



Learning Safari Adventures

Becerra Safari, 3rd Grade

8/26/16



Learning Adventure Notes:

- Happy (New) School Year! The first week of school was exciting and meaningful. Students were so excited to see the classroom and to begin learning. There are 19 students (11 boys and 8 girls) in our class. One student is new to Boulevard. Welcome to Kelley (from Mercer—not too far)! I am already getting to know each student on an individual basis. I look forward to getting to know each child, and his/her family, better over the year.
- Thank you for reading the notes and letters I sent home this week. I firmly believe that communication is an essential component of your child's education. I will send home a newsletter every other week.
- Please feel free to call me, send in a note, or e-mail (becerra_m@shaker.org) me if you have a question or a concern. Each classroom has a phone with a direct line and voicemail. The direct phone line to my classroom is 295-4901.
- The class website is also a great tool for communication. There's even a link to e-mail the class.
- This week the students and I spent time getting to know each other, learning the classroom routines and expectations, and organizing/labeling desk supplies.
- Some of the routines students have been learning are: Morning Steps, Feeling Sticks, Morning Meeting, POWER Cards/Vine, jobs, math stations, classroom jobs, and trigger words. Each trigger word has an action. It's a fun way to keep attention and focus (and review content terms). Try saying the following trigger words to your child: popcorn, teacher freeze, safari, and GLP!
- Learning is an adventure! Did you hear about the adventure hats, vests, and binoculars? We're making great use of these learning safari-related tools! Each student made either a pair of binoculars or a safari vest. I provided the materials with the only directions of, "Have at it!" This activity was fun and gave me a glimpse into students' creativity and problem solving skills. You can view pictures and the actual items on **Thursday, 9/1/16**, at **Curriculum Night** at **7:30 pm!**

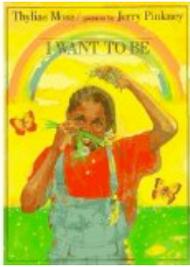
IB Adventures:

Central Idea: *Inquiry provides opportunities for discovery and exploration into how individuals learn.*

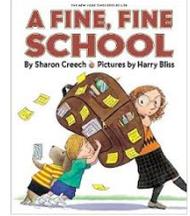
- Essential Agreements: This unit is an inquiry into individuals, experiments, and the Learner Profile. To jump-start the unit, we discussed rules followed at home. The conversation led to a discussion about the needs of an efficient classroom. I wrote 5 questions on the white board. Students recorded thoughts onto sticky notes. You can view the questions and thoughts on **Thursday, 9/1/16**, at **Curriculum Night!** After hearing the story *What if Everybody did that?*, our classroom's Essential Agreements were formed.
- ME Bags: Throughout the week each student brought in a *Me Bag*. This activity encouraged inquiring to learn new information. After the written hints were given, four students asked strong questions to gain information, and then 3 guesses were taken. Some of the mystery objects were guessed with 3 or less questions. The *Me Bags* will continue next week.
- Learner Profile: I made a Power Point highlighting the Learner Profile Attributes displayed at *Rift Valley Children's Village*. After sharing the Power Point (and some stories), students formed attribute groups. Each group illustrated and captioned a specific attribute. You can view pictures (print out of each slide) in our classroom on **Thursday, 9/1/16**, at **Curriculum Night!**
- Pre-assessment: Why is it important for students to be curious? This was given as a "quick write," so I was able to get a feel for what students understand about inquiry—as well as each student's initial writing skills. The pre-assessment will guide me in planning the lessons.
- SOLE Inquiry: **Self-Organized Learning Environments (SOLEs)** are created to encourage students to work as a community to answer a vibrant and challenging question by using the Internet. Students take charge of their own learning by inquiring and exploring. This was our first SOLE and it went amazingly well! My main job was to not interfere or give directives/advice—just give the inquiring question. I went over the essential agreements for SOLEs and let students loose. Students had 30 minutes to inquire into the following question: **How do humans learn?** I was super impressed with the cooperation amongst students and the amount of knowledge gained in such a short amount of time. Most groups found videos to watch on Brain Pop or YouTube. After the research, students gave a brief share out of their research notes to the rest of the class about their findings.

Language Arts Adventures:

- I shared two books with the class this week that related to the start of the new school year, relationships, and the IB Learner Profile. Both books tied into Language Arts and IB.



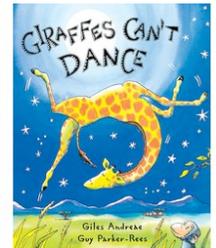
- *A Fine Fine School*: This story is about a principal who is so excited about his fine school, his fine students, and his fine teachers. He's so excited that he extends the school year to include many more days! Towards the end of the story, the principal realized the importance of being BALANCED.
- *I Want to Be*: This story is about a girl thinking about what she wants to be when she grows up. She REFLECTS about her strengths throughout the story.



- Safety Plans: Each student wrote a plan to follow when stress, frustration, sadness, and/or anxiety gets to be too much. A one to two minute break allows students to calm down, gather thoughts, and recollect. To jump start the lesson, I shared a personal frustration story (a fight with my sister) and how we both handled the fight. I also read the stories *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really Really Angry* and *How are you Peeling?* Each student's plan was laminated and will be stored in individual desks. This way, students can pick up the card and take it to a safe place. Ask your child about his/her plan. You can see your child's Safety Plan at **Curriculum Night** on **Thursday, 9/1/16!**

Math Adventures:

- Math Growth Mindset: On Tuesday we discussed thoughts and feelings about math. It's important for students to realize that all students are capable of learning math – and there is no such thing as a “NO MATH BRAIN!” I shared the book “Giraffes Can't Dance,” where a giraffe was convinced he couldn't dance. But with the right teaching and practice, the giraffe DID dance. We related this story to math concepts and skills, and then watched a video about math growth mindset. As a class, we brainstormed phrases that aren't good to use while talking to peers during math – and then came up with even better phrases to use. For example, “I don't know that YET!” “I will learn this with more practice!” You can view our brainstorming charts (posted in the classroom) at **Curriculum Night** on **Thursday, 9/1/16** at 7:30!
- Guided Math Training Camp: Math is taught in small groups using the enVisions math series. Each lesson contains a whole-group mini lesson and a brief video. Students then rotate through 3 stations: Teacher Time, Review & Fact Practice, and Computers (Compass Learning). This format allows for differentiation, more time on task, and a variety of math tools. I like it because I'm able to address learning needs more easily. Groups change daily based on the lesson's objectives. At the start of each unit, students take a pre-test. I use the pre-test data to determine needs and groups. This week students “trained” for math by rotating through 3 stations. Students were on computers (www.sheppardsoftware.com), were practicing facts, and were with me (for Teacher Time) practicing various skills. Topic 1 in the math series will begin on Tuesday.
- Topic 1 Pre-assessment: On Friday, students took the pre-assessment for Topic 1.



Information Hut:

- Everyone received a hard copy of this newsletter. The next newsletter (9/9/16) will be sent through email.
- **Curriculum Night** is on **Thursday, 9/1/16**. I hope to see you there!
- There is no school on Monday, 9/5 (Happy Labor Day)!
- The **Back to School Bash** is on Friday, 9/9/16. I hope to see you there!
- There is a **PTO Meeting** on Wednesday, 9/14/16 at 7:00 pm.
- Some basic information is attached. I bet you know where and when you can learn more! If you guessed **Curriculum Night** on **Thursday, 9/1/16**, you're right! ☺ I hope to see you on Thursday!

Take Home Folder

Students have a Take Home folder. Just as the name implies, this folder is taken home. Students should bring the folder home daily and should bring it back to school daily. Any items that I need to send home are placed in this folder. The folder has two pockets. One pocket holds papers for you to look at and to keep at home. The other pocket holds papers that need to stay in the folder (POWER Calendar). Please check this folder daily. Take out any papers from the pocket marked “EMPTY AT HOME.” Place any items that you need to send into school inside of your child’s Take Home folder. Students check Take Home folders for notes every morning.

Homework

Each student will receive a language arts homework packet every other Monday (or the first day of the week). The packet is due two weeks later. The packet will consist of an on-level reading comprehension passage, a writing prompt, and a Spelling Choice Menu. The first homework packet will go home in mid-September. Once a week I may send home a quick spelling sort homework assignment to make sure the words are being practiced and sorted correctly.

All students will receive the same homework packet for the first month of school. Shortly after, homework packets will be geared towards students’ levels. Students who do not turn in homework will get a reminder note. Students will miss Choice Time if the homework is not turned in after the reminder note is sent home. At this point, students will complete the homework during Choice Time. Choice Time will also be missed on the due date if late and/or incomplete homework occurs 3 or more times. I ALWAYS have extra homework packets. Your child may ask me for another packet if the original is misplaced.

Math homework will be sent home individually 3-4 days a week, starting next week with the enVision Topic 1 lessons. The Math homework is due the NEXT day. The math homework assignment will be recorded onto a Math Homework Log, which is **on the back** of the Power Calendar. I would like for students to read for at least 20 minutes 5-7 days a week. It would also be nice for students to do the same with math facts (practicing in any method). While this isn’t required and there isn’t a mandatory reading log or fact log, I strongly encourage students to read and to practice facts. As a class we will come up with some sort of incentive. When the plan comes together, I’ll be sure to let you know. For September, the incentive is LUNCH BUNCH! Just to be clear, the 20 minutes can be shared by reading and math facts!

Spelling Tests

Spelling tests are given every OTHER Friday. Look for your child’s individual spelling list in his/her Take Home folder. Spelling lists can also be found on www.superbecerra.com. The lists should be **CUT UP** so that students can practice spelling **AND sorting**. The first spelling list (and possibly the second) will be the same for every student. Once the Word Study routine is set, groups will begin. Shortly after, lists will be individually differentiated through the use of bonus words. The first spelling list will go home mid-September.

Graded Work

I will send students’ graded work home on Wednesdays. Please look for this in your child’s Take Home folder.

POWER Cards & Calendars

POWER Cards are one of my discipline techniques. This is a pro-active discipline method. This method also makes you (the parent/guardian) aware of your child’s behavior daily. Detailed information about this program went home on the first day of school. It will also be covered during Curriculum Night.

Snack and Water

Students may bring a snack to school if so desired. Snacks must be healthy and neat—no messy snacks please. Students may also bring water bottles to school. Dehydration does not make for easy learning.

Lunch

Students have recess and lunch from 12:30-1:25. (Recess is first.) If your child is packing lunch, please make sure that his/her lunch box is clearly labeled and equipped with any necessary items, such as a spoon. School lunches may be purchased for \$3.00. This includes milk. Lunch credits may be purchased in mass quantities, or may be purchased one at a time. Students may buy milk individually for 50 cents.

Birthdays

Students may bring in a birthday treat to share with the class. I will send a reminder note home a week before your child's birthday. You may bring the item in or send it in with your child. Please arrange this with me at least two days prior to the birthday. Birthday treats must be easy to serve. Cupcakes, cookies, or prepackaged items are best. The class will sing *Happy Birthday* and then the treats will be passed out. This is not a party...students will continue to work while the treat is being devoured.

Individualization

I am aware that students are at various levels. Students have different passions and interests. Because of this, I individualize learning as much as possible in every content area. Once routines and procedures are set in place, individualization will start. Individual reading conferences, small reading groups, Writing Workshop, individual spelling tests, individualized homework packets, and Math Enrichment activities are some examples of individualization. I set high expectations for students, and I find that students reach the given expectations. I stress focus, independence, and fun.

Volunteers

Volunteers are welcome and desired in the classroom! A note about the volunteer schedule will go home soon.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

Shaker Heights is IB-authorized!! ☺ The district is committed to providing students with a global learning experience; leading students to become life-long learners who appreciate and accept diversity. There are 6 main transdisciplinary units. The units encompass many content areas and stress inquiry and high-order thinking skills. Please read the class newsletters for IB information.

Thank you for reading this information. I suggest keeping this page for your reference. I hope to see you at **CURRICULUM NIGHT** on **Thursday, September 1st at 7:30 pm** in our classroom.

If you're unable to attend due to childcare, please let me know. I will be able to provide you with alternative childcare options. ☺