

Reading to Learn in Kindergarten *And Here's to You!*

The following scenario illustrates a kindergarten teacher using the process of Reading to Learn to support teaching and learning in reading.

Snack time in Mrs. Garcia's kindergarten class had just ended. As the students are putting their lunch bags away, Mrs. Garcia calls them to attention. "Girls and boys, we are going to be reading a story together in the corner. I would like you to calmly go there now."

The students get up from their desks and make their way to the round carpet in the corner of the classroom. This section of the room is well lit from sunlight streaming through the nearby windows. As the students begin to get comfortable on the carpet, Mrs. Garcia sits down in a chair in front of the students. She has a yellow book placed on her lap. She keeps her hands folded on the book as she smiles and waits for the children to settle down. Next to her is an easel with a large pad of chart paper. The word Celebrate is written in bright purple in the center of the paper.

Some of the students are still talking and wiggling around on the carpet when Mrs. Garcia raises her hand above her head to indicate she wants them to listen. A few students raise their hands. Soon everyone has a hand raised and is facing Mrs. Garcia silently.

Mrs. Garcia speaks to the class in a warm voice. "Thank you for finding your seats so quickly everyone! I am going to read one of my favorite books to you! We are going to read it together. You'll notice that each part of the book is pretty similar. Because of this, when we are finished reading we are going to write our own page together to add to the book!"

She holds up the book that is on her lap. It has a yellow cover. On the cover is the illustration of a young girl with her arms open wide. Two colorful birds are perched on her hands. There is also a dog and a duck in the picture. Pointing to the words at the top of the cover, Mrs. Garcia slides her finger beneath each of the words as she reads the title. "This says 'And Here's to You!'" Looking at a girl nearby, Mrs. Garcia asks, "Maria, what do we call this?"

Maria hesitates briefly, but then answers in a soft voice, "The title?"

"Yes!" responds Mrs. Garcia. She brings her finger to the author's name. "William, this says 'David Elliot'. Who do you think he is?"

A boy in the back calls out. "He wrote the book?"

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Mrs. Garcia smiles. “Excellent! And what do we call a person who writes a book William?”

William replies quickly. “The author!”

Mrs. Garcia nods her head. “Joaquin, here it says ‘illustrated by Randy Cecil’. What does that mean?”

A bunch of children raise their hands, but Mrs. Garcia ‘shushes’ them before they can answer. A boy with dark curly hair responds. “She made the pictures in the book.”

“Great answer, Joaquin,” says Mrs. Garcia. “Now class, this book is about celebrating.” She points to the word ‘celebrate’ on the chart paper. “This word is ‘Celebrate’. Who can tell me what it means to celebrate something?” A bunch of students raise their hands. “Felicia – what do you think it means?”

A girl with glasses answers. “Well, we celebrate birthdays in my house.”

“Yes,” says Mrs. Garcia, “and why do you think we celebrate birthdays?”

Felicia pauses for a moment, “It’s special day. We get presents and have balloons and cake and ice cream. I want an ice cream cake for my birthday this year!”

Mrs. Garcia laughs good-naturedly. “Yes! Birthdays are a lot of fun. I like how you said that it is a special day. That’s what celebrations are all about. We celebrate things that are special, things that we love. I would like you to turn to a partner and share something with them that you love.”

The students begin chatting with other children as Mrs. Garcia listens. After a few moments she raises her hand. The class quiets down quickly. “I heard a lot of you saying you love your pets. Well, the book I am going to read to you celebrates all kinds of creatures. This book does not tell a story. Rather, it will celebrate a different creature on each page. Before I begin reading, let’s predict what kinds of creatures we think will be celebrated.” Mrs. Garcia stands up and takes a green marker from the tray at the bottom of the easel. “Okay, what are some creatures we think will be in the book?”

Students start calling out a bunch of different animals. Mrs. Garcia writes a variety of different animals randomly on the chart paper all around the word ‘Celebrate’. When the sheet is filled with different kinds of animals, Mrs. Garcia holds up the book and turns to the first page of the text. There is an illustration of a young girl with birds flying around her. Mrs. Garcia asks the class, “What details do you notice in the pictures on these two pages?” She calls on different students who identify a girl, birds and clouds. She encourages the students to be more specific by asking them. “What colors do you see? What are the creatures doing?” The children mention that the birds are flying and that the girl is smiling. They also identify many different colors.

When the students have identified a variety of details, Mrs. Garcia then reads the text on the page.

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Here's to the birds!

The feather people!

Birds!"

As she reads, she traces her finger below each word as she reads.

When she finishes reading the page. Mrs. Garcia turns to the class. "Okay class. I am going to read each line one more time. After I read, I am going to see if you can make any connections between the words and the pictures. Let me do the first one so you know what I mean. "

She reads the first line again. 'Here's to the birds!'" She points to the word birds. "I see a bunch of pictures of birds on these two pages. They connect to the word 'birds'. Let's see if you can do the same thing on the next line."

Mrs. Garcia rereads the second line. "'The feather people!' Does anyone see any connections between any of these words and any pictures in the book?"

Two students raise their hands.

"Johnny, what do you see?" Mrs. Garcia asks.

"I can see feathers on the birds!"

Mrs. Garcia claps her hands. "Great connection!"

Another girl raises her hand. "Yes, Sandra, what do you see?"

Sandra points to the illustration of the girl. "I see a girl. She is a people."

Mrs. Garcia smiles. Yes! There is a person on the page. Persons are people! In this book the author also calls all different kinds of animals people too. Good job Sandra!"

For the next ten minutes, Mrs. Garcia continues to read the book. The next set of pages is about fish. These are followed by pages about bears, bugs, cats, dogs, cows, and frogs. Each section follows the same formula as that with the birds. The book concludes with a celebration of all kinds of people, with the last page focusing on the 'you' of the reader. As Mrs. Garcia reads, she encourages students to identify details in the illustrations and to connect these to words in the text. Occasionally, after she reads each section once or twice, Mrs. Garcia points to specific words and asks students to read them.

After the students have finished the read aloud, Mrs. Garcia flips the chart paper to a new page. The following is written on the page.

Here's to the _____!

The _____ people!

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Here's to the _____ ones.

The _____ ones.

Here's to the _____ ones.

The _____ ones.

Oh, I love the _____!

Mrs. Garcia turns to the class. "Okay class, guess what? Now we are going to write our own page in the book!" She calls on a quiet girl in the back. "Esperanza, what is an animal we did not read about in the book?"

Esperanza thinks for a moment. "Horse's she says!"

Mrs. Garcia beams. "That is a great one! Okay class, we are going to write a page about horses. But, we will do it together." With a good deal of prompting, Mrs. Garcia goes line by line with the class and encourages the students to think of words and phrases to fill in the blanks. At times she goes back to parts of the book as an example. After she has finished, the students have written the following:

Here's to the horses!

The neighing people!

Horses!

Here's to the brown ones.

The black and white ones.

Here's to the prancy ones.

The love to eat apple ones.

Oh, I love the horses!

After the class has finished the writing about horses, Mrs. Garcia reads it a couple times out loud to the class. When she has finished, she puts her hands on her hips and says, "You all did a wonderful job! You were authors today! After lunch, we will have some time and you can be illustrators too. I will give you some time to draw pictures of horses to go along with this page. Again great job!"