

WRITING PROMPTS

1. *OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT*

Teaching economics is not a challenge for me, but keeping a classroom of 20 Kindergartners focused on the learning can be a challenge! What could I do to keep these very enthusiastic students interested in learning about economics? Using a popular character from children's literature proved to be the ideal solution! George, a fictional monkey, is the main character in books written by H. A. Rey. George first appeared in H. A. Rey's Cecily G. and the 9 Monkeys in 1942. Since then he has been the main character in numerous books, DVD's, games, activities, television series, and Internet sites. The students in my classroom are very familiar with George's curious characteristic. Combining Curious George and economics launched the project *Curious About Economics*.

As each new economic concept was introduced a different Curious George book was read. Students were curious about economic wants, scarcity, goods, services, producers, consumers, productive resources, choice, opportunity cost, specialization, interdependence, price, markets, and public goods and services. Students participated in large group, small group, and individual activities while learning each concept. Home/school connections provided additional reinforcement.

After administering the pre-test in December our study began when we read Are You Curious? and the students completed the journal prompt "I am curious about . . .". The students identified individual and family economic wants. Working in small groups the students studied natural resources and the goods produced from these resources. They became producers of a good as they made a bunny hat for our annual egg hunt. Having to decide among several items introduced the concept of choice. As these choices were narrowed from seven to two and then to one, opportunity cost was introduced.

Several areas of the curriculum were included in each economic lesson. Literacy skills were evident as each new Curious George was read. These books were placed in a central location for the students to read throughout the day and during DEAR time-Drop Everything And Read. This is a thirty-minute part of our day where students read silently and/or with a partner. Curious George books are also part of our AR or Accelerated Reading program where students who are capable can read these books and take reading tests on the computer. Students completed a writing activity for each concept and placed these in their economic portfolio. Each student wrote in his or her own economic journal. Using art skills the students illustrated their writings. The students practiced math skills when graphing their choices and counting their "money" they earned to spend at the class market. Students practiced their oral communication skills and listening skills as different activities were shared with the total class. As noted, economics is easily infused within an already existing curriculum-it is not something "extra" that needs to be added to a day that is already filled with activities.

2. *DESCRIBE WHAT WANTED TO ACCOMPLISH WITH PROJECT*

Knowing that I am teaching the decision-makers of the future I wanted my students to realize that they live economic lives. Making the right decisions affects each student every day. I wanted my students to understand that economics is in everything

they do and not just in Room 13! I wanted the students to be able to relate the economics learned in the classroom to their everyday lives. Students in Kindergarten are very eager to learn and I kept this enthusiasm going throughout the project. Every time I brought out a new Curious George book the chatter began as to what they would learn next.

3. *PREPARATION FOR PROJECT*

Using the *Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics* and the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks helped me outline the economic concepts I wanted my students to learn. Searching for numerous Curious George books proved easier than first thought. Ordering these from an Internet book site was much simpler than going to bookstores around town. Investing a lot of time to read each book and determine the economic concept or concepts to be taught proved successful. I even bought a few books in Biloxi, Mississippi during an economic conference! I located books on natural resources. Using the curriculum guide *K thru 2 Can Do! Math and Economics* published by Economics Arkansas provided me with the lesson on scarcity. I was now ready to teach economics to my students using Curious George books.

4. *WHAT STUDENTS LEARNED AND HOW MEASURED THIS LEARNING*

Many forms of assessments were used throughout the project to assure that learning was taking place. Evaluation techniques included individual assessments of each concept, teacher observations, student's entries in their economic journals, active participation in small and large group activities, and student work in individual portfolios. The home/school connections were useful in assessing each student's internalization of economic concepts. Students were given the opportunity to take home a Curious George book and activity sheet to be completed with their family. The students read the books and answered economic questions. Each sheet included an area where they applied the economics learned in the classroom to their everyday lives.



Learning economics while reading Curious George books!
Each day saw at least one student reading one of the "economic" books in our reading corner.