

- **Brief Description of the Group:**

The group consisted of seven four to seven-year-old girls that attend my daughter's school. I either work with their mothers or live in the same neighborhood with their mothers. We have recently formed a play-date group that meets once a week. The days and times fluctuate, but I usually volunteer to have them at my house since I really enjoy hosting them and we have a big jungle gym and yard for the kids to play in. My daughter's classmates, Lorelai, Reagan, and Stella are part of the group and are all age six. Lorelai's younger sister, Aubrey, is part of the group and she is age four. Our neighbor, Ava, is part of the group and she is age seven. Another neighbor, Emily is part of the group and she is age four. My daughter, Isabella, is age six. All the girls have known each other most of this school year and are comfortable and gregarious with each other. Ava and Isabella are the most shy of the group and Lorelai, Aubrey, and Emily are the most assertive.

I have never read to this group before or conducted any kind of focused group activity. My time with them is usually spent encouraging them to play in the yard, to share toys, to take turn on the swings, and getting them snacks and drinks. I was looking forward to trying out a Story Time with them that included two follow-up activities. I thought it would be interesting to see how well I could engage them when they are used to "running a little wild" instead.

- **Date and Location of the Story Time:**

This play date was scheduled for Monday March 23, 2009 after school from 3:30-4:30 pm. The location was at my house in the back yard and on the side deck.

- **Author:** Eric Carle
- **Title:** *The Tiny Seed*
- **Publisher:** Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers
- **Publication Date:** 1987
- **Visual Aids Used:**

I used a large hardcover edition of *The Tiny Seed* that had beautiful full-color illustrations for my Story Time with the kids. I also had over a dozen very large stuffed daisy-style flowers in various bright colors to hand out to the girls as the seed grew into a flower.

- **Accompanying Activities:**

(1) Seed personification: Right after the story was over, we all stood up and flew through the wind like the tiny seed did in order to physically connect to the story, to have some, fun, and to expel some energy. My yard provided plenty of room for this activity and it was a beautiful spring day. (2) Daisy Growth Chart: I had pre-cut green poster board into strips and taped them into five foot pieces with the inches and feet marked with a black sharpie. (I had done this over the weekend with my husband's help.) If my group had kids in it that were all at least age seven, I might have let them make their own measurement marks; however, I wanted this group to spend their time designing their flowers and leaves and decorating them. I modeled cutting big daisy petals, a circle, and leaves out of construction paper and then stick-glued them together into a flower. The flower head was attached to the stem with more glue and tape. The girls were then given stacks of multi-colored construction paper, safety scissors, stick glue, tape, crayons, and markers. They were encouraged to use their

imagination and to work together if they wanted. I ended up helping out the four-year-olds quite a bit, but the younger girls also received help from a couple of the older girls. All the girls became very creative and decorated their daisies in various ways. Some girls left the petals plain and made designs in the center. Others decorated the entire flower. Some of the girls cut out curlie-q leaves and other made traditional leaves. I did end up going back over each girl's growth chart and taping up loose pieces to make them more stable. When we were all done, we took turns taping each growth chart to the wall and marking the height of each girl. (3) Tiny seeds: Using Dixie cups, each girl planted several sunflower seeds with a small bag of potting soil I picked up for less than \$2. We discussed what was needed to help the tiny seeds grow – soil; water; sunlight. I gave each an extra Dixie cup to take as a way to track how much they should water their seeds each day – a mark was placed at the 1/3 mark on the Dixie cup to help them measure.

- **What worked well?**

I thought everything worked well except for the amount of time I had to put into making the “stems” for the growth chart. That would just be too much work if this were an activity that I was going to use for a larger group. I think that it might be possible to print the measurements onto green printer paper and then let the students cut the printed measurements out and glue them onto poster board. That would save a lot of time. (I had already finished more than half of the stems when I thought of that idea.)

I do think that my group of girls were very excited to have a Story Time with “Isabella’s Mom” and were a captive and enthused audience. They were not in the least bit inhibited to react to my dramatic interpretation of the story or to answer questions about the illustrations or text. I’m not so sure that would be the case with a new group of kids that may or may not know each other, would be in a library setting that could possibly be unfamiliar, and have a brand new person telling them a story. I am positive that when I conduct Story Times to a new audience in a traditional library setting that I will need to work a lot harder to win over my audience than I did with my daughter’s play-date group.

I must add that being able to read to the girls and complete the activities outside on a beautiful, spring day surrounded by blooming flowers and plants added greatly to the ambiance and enjoyment for all of us. (Oh yea, and we had plenty of snacks and juice boxes to nibble on during the Story Time – that always helps.)

- **What will you change next time?**

As I mentioned in the last section, I would find a way to print the measurements needed for the growth charts instead of completing them by hand. In the future, I would like to incorporate a writing activity that includes predictions of what might happen to the new seeds that just flew away into the wind or how the earlier seeds that were eaten contributed to the cycle of life.

Information from my earlier submitted module:

Carle, E. (1987). *The tiny seed*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

This title is recommended for ages four through eight and has an Accelerated Reader level of 2.7. I'm so glad I picked up this book to read with my daughter for this module. It is much more complex than the other Eric Carle books we have read. The narrative is straightforward – not poetic or rhyming – but effective in its straightforwardness. The story is of a tiny seed being swept through the landscape with much bigger seeds that don't quite make the journey to fruition for various reasons – landing on ice; being burned up by the sun; eaten by birds; eaten by a mouse. The tiny seed's journey ends in the soil where it sprouts, but it is not the biggest seedling so it escapes being crushed underfoot and then being picked as much bigger plants meet their fate. The tiny seed becomes the biggest and most beautiful flower of them all, attracting birds and bees from miles around until, eventually, its seeds take off in flight upon the wind. This story is perfect for teaching perseverance if one uses personification in relation to the seed/seedling/plant/flower. It is perfect for teaching about nature, landscapes, the cycle of life, etc. I could see a classroom using this across the curriculum with a classroom garden worked in as an activity as well as a library. (36 pages)