the unit as well as view the progress of student learning at the end.

Unit Outline

<p>Introduce Theme-Class Mind Map</p> <p>Introduce Books- Student Book Walk</p> <p>Pre-Assessment -Individual Read Aloud (LT: 1-4)</p>	<p>Introduction to Literature Circles- Read Aloud & Model with whole class literature circle</p> <p>Self-Assessment Journaling 1 (LT:1-4, 5)</p>	<p>Summary Lesson 1- Students create summary graphic organizer</p> <p>(LT: 7)</p>	<p>Summary Lesson 2- Guided practice with book review</p> <p>(LT:7)</p>	<p>Literature Circle 1-Each circle reads book aloud (adult) prior</p> <p>Self-Assessment</p> <p>Students write book review for lit. circle book (LT:1-4, 5, 7)</p>
<p>Add books read so far to class made graphic organizer</p> <p>Present book reviews to librarian</p> <p>Read aloud Journaling 2</p> <p>(LT: 1-4, 7)</p>	<p>Making Connections Lesson</p> <p>Model/Guided Practice in making Connection bookmarks</p> <p>(LT: 1-4, 6)</p>	<p>Literature Circle 2- Each circle reads book aloud (adult) prior</p> <p>Connections bookmark</p> <p>Self-assessment Journaling 3</p> <p>(LT:1-4, 5, 6)</p>	<p>Read Aloud</p> <p>Model Connection Quilt Making</p> <p>Independent Connection Quilt Making</p> <p>Journaling 4</p> <p>(LT: 1-4, 6)</p>	<p>Wrap Up</p> <p>Whole Class add to graphic organizer</p> <p>Individual Post Assessment Student Reflection as group (share necklaces)</p> <p>(LT: 1-4)</p>

All lessons address the diverse learners in my classroom by providing explicit instruction on the how, why, when, where, and what of the concepts. I will do this through think-alouds and explicit modeling of skills and expectations. This provides a basis of understanding for all children, and especially the students in my classroom who all need extra attention. All books which students are responsible for are read aloud to the class or in the literature circles. Though some students are capable of reading at grade level, this will provide the opportunity to develop comprehension and thoughts about the focus questions. Reading aloud will give all students access to the information needed to participate, as well as help build their reading ability by having them follow along. This modeling helps students be exposed to what “good readers” sound like (Routman 2003).

Introducing the Theme

The introduction of the theme, reaching out to others, will be made to the entire class before their pre-assessment is administered. This will give students some sort of framework and example to help prevent frustration with what seems to be a blind test. A large piece of butcher paper will be present with the theme, reaching out to others, written in the middle. I will ask students what they think this term means. Students will share what they think. As they share, their ideas will be recorded onto the butcher paper tightly around the theme. All reasonable ideas will be recorded with the understanding that we can go back and change things if we get more information.

When the preliminary ideas about the theme are recorded, I will direct the student’s attention to the four corners of the butcher paper. In each corner is one of the four learning targets derived from the theme. I will read aloud each question (these are the same questions in the four quadrants of their pre/post-assessment). I will ask students for their input. We will also record the responses to those questions. We may also draw arrows if students find that one of the earlier responses is appropriate for one of the corners.

After this brainstorming session the students will take their pre-assessment. The graphic organizer we created as a class will be covered. Students will record what they think independently. Assistance with writing may be given by one of the five adults in the room. Once students are finished, I will introduce the books we will use for our unit. I will explain that we are going to become experts on the theme, reaching out to others. In order to become experts we need to do research and the tools of research we will use are the books that are display around the room. I will briefly overview the books we will use in class (all students will read the same books, in rotation, in their literature circles). Students will have a few minutes to walk around, touch, and interact with the books.

To end the first day of introduction I will read aloud *A Chair for My Mother* by Vera B. Williams. Students will be responsible for thinking about the theme, reaching out to others, and where it is present in the book. The student’s ticket out to recess is one thought about the book read aloud, unit, theme, or anything discussed in the day’s lesson.

Concept Development

The last day of the unit will be the time the class synthesizes and reflects on the unit. During the two weeks the class has created a book mind map that outlines the themes and content they noticed in the specific books they read. At the beginning of the

last day we would finish adding the remainder of the books to this mind map. Then I would prompt the class to look at the mind map that shows the books we read and what we learned from them and see if we could add anything to the graphic organizer we made on the first day. I would also ask them to think about anything we could remove. I would model the first addition, showing the process of taking an idea from the book mind map and categorizing it onto the graphic organizer. As a class we would synthesize our knowledge of the books we read and how they have helped us become experts on the theme, reaching out to others. After completing the graphic organizer we would review all the information we recorded. Then I would ask students to go back to their seats and give them their graphic organizer pre-assessments. In a different colored ink the students would fill in more information if they decided they needed it. Again, writing assistance from one of the five adults in the classroom would be permitted, since it is ideas, not writing ability, I am assessing.

After all students are finished with the post-assessment we will have sharing time. This time is used for students to share which books were their favorite, what they learned, successes, and the necklace they made.

Their ticket out to recess is a high five for a unit well done.

Artistic Response

As mentioned before, one of the summative assessment tools I am using is an artistic response. In order for students to show their understanding of making connections with books to develop their understanding of the text they will create a connection quilt square. This is an adaptation of the story quilt concept from the Literature Circles Website (Schlick-Noe 2007). The students will make a connection with any part of any book we have read in class (a book will be read aloud before with some modeling in case students are not able to recall, or do not want to present, a prior connection). On their quilt square the students will illustrate the part of the text they are making a connection with and the connection from their own life. Underneath students will write a sentence describing the connection and how it helped them understand the theme, reaching out to others, in the book they chose. We will mount the quilt squares and place the quilt in the hall so that others in the school can see what we are learning!

Students will also use their artistic creativity to create medallions based upon their journaling experiences. After journaling, students will create a small picture with a word that they remember from the book on the back. These pictures and words will become a necklace the students are able to present as part of their reflection on the unit as a whole. The necklace is based upon the artistic response belt model from the literature circles website (Schlick-Noe 2007).

Communication with Families

In order to facilitate school to home communication about this unit, I have created a website that families of my students can access. Because many of my student's families do not have internet access, I will provide a hard copy that is sent home with my students. This hard copy can be found below.

Community Resources/Collaboration

There are many ways in which to involve the community in this unit. The students are creating book reviews for the school Library to help other Tiffany Park students make choices about books. The community context helps give purpose to the assignment as well as build student's responsibility to others. The involvement of the Librarian is integral to this segment. She has agreed to focus on books that further illustrate this theme during Library time.

This unit has a strong basis in life to text connections. This can be expanded upon by creating a poll for students to administer. They could ask members of the school community, their families, and other people they come in contact daily to describe a time that they reached out to someone and why. This would help students understand that it is not an isolated theme that exists only within the classroom and books.

Classroom Community

This unit is reflection of the amazing community that already exists within the special education classroom I am a part of. Students and teachers alike celebrate each other and success in learning, as well as support the achievement of individual goals. Students seem to feel free to make mistakes and correct their understanding and often support each other in this process. The framework of this unit reflects opportunities for collaboration as well as demonstration of individual work and ideas. In designing time for students to work independently with either inspiration from a group lesson, or with the intent of group contribution, I am supporting all learners. Cooperative learning through the use of literature circles is built within non-negotiable ideas of respect and safety, both physically and mentally. These concepts in practice are modeled and rehearsed with guidance from the adults before students perform them independently. My access to a huge amount of adult supervision allows constant supervision of student's safety and respectful attitudes. The students are working toward a classroom goal of the mind map creation. Making the visible end point a collaborative one creates the sense that individuals are part of a whole. This concept is furthered in the use of literature circles.

Unit Overview/Critique

This unit is designed to build student's love of reading and comprehension skills through the exploration of the theme, reaching out to others. Picture books are the source of thematic interpretation and student learning is demonstrated in a variety of manners. In designing this unit for a special needs classroom, special attention was needed to make sure student involvement built a love for reading, not further frustrations from ability challenges.

The critiques I have about my own unit creation can be unhelpful and harsh; I am my own worst critic. I have never observed a unit like this being taught in a special education setting. I wonder if it is too much too soon. My biggest critique is that it requires too much from a student population that is not used to the format and who do not adapt to change easily. If this was just another unit like previous units, the students had experience; I believe it would be a different story. As it stands, the unit, in its design, not its content, may be too much for my students to handle.

Communication with Families Hard Copy

Dear Families,

Hello! My name is Carrie Riggs. I am a Master in Teaching student at Seattle University. I will be in Mrs. W.'s classroom until the beginning of March. I have had the pleasure of spending time in the classroom bi-weekly since the beginning of the year and have enjoyed all of your children. I met many of you at curriculum night and look forward to meeting you all in the coming weeks.

When the students return from Winter break we will be beginning a themed literature unit based upon the idea of reaching out to others. The theory behind this unit is to help your children develop comprehension skills and a love for reading through the theme.

The major goals of this unit are for students to understand:
What does it mean to reach out to others?
What does it take to reach out to others?

These questions will be illustrated with a variety of picture books. Students will engage in literature circles where they discuss their opinions and generate ideas for the class concept map. We will create a connections quilt that will be displayed outside the classroom. Your child will also write a book review to display in the Library to help other children in their book selection. If you would like a complete book list for the unit please give me a call!

After each literature circle your child will bring home, for a night, the book they just learned about. This is a great time for your child to share with you the story and their ideas. If you wanted to tell you child about times in your own life where you have reached out to someone, this would be a wonderful opportunity!

There are a number of great resources online to further build upon this unit.

<http://pbskids.org/rogers>

<http://www.tolerance.org/pt/index.html>

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Stories/PeoplePlaces/Coastal-cleanup>

These include information and games that surround the idea of reaching out to others, both human and not!

If you have any questions about this unit, would like more resources, or would like to help, give me a call from 3:15-4:15 at school or email me anytime at email@email.edu.

I am excited to begin this unit!

Have a great Winter break,
Carrie Riggs

Bibliography:

References

Family Communications. (2001). *Mr. Rogers Neighborhood*. Retrieved November 10, 2007 from <http://pbskids.org/rogers/>.

Who does not love Mr. Rogers? This site was included in the family website and hard copy for communication.

Fullerton, K. (2004). *Standing Up for What You Believe In*. Retrieved November 10, 2007 from <http://fac-staff.seattleu.edu/kschlnoe/web/MITexample.html>.

I adapted the connections bookmarks that Kelly used in her Themed Literature Unit. They are used in my TLU as a formative assessment in connection creation.

National Geographic Kids, & Fox, K. (2007). *International Coastal Cleanup*. Retrieved November 10, 2007 from

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Stories/PeoplePlaces/Coastal-cleanup>.
This site was included in the family website and hard copy for communication.

Routman, R. (2003). *Reading Essentials*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

If I had just two resources in the teaching of literacy, Routman's book and the literature circle website that follows would set me up for success. This book provides the framework and reasoning behind a well designed reading program that can reach all levels of children. This resource was used as the backbone of this lesson.

Schlick-Noe, K. (August 3, 2007). *Literature Circles Resource Center*. Retrieved November 10, 2007 from <http://www.litcircles.org/>.

As mentioned above, this site is a life saver when it comes to authentic and effective reading instruction. I used this site as inspiration and a model for my literature circle implementation. I also adapted two artistic responses I found on this site.

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2007). *Planet Tolerance*. Retrieved November 10, 2007 from <http://www.tolerance.org/pt/index.html>.

This amazing resource from the Southern Poverty Law Center was included in the family website and hard copy for communication.

Thematic Books and Resources

Bunting, E., & Diaz, D. (1994). *Smoky Night*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company.

This book is used as a model and guided practice in the first lesson on summary. It is a wonderful story about how shared experiences bring people together. Though racial background divides the two main families, their cats bring them together in the wake of a terrible riot and fire. This book will help to illustrate how can reach out to others who are different from ourselves by finding what makes us similar.

Carlson, N. (1990). *Arnie and the New Kid*. New York: Viking Penguin Books.

This book is used as a literature circle book. It is about a child who, through an accident that puts him on crutches, develops an understanding of the challenges faced by his classmate who is in a wheelchair. Once Arnie does not need the crutches he continues his friendship with his classmate who is in the wheelchair. It is a wonderful illustration of empathy and how we can reach out to others.

Hatkoff, I., Hatkoff, C., & Kahumbu, P. (2007). *Owen & Mzee: The Language of Friendship*. New York: Scholastic Inc.

This book is an amazing, non-fiction, example of reaching out to others in a time of need. The interesting twist is that these two friends are a hippopotamus and a tortoise. The use of photographs validates this story and makes it more real and less “cartoony.” This book would be used in a whole class read aloud model for literature circles.

Manson, A., & Reczuch, K. (1995). *Just Like New*. Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood Books.

This book is a wonderful illustration of how reaching out to others can take an anonymous form. A girl sends her favorite, and newest, doll to a child in Great Britain during World War II so that the girl will have something to open on Christmas. These two girls are joined as pen pals and friends, after the initial reaching out occurs. My favorite part is when the girl sending the doll cuts air holes and sticks straws in the doll's nose to help her breathe during the voyage to Europe. This book would be used in the making connections lesson as a model and practice text.

Senisi, E.B.. (1998). *Just Kids: Visiting a Class for Children with Special Needs*. New York: Dutton Children's Books.

I am using this book specifically because it shows actual pictures of students with special needs. I believe that this book, and its message of reaching out to people who are different from you, will resonate with the students of my class because it shows children who look like them. It is a great example of how reaching out to others is a two way street. This book will be read aloud in class and used as a journaling prompt.

Stanley, E. (1994). *The Deliverance of Dancing Bears*. La Jolla, California: Kane/Miller Book Publishers.

This powerful book demonstrates the importance of connections to all life around you. When a man sees a bear dancing for his master in the market square, he recognizes the pain and suffering of enslavement. This book shows that empathy can be had with non-human creatures. There are some rights, like freedom, that are universal. This book would be used as a read aloud and journaling topic.

Wallace, I. (2003). *The Man Who Walked the Earth*. Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood Books.

The purpose of this book will be used in the second lesson on summarizing. This beautifully illustrated book shows how providing a basic service is a way you can reach out to people. When a man knocks and asks for dinner from a family missing their father who is away, the family obliges, hoping someone would do the same for their loved one. The traveler is also a magician who gifts some wonderment and magic during the cold winter night.

Williams, V.B.. (1988). *A Chair for My Mother*. Hong Kong: South China Printing Company.

This book is read aloud in the introduction of the unit. It is a story of a family who has lost all possessions in a fire and who are saving to purchase a comfortable chair. There is a wonderful double page spread that illustrates the community reaching out to this family by providing household goods they may need. This book may also be used by students for their book review or connection quilt.