

Language Arts Update – October

Remember what we said last month about expecting the unexpected? Well...we had hoped to start off by discussing our favorite books using the principles of Accountable Talk. It was not the FIRST thing we did, but we managed to squeeze it in at the end of the month! We blame our Food Theme! We have had such success (and FUN!) discussing the connection between reading, writing and food that the first month of school seems to have flown right by us. Hopefully you have heard some good things about Language Arts and food but we are sure you may be wondering exactly what is going on in class. Let us break it down for you a bit...

Reading - We spent time this past month discussing how to select a book that was "just right" for us. You can view the page on our resources tab to learn more about [appetizer, entree and dessert texts](#). We quickly realized that although students could identify the type of book they had in their hands, they had a difficult time finding books they WANTED to read. Our food brains went to a tasting party and we decided we could do a [book tasting](#) with the students. We started by tasting different kinds of lemonade to determine the words we would need to use to really describe what we were "tasting" (and...food always wins them over!). We then set out a variety of texts and had the students follow a specific procedure for sampling 4 different texts. We discovered many things about ourselves as readers and we plan to use this activity often to ensure students are expanding their horizons. Once we had time to decide the kinds of books we should be reading, we needed to discuss what parts of the text were worth noting. As a reader, you need to understand which parts of the text are meaningful and should be something you spend time examining. This is a place readers often struggle. They either spend time on the wrong details or do not feel anything was worth remembering. We introduced (or re-introduced in some cases) the idea of Signposts in text. Just like signs on a highway, Signposts alert a reader to something significant occurring in the text. We will use these Signposts all year as we discuss texts in a whole group, in small groups and in 1:1 conferences. You can view a brief overview of the [Signposts](#) on our Resource Page.

Writing - You may have heard about our experiences with menus this year. We have used them to take a close look at what it means to be organized and have strong ideas in our writing. Students quickly picked up the importance of organized menus...how do you know if they have pork lo mein if the food selections are all over the place? They also helped improve our classroom coffee house menu by adding descriptive details to our food selections. Would you order "New York's Finest" off a menu if it did not have a description? Be sure to ask your child what they thought "New York's Finest" meant compared to my original plan. They were MUCH more creative! We also encouraged them to use descriptive sensory details in their writing to be sure the reader could envision their ideas completely. Finally, we touched on the importance of conventions. Would you really order the daily special if they spelled it "Fresh Fich" instead of "Fresh Fish"? Me neither!!! We also used our food theme to discuss different types of writing. Writers need to be aware of the purpose and audience for their pieces BEFORE they begin writing since both have a large impact on the way we write. For example, when writing a quick answer for us in class, students would not use as much time to perfect conventions since we are simply trying to see how much they comprehend. When writing a formal research report, however, students would be expected to follow all the convention rules in addition to some formatting and presentation rules. Take a look at our chart on the resources page to help you understand more about [types of writing](#) and our expectations.

Looking Ahead...

So the plan for reading is to continue discussing Signposts in text but we will shift our focus from fiction to non-fiction in our mini-lessons. We also plan to really make our mini-lesson mini now that we have established our classroom routines. This means more time for small groups and individual conferences...YAY!

Writing will continue to focus on ideas, organization and conventions as we work on a few fictional narratives.

Language Arts also includes a few challenges for your students:

20 Book Challenge- We are challenging the students to read 20 books this year. They can do it!!! It is NOT

a requirement, but we will be having a celebration for those students that reach or surpass the 20 book challenge.

Including Idioms - We are adding an idiom a week to our daily warm ups. We have challenged the students to use idioms in context during our classroom discussions and earn extra BEARS Bucks for their efforts. We think we will be adding their idiom ideas to a display in the room as well.