

## My Philosophy of Children's Literature: Read More To Know More

There is no doubt in my mind that children learn by observing. It does not matter if they are watching a parent, a sibling, a favorite television program or a teacher, they pick up good habits, as well as bad habits. As a future elementary/special education teacher, I want my students to pick up only good habits while watching me in my classroom. My classroom will be a literature-rich environment that will motivate my students to read more. I will encourage my students to read by showing them how, on a daily basis, literature can be incorporated into the school day and implemented into the curriculum. The Arizona Standards for Reading will be my utmost priority when developing and creating my lesson plans for my students. To expose my students, it is so important to include multicultural literature into the classroom literature collection. At this young age, I want to instill into my students the values of literacy and literature, and help them realize as Dr. Seuss says, "*the more you read, the more things you'll know.*"

A literature-rich classroom environment is essential to motivate my students to read. As a starting point, I need to have a variety of books in my classroom library collection. I already started compiling a list of books that I want to include, and Dr. Seuss is top on my list. When choosing my literature collection though, I need to be thoughtful in my selection process. The books need to be quality literature books that include a variety of genres, contain books that address the different reading levels of my students, have a mixture of picture books, children's chapter books, novels, multicultural literature, and even books on tape. The Reading Center within my classroom will be a comfortable, inviting, and creative space where my students can enter to read and enjoy their favorite books. This center will be a place for my students to go, and enter into a world of adventure, imagination and wonder. I want my students to be bright, well rounded individuals, who are energized, and excited about reading. I will encourage my students to sign out books from the classroom library that are of interest to them, and even take the books home to read at their leisure. Although class discussions are beneficial, I would even welcome a one-on-one discussion with a student who wanted to discuss a book with me. I want to develop critical thinkers in my classroom, and sometimes the best discussions can occur on an individual basis. Overall, my classroom will be brightly decorated with bulletin board displays and posters that will promote reading. An original theme I have in mind is, "Over the Rainbow of Books." This title will hopefully energize my students to read more. I want them to grasp the concept that by reading one small book there are endless possibilities where this book can take them, even as far as over the rainbow. When parents or visitors come into my classroom, I want their focal point to be projects that their children have worked on in relation to a literature lesson that was taught. As another motivation for my students to read more, I personally plan on reading more as well. I will visibly display on my desk a book that I am currently engrossed in reading, so when my students see this book it will prompt them to read more as well. If I want to be a good role model for my students, than I need to demonstrate that I also love to read during my free time. Along with an elaborate literature-rich classroom environment, a great way for me to give my students ideas and hints on what books they might like to read, I will incorporate reading and literature into the school day and curriculum every day.

Including read-alouds and literature-rich activities into the school day and curriculum is something that I plan on doing to encourage my students to read often. I intend to perform at least two read-alouds during the school day to provide some diversity in the schedule. The benefits of read-alouds are numerous. Just imagine all the new vocabulary words that my students will be exposed to when they are reading or hearing a story! During a language arts lesson, I can introduce my class to different parts of speech, such as rhyme and even repetition. Eric Carle is an author that I

recently discovered, and he has written numerous children's picture books. One book in particular that has repetition as a theme of the book is *From Head to Toe*. This book might seem as though it is geared towards the younger aged students, but I am planning on teaching special education, and this picture book would be very appropriate for this lesson. With just this one book, there are countless interactive projects that I can implement into my curriculum. A resource that I will utilize often when preparing my lessons for the class will be Bloom's Taxonomy. The levels of understanding and remembering are important, but I want to challenge my students, and will push for more high level thinking by using activities that incorporate analyzing and evaluating. If I want my students to provide creative and thought-provoking responses when I pose an open ended question, I need to take the time to compile my questions accordingly. Reading aloud books can engage students in a discussion about the basic literary elements of a story, such as the plot, the setting, when the climax occurred, and who the main characters were. Another book that I am delighted to add to my classroom library is *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, by Patricia Polacco. This book had many serious themes mentioned throughout the book, and would be a great picture book to use when teaching a lesson on the basic literary elements of a story. Picture books can be used when teaching science, social studies, math or even a lesson on classroom responsibilities and behavior. I have become very fond of Eric Carle's books, and one picture book that would be ideal for a lesson in science would be *Mister Seahorse*. The students can go to the library, and do some research on different sea creatures. To make the read-aloud even more effective, it is important to have them at the same time each day. I still have time to plan for this, but more than likely, the read-aloud would occur immediately after their lunch/recess. When the class comes inside from lunch/recess, a read-aloud will help calm the students down and help them refocus their energy from the playground back to the lesson in class. On occasion, I may even ask a few of the students to perform their own read-aloud or book talk. Anything and everything that has to do with reading, books and getting my students involved and engaged is what my hope is. A wonderful way to get the class excited about the book that is going to be heard is to have a "before reading" group discussion. The students can begin to channel their thoughts onto what they believe the story will be about. They can start to develop their own opinions and ideas of what will happen. While I am reading the book, I will stop and check for comprehension and understanding. Once the book is finished the entire class can have a group discussion, and perhaps even work on a reader response activity that will enable them to utilize their writing skills, and reflect on their own diverse backgrounds. Besides incorporating literature into the school day and curriculum, in order to challenge my students to appreciate and accept differences, I will have a diverse selection of books in my classroom library that pertain to multicultural literature.

Having a multicultural literature selection for my students to read is a great way for me to express to my class that people may be different, but different should not be considered a bad thing. The books that I will have carefully selected for my classroom library will be books used to teach lessons on the differences in culture. I may have an English Language Learner student in my classroom, and I want them to feel welcome. I will have bilingual books available for students to read. When I am teaching a social studies lesson, these multicultural books will be very useful. I want to build a classroom that is culturally diverse, and teach my students how to be respectful and kind to people who may be different. My students need to learn how to be accepting of others, and treat others kindly, and by using themes from multicultural stories I can teach a lesson in respect and kindness. I want to challenge my students to read and explore other types of literature. Some of these books my student's may never have thought of reading before, but my goal is to entice them to read a variety of books.

"The more you read, the more things you'll know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." This quote comes from one of Dr. Seuss' books entitled *I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!*

I thought this was an appropriate quote because as an aspiring elementary/special education teacher who is just beginning my own adventure into the wonderful world of teaching, I've come to realize that the more I read, the more I know, and the more I learn the more places I will go.