

Unit 10 – Find Your Niche as a Reader: Return to Your Old Favorites, Create Your Own Reading Centers, and Make Plans for Your Reading Life

June

The end of the year is an exciting time. Yes, you are tired and it seems difficult to plan another study. But, it is such a wonderful time to reflect on all the work that you and your children have done all year and to plan ahead for the summer and the next year. Your children are ready to be third graders! This is the time to give them time to reflect on and celebrate their growth as readers, time to make plans for their summer reading, and also time to invent and carry out their own independent reading studies. All year, you have been in charge of what they will study; now it is their turn. Children love this and will rise to the challenge. You also may want to think about how to involve the parents in this unit. Their help will be crucial to ensuring that your children continue to read over the summer. Will you invite the parents in to join you and your class during reading workshop one day? Will you have a workshop for the parents to offer ideas for how to keep their children reading during the summer? You want to end the year inspiring your children about continuing to read.

How This Unit Might Go

One way you might begin this unit is by asking your children to look back on how much they've changed as readers since the beginning of the year. Tell them that you have loved watching them change as readers, and now is their time to think about and revel in how much they have grown. You have most likely saved a variety of reading artifacts across the year, such as reading log pages, Post-it notes, writing about reading, and now you can use these to help children remember the kinds of readers they were and to compare this to the kinds of readers they've become over the course of the year. You might invite your children to reread the books they read earlier in the year to see how their thinking has changed. Another way you might ask your children to reflect is to have them consider their reading tastes (What kinds of things do I like to read?), their reading tendencies (What kinds of things do I tend to do as a reader?) and their reading needs (What do I want to get better at as a reader?). The children can also think about the different reading partners they have had all year. They can think, "Who was my best partner? How did my partner help me? Who did I have the best book talks with?"

For the first few days of this unit, you might gather the class in the meeting area and have a discussion that leads to reflection rather than the usual minilesson. For example, you might say something like, "Readers, one of the things I know that grown-up readers do is reread books we've read before that have been important to us for some reason. Strong readers know that when we reread, we often have new thinking about the story. I was thinking that we could all look back over some old favorite books this week and reread trying to notice the new thinking that we're having about the stories." You could reread some old favorite read alouds and ask your students to shop for old favorites of their own from the classroom library to reread for the next several days.

You may remind the children of a few units you have done this year that could turn into projects in June and carry on over the summer. The series unit is a good place to start.

You can remind children that they could read a new series or revisit one they already know and love. Kids can give themselves goals, such as, “I’m going to try to figure out the patterns and how this series goes,” or, “I’m going to study this character and find out who she is and if she changes and grows across the series.” One child might set a goal to read all of the *Mr. Putter and Tabby* books while another wants to read different mystery series to see how they are the same and different. The study could start in class, and then be extended into the summer. This time also gives the children a chance to try different projects in class so, when they are at home, they could continue any of them.

Once children determine their projects, you’ll want to help them plan for how they’ll proceed and gather materials. Once they’re engaged in the projects, your teaching may change to support them when they hit glitches, when they lose momentum, or when they lose focus. You might have a tricky time ensuring that children have access to whatever materials they may need to execute their projects. However, once these obstacles are overcome, the skills you’re teaching for these reading projects are transferable to any kind of project.

You might spend some time during this unit supporting children as they create their own reading projects and reading centers. For a couple of weeks, you’ll support children in planning, carrying out, sustaining, and finishing projects of their own choice. As you help children pick the projects children will do, you’ll suggest they make projects in their lives to pursue topics of interest, to get better at something, and to try something new. You might spend a few days helping your children to envision the kinds of projects that would go along with these three categories, such as “I want to learn more about mummies, so I’m going to read books on mummies and ancient Egypt,” or “I want to get better at reading aloud to my little sister, so I’m going to find lots of good picture books she’d like, and I’m going to practice reading them,” or “I never really read much poetry, so I’m going to read a lot to find the kinds of poems I like.” You may have to play a large role in helping children figure out their projects. This is the trickiest part of independent projects, but the classroom should be brimming with energy as children have a chance to determine what they want to study. You will want kids to review and use the charts from the units upon which their projects are based. Children can practice making decisions using the strategies and examples on the charts to help them do so. You may want to use your Share time to introduce kids to an array of projects they could try.

During this study, you’ll also help children make their own summer reading plans that will enable them to continue to grow as readers as well as diversify their tastes and habits. Dick Allington’s research tells us that if students don’t read over the summer, their reading levels drop two entire levels. He found that this problem can be mitigated when students read about 8 books at their level over the summer. Therefore, you have a critical obligation to send them off to July and August wanting to read a lot! You may want to have conferences with students

to talk about what they hope to accomplish over the summer. In this way, you help students make reading goals and look forward to their accomplishments. It is important to know who in your class came in at a lower level than when they left first grade. Knowing this information might alert you that some kids and families might need more support in continuing to read over the summer. You might plan a class trip to your local library (with library cards or to get library cards), showing children where they can find their just right books and favorite books. You will want your children to check out at least 8 books that could go with one or two of the summer reading projects they intend to continue or start.

You also might want to invite the parents in for an end-of-year celebration for the class' summer reading projects. The children can explain to their parents what they intend to continue to study and how they intend to do that. You may have children practice with other classes and grades. Perhaps you could take them to the third grade, so the teachers have an idea of what amazing things the kids will be coming in with in September. By making their intentions public, it might help make them seem more real and possible. You might also have a workshop for parents to support them in supporting their children over the summer.

You might compile a list of all the different projects that children are planning on doing. List not only what they will be reading, but also what they plan to work on in their reading. This is a very useful tool. You can send this home with some items starred so that children can see what they want to continue to do over the summer with families and friends. You may want to also make smaller copies of the charts that students will find helpful for their projects.

Read-Aloud

In this final unit, you may offer closure by rereading excerpts from favorite read alouds. You might talk to your children about how some readers love to go back and read parts of favorite books because these offer comfort and may sound different the second time around. Readers may also notice different things when you reread something. You might begin by saying something like, "I want to reread a part of *Charlotte's Web* because I think that when we read this, it changed our class," or "You know, I think one of the best talks we had was when we read *Ruby the Copy Cat*. I thought we could reread it and have another conversation to see if our ideas have changed." It helps to keep the Post-its that you put inside the read aloud books so that you have reminders of the work that your class has done.

As a class, you may also want to choose projects to work on during read aloud, thus modeling for children the choice and decision making that goes into taking on a project.

Meanwhile, you will also show children the inspiration and independence that arises from creating a project.

You may have your children write a little blurb for homework about which books they think you should read aloud again in the upcoming school year. If you choose to do this, have the children write the title of the book and then add their reasons for their thinking. They can advise the teacher as to which books to definitely read to next year's second grade class.

Shared Reading

In this last month of school, you may want to do similar work with shared reading that you'll do with the read aloud – revisiting old favorites. If your children kept poetry notebooks in which they compiled the poems they learned during shared reading, you might have a poetry recitation near the end of the year in which you ask children to select a favorite poem to memorize and say aloud to the class. You can also take out several of the big books you read together this year and let students choose their favorites to reread. You'll want to remind them to use all they learned this year to read them like “almost third graders.”

Word Study/Phonics

As the year comes to a close, you will want to take some time to assess your children with regard to their understanding of phonics and word study. You'll probably look at their writing to see that they spell word wall words conventionally and fluently (they write them quickly), and that your children's attempts to spell unknown words are grounded in all they know about how words work. You'll want to see that they transferred what they learned in words study to their writing, and to their reading.

If you decide to teach...	Suggested Lessons in <i>Words Their Way 4th</i> <i>Edition</i>	Suggested Lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons Grade 2 –</i> Pinnell & Fountas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contractions• Inflectional Endings for Plural and Past Tense• Homophones• High-Frequency Words	See Adaptable Games (pg. 220), 7-2 (pg. 221) 6-16, 6-17 (pgs. 199-200) Pgs. 182-183	WS10 to WS12 (pgs. 339-350) WS5, WS6 (pgs. 319-326), WS9 (pgs. 335-338) WS4, WS5 (pgs. 285-292) HF1 to HF 9 (pgs. 235-270)