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October 17, 2007  
Language Arts

### Reflection for Stonehouse Visit

On Friday October 12<sup>th</sup>, I visited three different grade levels at Stonehouse Elementary school to observe the language arts activities and routines that each class has set up. I was really impressed with the majority of the teaching practices I saw. In the kindergarten class, Mr. Carter was getting his students ready for their field trip to the orchard, but he still took time to let us watch his morning activities. He started out with letter exercises, the students stretched to make the shape of letters while at the same time naming the letter (A, X, H, l, r, n, h) and provided the sound. Next they used their palm pad to practice writing the letters with their finger and sang “head, shoulders, knees, and toes” with the letter n replacing the first sound of each word. The class also went over a poem by singing it, repeating it, and then finding errors when Mr. Carter read it incorrectly to them. He modeled touching each word and looking at the first letter of the word as well as picture cues. Finally he showed us the Chicka Chicka Boom Boom board that has a palm tree and magnetic letters. The class practices their letters and the sounds of the letters. They also have a pringles can version at home to use. I thought this idea was amazing!

In second grade, Mrs. Jones was working on beginning sounds of words when we first arrived (sh-, ch-, wh-, and th-). Students identified the sounds and gave examples of the words that have the sounds. Next she talked about making predictions with picture walks, reading the back cover, and reading the title. Finally she read the picture book *Don't Need Friends* to the class. Before the story I was really impressed with the class interaction with the teacher throughout the lesson, but when she began to read the story with the book facing her the entire time until she had finished reading all the text I became really frustrated. At one point a student asked to see the pictures and she brushed him off with an “I will, one sec” until she could finish reading the text. Although she used a lot of expression in the reading and provided sound effects, she did not really engage the students in the pictures since they were only shown for brief pauses between pages.

The final classroom we visited was Mrs. Cavanaugh's fifth grade. This class was really well organized and I was impressed by the responsibilities the students had. First the students sat together and talked about character development in *Maniac Magee* as a class. They brainstormed changes in looks, feelings, things the character learned, and things that happened in the story. The teacher wrote down everything on a huge easel pad of paper in her lap that no one could really see as they sat around her on the floor, which I thought was a bit pointless. After the class listed a few ideas for each subtopic on character development they individually made journal entries about the character development in one of the Sherlock Holmes stories they had read. Then the students broke into groups for small group reading/independent reading time. During the small group meeting in the hallway, the students shared words that they had to find in the text and define. They also read summaries of their story and shared their ideas about the plot. We also did a short question and answer period with the group to find out about their routines. The students knew how to pick their own books to read. If it has more than five unknown words on a page then it is not for them. They also keep reading logs of the titles and genres they have read and include summaries, predictions, questions, and pictures about the book. Additionally they know that they can abandon books if the chapter book is not their topic of interest or is too hard to understand. I thought that the fifth grade was exceptionally well run and it was nice that Mrs. Cavanaugh told us it takes about three weeks to really set up the routines.