Giraffe Unit

Kindergarten

Stage 3

**Environment:**

* When the students come in on the first day, they will see many animal prints, especially giraffe, and books. I want my room to be overflowing with books so my students can have every opportunity to read or look through the books on the shelves. I also want to stress how cool and important I think reading is to try to influence them to love reading also. My unit is strongly literacy based, so I think starting off by trying to get them to love books will fit right in with the rest of the unit.
* There will be a '"Reading Oasis" where they can sit with a book in a bean bag chair, or with a blanket, and read when they have free time. This provides a comfortable environment for them to relax and get into a good book, and it also makes the room seem more like home and comforting to those who need it.
* My desk will be an addition to the kidney-shaped reading table so that I can just turn around when I am working with groups. This way, there is more room in our class for their imagination to shine, and I don't need that huge of a private desk anyways.

**Self-Assessments:**

The students will use three pictures to self-assess themselves in the classroom:

* Some pieces click – I have no understanding at all, and need guidance
* Most pieces click – I understand some of it, my knowledge keeps progressing
* All the pieces click – I understand most, if not all, of it and I can help others with this topic

**George the Globe-Trotting Giraffe:**

The first day, I will explain the George the Giraffe idea, and we will look through the giraffes on the "adoption" website to select which one we want to adopt. After we select one, fill out all of the paper work, and receive the stuffed giraffe, they will start taking him home. We will put everyone's names in a can and draw to see who gets to take him home each day. This way, everyone will have a chance to take him home before the end of the year, and the order the students get him is not based on anything but pure luck. They will take him home for one night, and before they come back the next day, they will need to have a journal entry written (preferably mostly by them, but their parents/guardians can help some) about their adventures with George. George's notebook will go home with him, and at the end of the school year, we will have a raffle to see who wins George and his journal of adventures.

**Take Home Book:**

Since I am such a strong advocate of reading, I would love my students to read something every night - whether it is to a parents, sibling, pet, neighbor, or plant in their home. I will encourage the parents throughout the year to try to read for 15 minutes each night with their child because it really does make a huge difference in their education, reading fluency, and development.

**Day 1:**

**Reading:**

We would start by reading "The Short Giraffe" by Neil Flory and Mark Cleary. This is an adorable book about a group of giraffes who are getting ready for a picture, but one is significantly shorter than the others. He tries multiple things to get taller so he can be in the picture, but none of them works. In the end, the other giraffes bend down to his level so he can be seen in the picture too. This is a great way to introduce the unit because it is all about a giraffe who doesn't fit in with those around him. He is unusually short, and he tries to overcome those differences to fit in. When that doesn't work, the other giraffes accept him for him, and that is such a powerful message to my students. This can be a book advocating that if you accept who you are and don't try to change for those around you, you will be happier and more confident, and they will like you for who you are instead of who you are trying to be.

**Writing:**

I will have them reflect on this book by writing in their notebooks about a time where they didn't fit in, and what they did about it. Did they change who they were to try to get people to like them better? Or did they act the same and find friends that way?

**Fact Finding:**

I will allow them time to go through the non-fiction books about animals and giraffes to find different facts about a giraffe's height. They will compile this in their notebooks, and then later on we will refer back to their list of facts for our math assignment.

**Math:**

I will introduce the 18 foot tape on the floor. After we research about the height of giraffes, we will talk about how most adult male giraffes grow to be 18 feet tall. Having the tape stretched out on the floor is a great way for the students to visualize how tall 18 feet is. They will then make predictions on how many people, water bottles, cars, rulers, and cans of pop tall would equal the height of a male giraffe. After filling out their predicting learning page, they will turn in their predictions to me, and later in the week I will hand them back out when we actually figure out the correct calculations.

**Science:**

We will talk about elephants and the different physical aspects of them that are special. They will carry their Safari Journals with them so they can take notes on the special features of an elephant.

**Take Home Book:**

The book that they would take home this day is "Animals, Animals" from Reading A-Z. This book is all about the differences with animals. It is a Level K reading book, but hopefully someone would be able to read it to them. If not, they are still gaining knowledge out of the pictures on each page.

**End of the day, Reflection, and Self-Assessment:**

* They will write in their Safari Journals about elephants, including

1. what makes them special
2. how do they size up to a giraffe
3. and draw a picture of their interpretation of the animal

* Before they leave the class I will ask them to think about how they feel about what we learned that day, and to put their popsicle sticks in the can that correlates with their knowledge of the concepts we learned that day
* We will draw one of the remaining names from the can to see who gets to take George home and write about their adventures with him

**Day 2:**

**Reading:**

We would read "Giraffes Can't Dance" by Giles Andreae and Guy Parker-Rees. This book is about a giraffe that wants to dance like all of the other animals in the jungle, but since he has such awkward-lengthed limbs, he gets made fun of. After hearing some inspiring words from a friend, he decides that he doesn't care who sees or what they think, he just wants to dance. This is an excellent book for this unit because, again, it is teaching children to not care what those around them think, because as long as you like who you are and what you are doing, you will be happy.

**Writing:**

I will have them write in their notebook, and then share with a partner, one thing that they like to do that might be seen as goofy or silly. The partner will be instructed to be encouraging to their partner, and then they will share the thing that they do that is goofy. This is a great way for the students to get to know each other, and to also tear down barriers before they get to an age where friendships are based on similarities instead of kindness.

**Math:**

Students will conduct lab measurements about how many rulers, water bottles, and M&M's tall they are. They will then fill out a learning page with their findings, and compare with other students to determine who is taller.

**Music:**

After reading this story, we will talk about being afraid to let our light shine because we are afraid about being made fun of. Then, for the fun of it and to reiterate that we shouldn't care what people think about us, I will turn on music and we will all have a short little dance party. Doing this activity shows the children that it is okay to be goofy, not always perfect, and to let go and have fun with who you are.

**Science:**

On this day we will read about raccoons and skunks. The students will write in their Safari Journals facts and special features of raccoons and skunks.

**Take Home Book:**

Their take home book for the day will be a copy of "Something Special" by David McPhail. This book is about finding out your true talent and being able to share it with others.

**End of the day, Reflection, and Self-Assessment:**

* They will write in their Safari Journals about raccoons and skunks, including

1. what makes them special
2. how do they size up to a giraffe
3. and draw a picture of their interpretation of the animal

* Before they leave the class I will ask them to think about how they feel about what we learned that day, and to put their popsicle sticks in the can that correlates with their knowledge of the concepts we learned that day
* We will draw one of the remaining names from the can to see who gets to take George home and write about their adventures with him

**Day 3:**

**Reading:**

We will read "Pezzettino" by Leo Lionni. This story is about a little block guy who thinks that he is a part of something bigger, but every structure he finds down the road has all of their pieces. Just when he feels like he doesn't belong anywhere and isn't needed, he realizes that he is complete already and that is why no one needed him - he was already made up of a bunch of parts. This book goes right alongside with the theme of different pieces making up something bigger.

**Fact Finding:**

We will research in our non-fiction books about how long a giraffe's tongue is, and what special features a tongue that long provides for a giraffe.

**Art:**

Their craft today will be to make a giraffe measuring tongue to use for a ruler reference over the rest of the unit. After we research about giraffe tongues, they will draw and cut out a giraffe head, and then attach an 18 inch ribbon onto the giraffe's mouth since their tongues are normally around 18 inches long. I will have already labeled each ribbon at every six inches so it is easier for them to measure.

**Math:**

Using their newly created ruler, they will be given a learning page to fill out that requires them to find 10 things in the room, measure them, and then record whether the object was longer or shorter than a giraffe's tongue.

**Science:**

Today they will learn about frogs and chameleons and what makes them special. They will record facts and interesting thoughts in their Safari Journal for later.

**Take Home Book:**

The book that they would take home tonight would be another book from Reading A-Z called "Animal Tongues". This book fits along perfectly with the theme of the day, and it has great picture of real animals so the students can visualize the different kinds of tongues.

**End of the day, Reflection, and Self-Assessment:**

* They will write in their Safari Journals about frogs and chameleons, including

1. what makes them special
2. how do they size up to a giraffe
3. and draw a picture of their interpretation of the animal

* Before they leave the class I will ask them to think about how they feel about what we learned that day, and to put their popsicle sticks in the can that correlates with their knowledge of the concepts we learned that day
* We will draw one of the remaining names from the can to see who gets to take George home and write about their adventures with him

**Day 4:**

**Reading:**

Today we will read "Animals Big and Small" by Daniel Nunn to compare the sizes of different animals. This is a great book that incorporates a lot of math into your reading also.

**Fact Finding:**

We would research the different sizes and behaviors of animals in our non-fiction texts. They would record their notes in their Safari Journal.

**Math:**

After we read this book, we would start comparing and contrasting the different heights, weights, and sizes of the animals we read about. We would also refer to the giraffe growth chart to see the different measurements of the animals represented, and how we compare to the animals. They would complete a greater than/less than learning page to show that they understand what it means for something to be bigger or smaller.

**Science:**

The animal we would research that day is the whale. Whales are so huge, and because of that, they have so many amazing features that not many other animals have.

**Take Home Book:**

Their take home book for tonight is a Reading A-Z book called "Extreme Animals". Not only does this book illustrate the differences in animal sizes, but it also compares their noisiness, wingspan, how they eat, etc.

**End of the day, Reflection, and Self-Assessment:**

* They will write in their Safari Journals about whales, including

1. what makes them special
2. how do they size up to a giraffe
3. and draw a picture of their interpretation of the animal

* Before they leave the class I will ask them to think about how they feel about what we learned that day, and to put their popsicle sticks in the can that correlates with their knowledge of the concepts we learned that day
* We will draw one of the remaining names from the can to see who gets to take George home and write about their adventures with him

**Day 5:**

**Reading:**

Today we will read "Chrysanthemum" by Kevin Henkes. This story is about a little girl mouse who has a weird name, and gets picked on for it. She struggles with not liking herself or her name throughout the whole thing, but in the end everyone wants a name like hers because the teacher likes it. This is another great book about accepting who you are, and being true to yourself.

**Art:**

For today's craft, the students will be making their very own giraffe. They will trace their foot and hand on construction paper. They will then cut both out, and connect them so the fingers make the legs of the giraffe, and their foot makes the neck and head. Then, they will use finger paint to make fingerprint spots. When they are completed, we will hang them up in the classroom so everyone can see that even though the feet, hands, and fingerprints are all different, they all still look like giraffes.

**Science:**

Today they will learn about jellyfish and what makes them special. They will record facts and interesting thoughts in their Safari Journal for later.

**Take Home Book:**

The book they will be able to take home tonight is "A Bad Case of the Stripes" by David Shannon. This book stresses how important it is to be yourself, or else you might start turning into something un-human - literally.

**End of the day, Reflection, and Self-Assessment:**

* They will write in their Safari Journals about jellyfish, including

1. what makes them special
2. how do they size up to a giraffe
3. and draw a picture of their interpretation of the animal

* Before they leave the class I will ask them to think about how they feel about what we learned that day, and to put their popsicle sticks in the can that correlates with their knowledge of the concepts we learned that day

**Day 6:**

**Reading:**

This day we would read "It's Okay To Be Different" by Todd Parr. This book talks about every difference you could think of, but he writes it in a way that is kid-friendly and easy to understand! This book could be used throughout the year when anyone has a difference from someone else.

**Fact Finding:**

We would look through all of our non-fiction books for information on the different species of giraffes and how to tell where they are from based on the pattern of their coat.

**Geography:**

After researching, we would consult the map of Africa on our wall, and make the fur-patterned pictures to add to the map for easier reference. This would create an easily-accessed guide for categorizing the different species of giraffes we would talk about.

**Science:**

We would research cheetahs, zebras and tigers during this time because of their fur-patterns. The students would write down in their books all about their individual animals and their fur-patterns so they could compare and contrast them later.

**Take Home Book:**

The book they would take home for this day is a Reading A-Z book called "Zoo Keeping". This book is extremely advanced for this age, but they will be able to see pictures to infer what the text says, and they can always get help from an adult.

**End of the day, Reflection, and Self-Assessment:**

* They will write in their Safari Journals about cheetahs, zebras and tigers, including

1. what makes them special
2. how do they size up to a giraffe
3. and draw a picture of their interpretation of the animal

* Before they leave the class I will ask them to think about how they feel about what we learned that day, and to put their popsicle sticks in the can that correlates with their knowledge of the concepts we learned that day
* We will draw one of the remaining names from the can to see who gets to take George home and write about their adventures with him

**Day 7:**

**Reading:**

The book we would read aloud is called "Spoon" by Amy Krouse Rosenthal. This is an adorable book about a spoon who gets jealous of everything that the knife, fork, and chopsticks get to do because he thinks they have more fun and purposeful jobs than him. In the end, he finds out that he can do things they can't, and they are jealous of how great he is. This is a good book to illustrate that people don't always see you in the same way you see you.

**Fact Finding:**

We would search in the non-fiction books and magazines to determine whether a giraffe is a Carnivore, Herbivore, or Omnivore, and then would compare their eating styles with lions and bears. They would make notes in their Safari Journals about which was which.

**Science:**

The animals we would research today would be lions and bears. The information would be recorded in their Safari Journals so they could go back and write about them later.

**Art:**

The craft today would be to make Carnivore, Herbivore, and Omnivore plates. By taking three separate paper plates and gluing pictures of food on them from magazines, these could be quick resources for when we talk about if an animal is a Carnivore, Herbivore, or Omnivore.

**Take Home Book:**

The book they can take home today is another Reading A-Z book called "What's For Dinner". It is about a giraffe that gets tired of eating leaves so he tries to switch it up. After a lot of difficulty, he finally decides not to change, but to continue eating the way he was made to.

**End of the day, Reflection, and Self-Assessment:**

* They will write in their Safari Journals about lions and bears, including

1. what makes them special
2. how do they size up to a giraffe
3. and draw a picture of their interpretation of the animal

* Before they leave the class I will ask them to think about how they feel about what we learned that day, and to put their popsicle sticks in the can that correlates with their knowledge of the concepts we learned that day
* We will draw one of the remaining names from the can to see who gets to take George home and write about their adventures with him

**Day 8:**

**Reading:**

Today we would read the classic story about "The Rainbow Fish" by Marcus Pfister. This is a story about a little fish who doesn't fit in, but after being kind and sharing his scales, people accept him and want to be his friend. This is another good story about being yourself, and also being kind.

**Vocabulary:**

In the Giraffe Book, there are two word sorts where the students can cut out the individual letters and create as many words as they can out of the letters in "Herbivore" and "Giraffe". This would be mostly sight words for them, but it would still be beneficial to see what words they could come up with.

**Science:**

We would talk about sloths, koalas and pandas during this class period. The students would write notes in the Safari Journals.

**Take Home Book:**

The book they will take home tonight is "How Animals Sleep" from Reading A-Z. This book is a non-fiction book about many different animals and their sleeping habits. This is a great way to see the different unique ways that animals need to sleep to keep themselves safe.

**End of the day, Reflection, and Self-Assessment:**

* They will write in their Safari Journals about sloths, koalas and pandas, including

1. what makes them special
2. how do they size up to a giraffe
3. and draw a picture of their interpretation of the animal

* Before they leave the class I will ask them to think about how they feel about what we learned that day, and to put their popsicle sticks in the can that correlates with their knowledge of the concepts we learned that day
* We will draw one of the remaining names from the can to see who gets to take George home and write about their adventures with him

**Day 9:**

**Reading:**

On day four, we will read "You're Never Too Little To Love" by Jeanne Willis and Jan Fearnley. This is an adorable book about a mouse who wants to kiss a giraffe, but can't reach her, no matter how many objects he stands on to try to reach her. This story is a great tool for teaching the children to accept differences and treat everyone with love.

**Writing:**

As our week comes to a close, the students will be asked to write a short story about what life as a giraffe would be like. They would be asked to put themselves in the shoes of a giraffe and write about it. This includes but is not limited to, what they eat, what they are afraid of, what they would do if faced with confrontation, how they sleep, and how they drink and eat.

**Science:**

Today they will learn about mice, rats, and hamsters. After talking about the rodent family, they will record information in their Safari Journals so they can write about the differences later.

**Take Home Book:**

A book they could take home would be "Giraffes Aren't Half As Fat" by Miriam Aroner. This is another great book about sizes, and they would be able to see the different dimensions of animals and compare and contrast them.

**End of the day, Reflection, and Self-Assessment:**

* They will write in their Safari Journals about rodents, including

1. what makes them special
2. how do they size up to a giraffe
3. and draw a picture of their interpretation of the animal

* Before they leave the class I will ask them to think about how they feel about what we learned that day, and to put their popsicle sticks in the can that correlates with their knowledge of the concepts we learned that day
* We will draw one of the remaining names from the can to see who gets to take George home and write about their adventures with him

**Day 10:**

**Reading:**

We would read "The Mixed-up Chameleon" by Eric Carle. This is a pre-read before we talk about our final assessment: the Create-An-Animal project. This is also great because it's another story about an animals that tries to be something he's not, and then ends up wishing he was just a chameleon again because he misses it. This shows the children that they're great the way they are and don't need to change.

**Art:**

We would work on their final assessment which is the Create-An-Animal project. This will be a project where they have to make up their own animal, using features of real animals, and make a poster of their creation. They will need to tell me whether it is a carnivore, omnivore, or herbivore, where it lives, how tall it is, and what special features makes it different from other animals, and how they are helpful to that animal. They will then present this poster in front of the class, and it will then be displayed in the hallway with a little blurb about the animal and its different attributes.

**Science:**

The animals we will research and talk about this day is the platypus. They are such unique animals, and it would be funny to show the students an animal that looks like a real life create-an-animal.

**End of the day, Reflection, and Self-Assessment:**

* They will write in their Safari Journals about elephants, including

1. what makes them special
2. how do they size up to a giraffe
3. and draw a picture of their interpretation of the animal

* Before they leave the class I will ask them to think about how they feel about what we learned that day, and to put their popsicle sticks in the can that correlates with their knowledge of the concepts we learned that day
* We will draw one of the remaining names from the can to see who gets to take George home and write about their adventures with him