

## **Cultivating our Cultural Identities**

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### **Abstract**

The lessons in these units are geared toward classes with a high percentage of English Learners at the primary (K-2nd grade) level. Using the text, "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" as the main text of the unit, teachers will be given suggestions for ways to teach the days of the week, counting in English, and the names of fruits and vegetables to beginning English Learners (ELs). There are materials and activities provided to engage parents and families in learning about healthy food choices while highlighting the cultural diversity of the different foods we all eat. Students will learn to appreciate and respect the commonalities and differences they bring to the classroom community.

**Keywords:** Culture, food, ethnicity, ESOL, EL, ESL, Primary, Kindergarten, bilingualism, social capital, family, phonemic awareness, kinesthetic, caterpillar, butterfly, parents, parental involvement.

### **Unit Content**

If you've ever had a student in your class who was new to the country and didn't speak English, you've probably wondered how they are feeling about being in this new place. What led their family to move here? Has this family come willingly with great excitement about learning English, living in the US, and making new friends? Or have they come reluctantly, fleeing danger, leaving cherished family members, friends, even pets behind with great sorrow? You wonder what you can do to make sure this student feels comfortable, to make sure they understand their teachers and classmates, and to help them to learn English and their grade-level content, too. You wonder what you can do to help this child's parents or caregivers know they are an important part of their child's education.

As an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teacher for 23 years in the School District of Philadelphia, some of what I learned in the seminar, "Asian Americans in U.S. Education" with Dr. Kimberly Goyette of Temple University, reaffirmed what I already knew about immigration, in general, but much of what I learned shed new light on how different sociological factors may help or hinder immigrant students' success in our schools. Professor Goyette let us know at the beginning of the course that we wouldn't just learn about Asian Americans in schools but how the immigrant experiences of one group can provide information and insights about other immigrant groups. Central to much of our discussions were questions surrounding

race, ethnicity and culture. Throughout the course, I explored my own curiosities about the role that language, especially one's home language, plays in cultivating and preserving one's cultural identity and the effect that might have on their academic achievement.

In the coming school year, for the first time in a long time, I will be working with all of the kindergarten ELs (English Learners). I will have the unique opportunity to be their first ESOL teacher and perhaps the main point of contact for their families, too. Therefore, I wanted to apply what I learned in this seminar to create classroom activities that will help students and their families experience success in school right from the start, one that lets them know our school appreciates and expects family engagement, one that lets them know that their culture, their ethnicity, their language, and their background knowledge are valued. If you are a teacher of the primary grades (K-2), this unit will help your students learn to count in English, say the days of the week, describe the life cycle of a butterfly, and talk about their own preferences for different food items, all within a larger context of making healthy choices. This is a great beginning-of-the-year unit designed to invite parents to become active and knowledgeable resources for their children and the whole class. The lessons are designed to help teachers model a curiosity about and respect for the different cultures and ethnicities of their students. Teachers will be able to build on the background knowledge and the language skills students bring to the classroom to create learning spaces that support positive identity development all while performing tasks that lead to academic achievement. Families will have opportunities to share about their own culture with the goal of creating a welcoming learning environment: one of inclusivity, understanding, and respect.

#### **SEMINAR:**

Professor Goyette began the course by presenting a history of Asian American immigration that highlighted the various "push" and "pull" factors influencing immigration, as well as the violence, discrimination, and systemic racism many Asian Americans have faced over the years and continue to face. Looking at a timeline of immigration we learned that starting in the 1850s, many Chinese workers came for economic opportunity; they worked in gold mines, on farms, and built railroads. As these Chinese workers became more successful, white workers blamed them for low wages and missed job opportunities even though Chinese workers received less pay. Riots and violence that resulted in death occurred more than once. In Rock Springs, Wyoming, 1885, 28 Chinese miners were murdered as a gang of white miners rampaged through town. In May of 1887, in Hells Canyon, along the Snake River running between Oregon and Idaho, 34 Chinese miners were massacred. Nobody was held accountable.

Overt racism was also public policy. In 1882, the xenophobic Chinese Exclusion Act was passed - the first to bar a specific immigrant group as a threat to the white race. Asians were depicted as the "yellow peril" and a threat to Western values. Despite restrictions, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino and Asian Indians continued to migrate

to the U.S. until the 1924 Immigration Act put quotas on the number of immigrants allowed to enter the US and excluded all Asians from entering except for those from the Philippines as it was a US colony. The McCarran-Walter Act formally ended the exclusion of Asian immigrants to the United States in 1952, and in 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act overhauled the American immigration system and ended the quotas enacted which favored some racial and ethnic groups over others. We discussed how the racialization of Asian Americans has changed and continues to change over time. Omi and Winant (2014) define racialization as “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group” (p. 13). We learned that definitions of race and ethnicity change over time, in different contexts, and largely depend on who is using the terms and for what purposes.

Looking at ethnicity through the lens of sociology, we learned of two views: *primordial*, which is based on kinship, and *social constructionist* which claims that the boundaries of racial and ethnic groups are constantly negotiated and redefined in the following ways:

- Emergent ethnicities: newly forming based on common experiences
- Resurgent ethnicities: rediscovering past ethnic history
- Ethnic mobilization: when groups form around a common experience/identifier to achieve a common goal
- Panethnicity: An ethnic identity that subsumes other ethnic identities (e.g. Asian American, Native American, Hispanic)

The term Panethnicity was coined in 1992 by Yen Le Espiritu to refer to Asian Americans who act together politically. Indeed, the panethnic term "Asian American" arose in the late sixties as university students united to advocate for themselves by trying to force universities to teach about all of their different cultures. This is also an example of Ethnic Mobilization as student groups united across race lines to achieve a common goal. Ethnic groups may indeed be united by race, which is often a political grouping used to justify, or protest, the unfair treatment of a group of people based on their race. It should be noted that the term Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) refers to a demographic that encompasses 40 unique cultures and countries of origin; everything east of Istanbul and west of California ([PBS, Asian Americans and Pacific Islander, A Philadelphia Story](#) (April 6, 2022)). Of course, the broadness of this reductive term belies the many distinct cultural differences and obscures the unique individual experiences of this diverse group.

We also learned about Symbolic Ethnicity when Professor Goyette had us generate a list of words to define culture. We reflected on our own cultural and ethnic identities by sharing practices and traditions that reflect the ethnicity with which we most closely identify, for example celebrating St. Patrick's Day as a person who has some Irish DNA might. This led to the question, "Can people freely choose their ethnicity? How

does this freedom vary by race?" Needless to say, there is less freedom for people who "wear their race on their face."

As teachers who care about social justice and about preserving our fragile democracy, we are called to confront racism. Our own school district has adopted an Academic Framework based on a "Culturally and Linguistically Inclusive Foundation." Further, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) framework is intended to help education stakeholders create student-centered learning environments and policies that affirm cultural identities; foster a positive academic outcome, and help students to connect regardless of differences. Teachers, administrators, and education policy-makers must ask, "How does education dehumanize, as well as humanize, those who have been considered "other?" (Langer-Osuna & Nasir, 2016, p. 734).

### *The Model Minority Myth*

Reading about and discussing the "Model Minority Myth" helped us understand the different degrees of assimilation and how the academic and economic success of certain (Chinese, Asian Indian) groups has often pitted Asian Americans against other minorities. The fact that Asian Americans obtain higher educational achievement in the U.S. school system is not a myth but an empirical regularity; however, ethnic diversity is a significant issue that should be acknowledged when generalizing about Asian Americans (Sakamo, Goyette, Kim, 2009). Despite the dangers of assigning a "Model Minority Myth" to such a broad group of people, on the whole, Asian Americans - particularly Chinese and Asian Indians - have high levels of educational attainment compared to Black and White adults, and as a result, Asian Americans have dramatically improved their socio-economic status relative to White America. Such positive socioeconomic outcomes stand in contrast to the widespread discrimination Asian Americans encountered during the earlier part of the twentieth century (Sakamo, Goyette, Kim, 2009).

As teachers, we should never look for biological explanations for student success or failure – especially along racial lines. We have to believe that if we work hard then we can help our students work hard; if we value learning they will value learning. Asian Americans, and in particular our Chinese students, aren't inherently smarter. However, at times I've seen and heard their parents hold higher expectations of them to perform well in school. Perhaps the "norms and practices" of their home lives positively influence academic success. Politicians, policy makers, and even teachers have claimed that, for certain groups of Asian Americans, these norms and practices include strong values and hard work. This implies that any minority group can succeed in the U.S.A. - "Just look at Asian Americans" as an example.

However, "doing well" does not always mean "being well" as we learned from Bankston and Zhou (2002). In fact, "suicide is the leading cause of death among Asian

Americans aged 20-24 years, responsible for about 33% of deaths in that age bracket. That percentage falls to 21% for non-Hispanic whites, 15% for people of Hispanic origin, and just under 10% for non-Hispanic Blacks” (Louie, S. S. “How Asian Shame and Stigma Contribute to Suicide. p. 1, 2020). Is there too much pressure on our own Chinese immigrant students to succeed? Knowing that oftentimes the parents of my own students have sacrificed so much in leaving behind their home country makes me wonder how that narrative might impose a sense of guilt and pressure on Els to succeed. Do our students' parents see school as the sole avenue for success? If so, how do we take advantage of this desire to succeed on the part of the parents while providing the maximum amount of social, emotional, and academic support to students? Mouw and Xie (1999), in their research on the effect of bilingualism, ask if there might be certain qualities found in some families such as high aspirations, hard work, and parental involvement that could be transferred across different ethnic cultures. And we as teachers might ask, how can we communicate and transfer our school practices of hard work and high aspirations to involve parents in homes where these practices might be lacking?

### *Social Capital*

One of the most interesting ideas I read about in this seminar was “social capital.” James Coleman developed the concept of social capital in the 1980s to describe social processes that lead to the ethnic disparities in student achievement. He claimed that the educational norms, expectations, and obligations that function within a family or a community are important social capital that can impact the level of parental involvement and investment, which in turn lead to academic success (Coleman 1988). Academic success must not come at the expense of social-emotional health, therefore it's important to note that according to the Asian American Psychological Association, ([Fact Sheet](#)) "a strong identification with one's ethnic group is a protective factor against suicide attempts, and strong family cohesion and parental support are protective factors against suicidal thoughts for adults and adolescents, respectively" (2012).

Considering Coleman's claim that social capital within the family consists of the presence of adults and the level of attention they provide to their children made me think about how much, or how little, parents of all backgrounds are communicating with their children these days. All of the articles I read about bilingualism and social capital predated "smart phones" so they did not mention the role that electronics - cell phones, tablets, handheld gaming devices - have played in decreasing the amount of attention parents are paying to their children and the perhaps insufficient amount of language children are being exposed to. If, as Coleman suggests, an increase in the number of siblings in a family could lead to the "dilution" of the time and attention that parents can spend on each child and hence decrease the effective social capital within the family, then certainly the amount of "screen time" used by children and adults will dilute the time and attention spent on developing home language skills and thus dilute the social capital our kindergarten students will bring to school. We must help parents recognize the importance of communicating with their children often, about everyday things, in their

home language. Mouw and Xie presume, "if parents are unable to communicate effectively with their children, the quality of parental supervision will be diminished, resulting in a decrease in social capital" (p. 236). In order to prevent the erosion of family social capital, we must reduce the possibility of a language gap between students and their immigrant parents.

*Bilingualism – The role of the home language*

How does bilingualism affect academic achievement and what role can it play in building social capital? There are two prevailing views on the importance of bilingualism:

The *cognitive perspective* suggests that bilingualism is beneficial to mental development because it allows bilingual children to switch easily between two linguistic mediums (Cummins 1977; Peal and Lambert 1962). The *cultural perspective* holds that bilingual children have better access to the ethnic and cultural capital of their parents than do their monolingual counterparts (Bankston and Zhou 1995). The cognitive and cultural perspectives on bilingualism are similar in that both argue that fluent bilingualism is unconditionally beneficial for immigrant students (Mouw & Xie, 1999, p. 234).

It is important to note two additional categories of bilingualism:

*Additive*, or fluent, bilingualism refers to learning the second language within a social context that allows the individual to maintain the first language. *Subtractive* bilingualism occurs when pressure is exerted to replace the first language with a second one. Positive self-concept is associated with the former; loss of culture and assimilation is associated with the latter (Mouw and Xie, 1999 p. 234).

In my many years of teaching immigrant students I have seen children, especially those with older siblings who started learning English in kindergarten, shift to English when they enter school and subsequently develop a preference for speaking English at school and at home. Oftentimes, the home language becomes the language of command statements like "go to bed," "do your homework," "do your chores," etc. If a child's preference for speaking English becomes an issue of conflict, especially when the parents do not speak English, it may lead to a fissure in the parent-child relationship and a loss of family social capital.

Although the research done by Mouw and Xie found that native-language use has a positive effect on academic achievement in 8th graders only when parents are not proficient in English, I believe that teachers of immigrant students must inform and

educate parents about the importance of talking to their children and continuing to speak their home language in order to preserve the child-parent relationship and to help students become truly bilingual (additive bilingualism). Therefore, the lessons and activities below include letters home to parents with activities they can do at home in their home language and in English. In order to build social capital, the lessons each include parent letters which can easily be translated into different languages using Google Docs. The parent letters invite parents to practice basic kindergarten skills and concepts in the home language, as needed, and invite parents to learn English along with their children if they don't already speak English. Finally, parents will be invited to participate in celebrations of student achievement like showcasing a performance assessment at the end of a unit of study.

### **Teaching Strategies**

#### **CONTEXT**

I teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in a large, linguistically and culturally diverse K-5 elementary school in the School District of Philadelphia. Our current enrollment of 1107 students as of today shows 52% in the ESOL program. According to our school's website, of the approximately 530 students enrolled in the ESOL program, speakers include: 238 Spanish, 176 Portuguese, 65 Mandarin, 32 Arabic, 16 Pashto, 13, Cantonese, while 7 or fewer speak Bengali, Taik, Achinese, Persian, Urdu, Haitian Creole, Tagalog, Malayalam, Albanian, and Balarussian. In a typical classroom containing 52% English Learners (ELs) enrolled in the ESOL program, you can expect to find that another 20-30% of the students hear and speak a language other than English at home.

To support our ELs, we have approximately two ESOL teachers servicing each grade level (seven-eight classrooms per grade) by co-teaching and also by pulling small groups for reading instruction. In addition, we have four BCAs (Bilingual Counselor Assistants), mostly part-time, who can help translate letters to go home, make phone calls, and assist with parent conferences and IEP meetings. We also have access to "Language Line Interpreters" available by phone 24/7 who can help with three-way calls and also face-to-face conversations by placing the phone on speaker. Teachers use Google Translate to communicate with parents and students, to translate letters and notes to go home, and, when needed, they use other students as translators. Conversations using an interpreter take twice as long, so teachers often opt for using the Remind App that allows teachers to translate text messages into the student's home language and parents to translate text messages, too.

Of course, teachers are very eager to help their ELs and all their students; however, at times, the language barrier becomes one more obstacle to overcome in an already highly-demanding job. Because we are lacking mandatory professional development in our district for all teachers and administrators in schools with a high percentage of ELs, much of the responsibility to help these students and to help teachers

help these students falls on the ESOL teachers themselves. Additionally, there is no "ESOL curriculum" for newcomers so ESOL teachers must follow the suggested guidelines found on the "curriculum engine" while knowing that more time must be devoted to teaching "newcomer" English, and we must create lessons and activities ourselves to coincide with the ELA (English Language Arts) curriculum. Therefore, I have provided activities appropriate for newcomers to learn some of the key vocabulary they will need for the first text they will be exposed to as kindergarteners in our district.

New this year in our School District is the "Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Academic Framework" for teaching ELA. Teachers in our own school district have been the writers of this curriculum that's considered a "living document" that will be updated during various points of the year. Much of the work is based on the theories posited by Gholdy Muhammad who, in her 2020 book "Cultivating Genius," devoted a chapter toward the pursuit of identity. She quotes Noguera (2003) who asserts that when students see themselves in the curriculum in ways that affirm their cultural, gender, and racial identities, then they will have greater potential for academic success. Muhammad (2020) further says, "it is our job as educators to not just teach skills, but also to teach students to know, validate, and celebrate who they are" (p. 69). She further states, "our identities and a strong sense of self are a form of protection and refuge for our children. If they don't know themselves, others will tell them who they are, in ways that may not be positive or accurate" (p. 70). This is the reason why my unit is themed "Cultivating Cultural Identity" and why I'm inviting students and their families to learn and practice new concepts first in their native language at home and also to share with their classmates aspects of their culture beginning with the everyday foods they eat at home.

The strategies listed below are specifically geared toward classrooms with a large portion of Els. It's important to establish consistent routines that are visual in order to create a low-stress environment for newcomers to learn English. It's important to give all students opportunities to demonstrate comprehension through physical expression and to give them opportunities to become physically involved with language. Students need many opportunities to interact with their peers in both their native language and in English in meaningful ways. Some well-known strategies include:

***Total Physical Response (TPR):*** James Asher came up with the Total Physical Response (TPR) method of teaching language by incorporating physical reactions to verbal input. The process is meant to copy the way that babies learn their first language. When students are engaged in TPR activities they experience lower stress, less inhibition, all the while creating a brain link between speech and action to boost language and vocabulary learning.

***Activating and/or Building Prior Knowledge:*** For both Els and non-Els alike, we know that students learn better when they are familiar with what they're about to learn.



Therefore, teachers must elicit prior knowledge or else build background knowledge. Done well, this part of the lesson should spark curiosity and a learning purpose.

***Use Relia and Picture Support:*** Use real fruits and vegetables whenever possible during the unit. Print cutouts of the pictures of key vocabulary (sun, moon, leaf, apple, pear, plum, strawberry, oranges, etc.) to use for TPR activities and games.

***Think, Pair, Share:*** After viewing, reading, or listening, to new information, students will be able to work with a partner, in their home language (L1) or in English, to extend their learning. They can then share the results of their partner work with the whole class.

***Include Language Objectives:*** ESOL teachers may take the lead here to plan for language learning opportunities. They should ask what are the forms and functions of the vocabulary being used? How can we create authentic speaking tasks that incorporate the new vocabulary to help make meaning and communicate?

***Use Sentence Frames:*** Having students practice academic language using prepared sentence frames helps build confidence when discussing new topics and ideas while reinforcing new sentence structures and vocabulary.

***Visual Thinking Strategies, or VTS.*** is an inquiry-based teaching method that improves a student's ability to describe, analyze, and interpret imagery and information through observing and discussing visual art. VTS support the development of critical thinking skills and encourage participation in collaborative discussions.

***Multi-Modal Approach:*** Introduce information visually, aurally, and kinesthetically. Students practice saying new words with a hand-motion and practice counting by touching parts of their body.

***Talk Moves:*** At the kindergarten level talk moves may simply involve repeating what somebody just said, or, if possible, paraphrasing what they said.

***Play games and have fun:*** We know that student engagement increases whenever games are introduced. Students are more likely to learn when they are engaged! Nothing like a little friendly competition to motivate students.

## **ELA CURRICULUM**

The first unit of the ELA kindergarten curriculum in The School District of Philadelphia has been designed to last for the entire first marking period, eight weeks of school, and is called, "A Healthy Me." There are four modules within the unit, each lasting two weeks. Module One: Healthy Food Makes Us Grow, Module Two: Healthy "Always" Foods such as Fruits and Vegetables Come in All Shapes and Colors, Module Three: Farms and Animals Produce Healthy Food for Us, Module Four: Healthy Foods

Power the Body. The big idea for the first marking period is "Healthy choices create a healthy me." The essential questions are: "What choices can you make that keep your body healthy?" and "Why is it healthy to eat some foods 'always' and others 'sometimes?'" and "How do healthy "always" foods make it to our table?"

The curriculum is culturally responsive and represents the Muhammad's "Historically Responsive Literacy" (2020) in the following ways:

- Identity: Students explore their food choices and preferences. Students share what they know about familiar foods using their home languages.
- Skills: As identified in the priority standards, students ask and answer questions about the text and complete a narrative writing task.
- Intellect: Students learn that food is a necessity and everyone must eat in order to develop and maintain healthy bodies.
- Criticality: Students understand that all kids need access to healthy foods. Texts include foods from various cultures and explore the links between family and culture.
- Joy: Texts include foods and images from around various countries. Students share foods that they love to eat and hear from their classmates about their favorite foods. In Module 4, students learn about all of the creative ways they can move their bodies to promote healthy lifestyles, including play and exercise.

Each module ends with a performance task which is intended to build the skills needed to perform the final performance assessment. This will be a book divided into sections. Each section will have an illustration and a caption about how they stay healthy. Sentence frames will be provided for each section. Some examples of sentence frames are below.

(Name) eats (healthy food) from the (name of food group) group to grow strong.

(Name) sometimes eats (name of sometime food) as a treat.

(Name) always eats (healthy snack) at (time of day).

(Name) builds strong muscles by (name of exercise).

#### **Authentic Performance Task 4 Scoring Guide:**

<b>Advanced or Exemplary</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Progressing</b>	<b>Beginning</b>
Students will be able to title their storybook. Students will be able to draw and label their pictures. Students will be able to write a	Students will be able to title their storybook. Students will draw and label pictures. Students	Students will be able to title their storybook. Students will be able to draw pictures and provide	Students will be able to draw pictures relevant to their topic. Students will be

sentence about why it is healthy. Students will be able to provide answers to all questions from their peers.	will be able to explain why it is healthy. Students will be able to provide answers to some of the questions from their peers.	beginning sounds of each.	able to verbalize what is healthy.
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I would suggest that this final performance could be done in the students' home language with the help of parents by students who speak the same language working together and in English. You may want to invite parents to come in as volunteers to help create the books, however, I would suggest all parents come for the final presentation.

### Classroom Activities

When planning lessons for the first unit, “Healthy Food Choices Make Us Grow,” I looked at the kindergarten standards for math, science, social studies, and, of course, ELA. One of the topics for Social Studies is “We are all different; we are all the same.” In Math, kindergarten students begin the year by learning to count to 20, writing the numbers, and understanding the relationship between numbers and quantities.

The following lesson ideas and activities are suggestions for ways to involve families and incorporate home language and culture into a unit on Healthy Eating. Any activity with an asterisk (\*) next to it will have detailed lesson plans to follow.

- 1) *Build Background Knowledge*. Send a translated letter home encouraging parents to view the video about the life cycle of the butterfly in their home language. (See sample letter as well as video links in the Appendix.)
- 2) Send a translated letter home with links to the book “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” in the students’ home languages.
- 3) Buy a copy of the book, “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” in the home languages of your students. You can find the book in many of the world’s languages (including Pashto and Somali) at [www.language lizard.com](http://www.language lizard.com). Invite parents to come in to read the book in their home language alongside the teacher or a native-English speaking parent.
- 4) When teaching the key vocabulary, incorporate ASL hand motions: Click on the links to see the signs: [Still](#), [Hungry](#), [Grow](#), [Sick \(stomach ache\)](#)

- 5) With each reading or viewing of the text tell the name of the author/illustrator. Tell students that you call this a “story,” and point to the words and pictures indicating places where the picture matches what is happening in the story.
- 6) As you point to text while reading, be sure to demonstrate the organization and basic left-to-right features of print.
- 7) Students can work with a partner retelling the story in their home language using picture cards.
- 8) Invite parents to help their students keep a food diary for a week writing down one healthy food choice eaten every day. (See parent letter in Appendix.)
- 9) Invite parents to take pictures of their children eating healthy “always” foods and special “sometimes” foods. Print the photos and make a poster with all of the photos perhaps grouping the food by its food group and/or by “always” and “sometimes” foods. (See parent letter in Appendix.)
- 10) Use the poster to *meet language objectives* like having the students know the names of all of their classmates and talk about similarities and differences in food preferences:  
 (Name) and I are the same. I like to eat \_\_\_\_\_, and (name) likes to eat \_\_\_\_\_, too. We are different. I like to eat \_\_\_\_\_, but (name) likes to eat \_\_\_\_\_.

Use *talk moves* to have students repeat the phrase after their classmate says it. When you’re finished with the unit you could create a class book with a page for each child so that students can read the book throughout the year.

- 11) Plan field trips to visit different grocery stores including an Asian grocery store. When and where possible, buy some of the foods you learned about from your students and have their classmates try them. Teach students the phrase, “Don’t Yuk my Yum!”
- 12) Invite parents to a food sharing event. You may want to simplify it by hosting a “rice festival” where families share a special rice dish from their culture.
- 13) Although this means an expense for the teacher, consider getting a “very hungry caterpillar” plush or making a puppet. Els often go through the “silent” period for the first few months of being surrounded by a new language. They might be more eager to talk if they are making the puppet, the caterpillar, talk.
- 14) Also, consider buying plastic food items. You can use them for *Total Physical Response TPR* activities like “Put the banana on your head.”
- 15) Print and laminate picture cards of food items for students to use during *TPR* activities and also *games*. Students can play concentration matching the pictures that are the same. Be sure they say the name of each food item as they look at it.
- 16) After learning the words to this song, you could substitute other food items with the same number of syllables. Always show a visual reference to the food you’re singing about. [Call and Repeat About Your Favorite Treats](#)
- 17) Have students *Think, Pair, Share* while doing different food sort activities. Use a T-chart (see Appendix) for sorting “always” foods and “sometimes” foods. After

- teaching colors, students can use the food pictures to sort by color. After teaching shapes and sizes, students can use the food pictures to sort by shape and size.
- 18) Teach counting using kinesthetics\*
  - 19) Teach the days of the week as a repeated cycle using a wheel (see Appendix), picture support, and also hand/body motions\* [Days of the Week Action Song – CLICK HERE.](#)
  - 20) Teach phonemic awareness using words from the core text\*
  - 21) Use an image from the project “What Kids Eat Around the World in One Week.” [CLICK HERE for the LINK.](#) Display the image on the smart board and use the *Visual Thinking Strategy* in order for students to talk, in their L1, about what they see. Help them talk about what they see in English, too. Using the smartboard tools, have students circle foods they might like and/or foods that look like something they eat at home. Have students circle the “always” foods with a green pen and the “sometimes” foods with a red pen.

**Lesson One – Counting with Kinesthetics:** Prior to this lesson, email parents/caregivers the letter (see Appendix) explaining what skill they’re learning and some suggested activities to do at home. \*You can use Google Docs to type, or copy and paste, the letter in English and have it translated. First, select all text. Then, in your tool bar choose "Tools" and then "Translate Document." You will be prompted to "Choose Language," and you can then choose the language needed and the translated letter will appear in a new untitled document. I usually include the English version as well for reference and to encourage parents to learn English along with their children.

**Timeline:** Counting should be part of the daily routine with children in kindergarten. Each step of these lessons could be done on a different day and can serve as an initial assessment of your students’ abilities to count objects with or without one-to-one correspondence in their home language while you teach them to count in English.

**Objective 1:** Students will be able to count in their home language from one to ten.

**Objective 2:** Students will be able to count from one to ten in English.

**Essential Questions:** How can we build on what students know in their home language? How can using a kinesthetic approach to counting help students learn to count in English?

**Standard**

K.CC.A.2 Count forward beginning from a given number within the known sequence (instead of having to begin at 1)

K.CC.A.3 Write numbers from 0 to 20. Represent a number of objects with a written numeral 0-20 (with 0 representing a count of no objects).

K.CC.B.4 Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities; connect counting to cardinality.

WIDA Standard 3: Language for Mathematics: English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of mathematics.

**Materials:** Cut out large colorful circles to place on the ground for stepping on while counting. A computer or smart board for showing and playing the video links. The

Caterpillar Counting page (see Appendix) along with any kind of small objects that will fit inside the circles (buttons, pennies, small food items). You can find videos of “counting to ten” in almost any language you search for. Here’s one in Arabic. [Count to 10 in Arabic – CLICK HERE](#). Jack Hartmann video showing how to write the numbers in the air. [Counting and Writing Numbers 1-9- CLICK HERE](#) Picture cards from the story (found in the Appendix).

***Rational and Step by Step Guide to Completion:*** Students will encounter the numbers one through five in the book “The Very Hungry Caterpillar.” They will also have the opportunity to count the 10 food items that the caterpillar ate which gave him a stomach ache. It’s important for teachers to know what students can do in their home language in order to build upon these skills in English. Many teachers can count to ten in Spanish, but in order to access other languages just do a Google search for a video of “counting to 10 in \_\_\_\_” and you will probably find what you’re looking for.

***Step One:*** Using 10 big circles taped on the floor, show students how to walk, or step with two feet, on each one of the circles while counting to ten. Have students take turns walking on the circles while the teacher plays a video of counting to 10 in that student’s language. Formatively assess students by seeing if they can join in the counting.

***Step Two:*** Have the students copy your motions as they touch the following body parts saying each number.

- 1 – touch toes
- 2 – touch shins
- 3 – touch knees
- 4 – touch thighs
- 5 – tap your bottom with both hands
- 6 – put your hands on your hips
- 7 – cross your arms and grab your elbows
- 8 – cross your arms across your chest
- 9 – touch your shoulders
- 10 – touch your head

If you’re comfortable, you can count in the different languages of your students along with them. You can also do this quickly or slowly and with funny voices to help engage student attention. You may even build up to counting backwards. Do not expect all of your students to join in with you when you count in English at the beginning. Do encourage them to get into the habit of repeating after you as much as possible.

***Step Three:*** Practice using small items as counters and model for the students how to count while moving one object at a time onto each circle of the caterpillar (see Appendix). Allow students to work in partner pairs of students with the same home language to count to 10 in their home language if they can. Pair students high/low to practice counting in English together. While they’re working together you may want to individually assess students to see who is able to count to ten making a one-to-one correspondence, and who isn’t. For a language extension you may have the students name the items they’re counting when they count aloud. Ex: “One penny, two pennies,

three pennies,” etc. This is a good chance to introduce the sound of plural /s/ on the end of words.

**Step Four:** Show the video [Counting and Writing Numbers 1-9- CLICK HERE](#).

Model how to make the numbers in the air. Have students join you. Be sure to either write the number backwards if you’re facing the students or turn you back so that they are going in the same direction as you when you’re making the letters in the air. If you have a smartboard you could select a thick pen setting and have the students come to the board to practice writing the number while the others practice at their seat. Remember to always include language and have the students repeat. Aside from just saying the number name they could say, “I am writing one.” Or “Name is writing 2,” etc. For more randomized practice and to add an element of fun, you could have two students go up to the board together and, using a number spinner (select 1-10), generate a random number for them to write and the first one to do this correctly stays at the board while the other goes back to their place.

**Step Five:** After reading “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” have students work with a partner to count and match numbers to the number of items eaten (See pictures for this activity in the Appendix).

**Step Six:** Watch the video [Very Hungry Caterpillar Counting Song](#). Model singing along and encourage students to sing along.

## **Lesson Two – The Days of the Week**

Prior to this lesson, email parents/caregivers the letter (see Appendix) explaining what skill they’re learning and some suggested activities to do at home. See Lesson One\* for information about how to translate a letter home using Google Docs.

**Timeline:** As with counting, naming the days of the week and using them in sentences to talk about what’s happening in school will be part of the daily routine. Each of the steps in this lesson could be done in a different class session and should take about 10-20 minutes.

**Objective 1:** Students will be able to say the days of the week in the correct order in their home language.

**Objective 2:** Students will be able to say the days of the week in the correct sequence in English.

**Essential Questions:** How can adding a motion (ASL) or action help anchor students when learning the days of the week?

**Standard:** WIDA Standard 1: Language for Social and Instructional Purposes: English language learners communicate for social and instructional purposes within the school setting.

**Materials:** Pictures of the SUN and MOON (see Appendix). Video about [Daytime and Nighttime – CLICK HERE](#). A large calendar along with a poster that gives a picture representation for each school day. This could be which “special” class the students have on that day (Art, Music, Gym). If you have students with different homeroom schedules in your group, you may make up your own routines that have pictures to go with them like “Moving Monday,” where you begin the session with some whole-body movements.



“Tapping Tuesday,” where you TAP syllables found in the days of the week or other new vocabulary words you’re learning. “Walking Wednesday,” where students perform a language routine while walking around the room. “Thirsty Thursday,” where you bring in a special drink to share with the class, or you make a point of stopping at the water fountain, and “Fun Friday” when you will be sure to include games and fun activities the children like. Or you could make a poster with picture cards to go with this song: [Days of the Week Action Song – CLICK HERE](#). If you don’t have a smart board on which to display the following sentence frames, then you could get a pocket chart and use sentence strips with the phrases: “Today is \_\_\_\_\_, Yesterday was \_\_\_\_\_, Tomorrow will be \_\_\_\_\_” with moveable word cards that include the names of each day along with pictures or icons you’ve chosen to represent each day. Day of the week songs and videos including: [Sing and Sign Days of the Week – Click Here](#), and Jack Hartmann’s [Days of the Week, Syllable Song – CLICK HERE](#)

**Rational and Step by Step Guide to Completion:** Students will encounter the days of the week in “The Very Hungry Caterpillar.” This book also introduces students to the concept of a life cycle and so teaching students that the days of the week occur in a cycle and repeat each week is an important concept for students to understand, although it may not be developmentally appropriate for kindergarten students to be expected to know all of the days of week in order, it certainly would be a skill for first and second graders.

**Step One:** Introduce the Days of the Week Action Song. [Days of the Week Action Song – CLICK HERE](#). First, watch the video together while modeling the actions. Then, using TPR, practice each of the movements separately while modeling what to do. Always describe what you’re doing and encourage students to chime and in and try repeating the words, too.

**Step Two:** Show students a calendar and the video of Jack Hartmann’s Daytime and Nighttime song. After watching the video once, pause the video before he says “daytime” or “nighttime” to see if the students can guess which word he’ll say. To see the video [Daytime and Nighttime – CLICK HERE](#). Show the pictures of the sun and moon (you could also give each child a picture of their own sun and moon to hold up). Have students repeat after you and say “daytime” while holding up the sun and “nighttime” while holding up the moon. Show on the calendar that after nighttime a new day comes and that each day has a new name. If using picture icons, this would be a good time to introduce those as well. Act out “go to sleep” and “wake up.”

**Step Three:** Count the syllables in the days of the week. Watch and listen to Jack Hartmann’s [Days of the Week, Syllable Song – CLICK HERE](#). Counting syllables is an important part of creating phonemic awareness in students at this age.

**Step Four:** Try adding American Sign Language when you teach the days of the week. Adding motions can help students who are kinesthetic learners and it certainly won’t hurt those how learn best in another modality [Sing and Sign Days of the Week](#) (See links for each sign in the parent letter in the Appendix).



### **Lesson Three – Incorporating Phonemic Awareness**

**Timeline:** As with the colors and days of the week, phonemic awareness activities should be part of your daily routine. They could take 10-15 minutes. Each step of this lesson constitutes a different day's activity.

**Objective 1:** Students will identify the sound /k/ when they hear it.

**Objective 2:** Students will be able to correctly produce the /k/ sound.

**Standard:** RF.K.2: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes)

**Material:** Pictures of a caterpillar, a cone, a slice of cake, and a cocoon. (NB. Although butterflies emerge from a *chrysalis* and moths emerge from a *cocoon*, Eric Carle chose to use the word cocoon as it's no-doubt easier to pronounce than chrysalis.)

You may also include pictures of other food items that do not begin with the /k/ sound.

**Rational and Step by Step Guide to Completion:** Students, especially Els, need explicit instruction on making the sounds in the English language. Research on the brain has revealed that before students can learn to match letters to sounds, they must be acutely aware of the sounds they are hearing and producing.

**Step One:** Model the /k/, /k/, /k/, /k/, /k/ Talk about where your tongue is (at the back of the mouth, scraping at the roof of his/her mouth). You can refer to it as the coughing sound. Have students touch their throats to feel where the sound is beginning. Use the picture cards to review the words "caterpillar," "cake," "cocoon," and "cone." Include other picture cards of words that do not begin with /k/. Have students hold up their hand in the shape of a letter "c" (ASL alphabet). If the word they hear starts with /k/ they show that shape, if it starts with a sound other than /k/ they can wave their flat hand back and forth to signal "no."

**Step Two:** Using the same cards as the previous day, have students work with a partner to say the names and have them sort the picture cards into two categories – the words that begin with /k/ and the ones that do not begin with /k/. Practice the sound in syllables: "Kay, Kee, Kie, Koe, Koo"

**Step Three:** After the children become familiar with the vocabulary, be sure to create activities counting syllables. Say each word while tapping or clapping each syllable, then have your students repeat after you: (2-syllable) Morning, Tiny, Hungry, Apple, Cocoon (3-syllable) Strawberry, Chocolate, Butterfly, Lollipop, Salami (4-syllable) Caterpillar, Watermelon, Stomachache

For all lessons it will be easy to use formative assessments to see how students are progressing. I would suggest creating a class chart with each skill listed and write the date of when the student masters the skill or take notes on what further instruction will be needed.

## Resources

Coleman, James. "Social Capital and the Creation of Human Capital" *American Journal of Sociology, Supplement: Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structure*, Vol. 94, (1988): S95-S120

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[www.nami.org https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/July-2020/How-Asian-Shame-and-Stigma-Contribute-to-Suicide](https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/July-2020/How-Asian-Shame-and-Stigma-Contribute-to-Suicide)

Mohammad, Gholdy. 2021. *Cultivating Genius: an equity framework for culturally and historically responsive literacy*. New York, NY: Scholastics, Inc.

Mouw, T. and Yu Xie. Bilingualism and the Academic Achievement of First- and Second-Generation Asian Americans: Accommodation with or without Assimilation? *American Sociological Association Journal*. Vol. 64, Issue 2, (1999): 232-252.

Noguera, P. A. "The trouble with Black boys: The role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males. *Urban Education*. Vol. 38, No. 4 (2003): 431-59.

Omi, M. and Howard Winant. 2014. *Racial Formation in the United States*. New York: Routledge.

Sakamoto, A., Kimberly A. Goyette, and Chang Hwan Kim. "Socioeconomic attainments of Asian Americans." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (2009): 255-276.

## Texts for Teachers

Carle, Eric. 1969. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. New York, NY: Random House, LLC.

Fox, M. 1998. *Whoever You are*. London, England: Hodder and Stoughton.

Lin, G. 1999. *The Ugly Vegetables*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

Vardell, S. and Wong, J. 2022 *Things We Eat*. Plano, TX: Pomelo Books.

### **Websites with Links**

[Life Cycle of a Butterfly Video](#) - English  
[Life Cycle of a Butterfly](#) - Spanish and English  
[Life Cycle of a Butterfly](#) - Portuguese  
[Life Cycle of a Butterfly](#) - Mandarin  
[Life Cycle of a Butterfly](#) – Arabic

[Life Cycle of a Butterfly Song](#) and Dance

[La Oruga Muy Hambrienta](#) - Spanish  
[La Lagartinha Comilona](#) – Portuguese  
[The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) – Mandarin and English  
[The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) - Arabic  
[The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) - Farsi, Dari, Afghani  
[The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) - Bengali

[What Kids Eat Around the World in One Week](#)

[Call and Repeat About Your Favorite Treats](#)

[I love Jackfruit](#)

[Amazing Fruits of Asia](#)

[The Supermarket in American Sign Language](#)

[A Virtual Field Trip to Whole Foods](#)

[Romeo eats durian](#) This is one video from the “Romeo Eats” Youtube channel where young Romeo tries different exotic food – and always likes them!

## **Appendix**

### **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

#### *Foundational Skills*

RF.K.1: Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.

RF.K.2: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes)

#### *Reading*

RL.K.1: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RL.K.2: With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

RL.K.5 - Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems).

RL.K.6 - With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

RL.K.7 - With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

### *Speaking*

SL.K.4 - Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.

### *Writing*

W.K.8 - With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

### *Language*

L.K.6 - Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.

### *Math*

K.CC.A.2 Count forward beginning from a given number within the known sequence (instead of having to begin at 1)

K.CC.A.3 Write numbers from 0 to 20. Represent a number of objects with a written numeral 0-20 (with 0 representing a count of no objects).

K.CC.B.4 Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities; connect counting to cardinality.

K.CC.B.4b Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities; connect counting to cardinality. *Understand that the last number name said tells the number of objects counted. The number of objects is the same regardless of their arrangement or the order in which they were counted.*

K.CC.B.4c Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities; connect counting to cardinality. *Understand that each successive number name refers to a quantity that is one larger.*

### *Health*

Core Concepts - Good Nutrition and Diet

1.2.1 Healthy Foods

1.2.2 Making Healthy Choices

## **PA STANDARDS FOR KINDERGARTEN**

**Connections to children:** Teachers must learn about children's home experiences and culture so they can design learning environments that support the home-school connection and expand prior learning into new knowledge.

**Connections to families.** When a partnership is formed between professional and family, the connection has been strengthened, assuring that children receive consistent messages about learning and skill development. Families should be given opportunities to learn about their children's day at school, to provide input into the information they want their children to learn and master, and to understand what they can do at home to enhance the learning experience. Family ethnicity and culture must be interwoven into the life of an

early childhood program and classroom. Professionals must embrace all children's heritages and provide activities, materials, and experiences that help children become aware of and appreciate their own culture while learning about and appreciating the similarities and differences of others. Communications with families should be made in the home language. Professionals in high-quality, early education programs know and understand their own attitudes and biases and are culturally sensitive and supportive of diversity.

**KEY LEARNING AREA: Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body, Concepts of Health and Healthful Living**

Standard 1: Families are supported and connected to community resources.

Standard 2: School communities and families build partnerships that are affirming, reciprocal, and respectful.

Standard 3: Families have the knowledge and understanding to encourage and support their students' learning and development.

Standard 4: Family members have support from other families, empowering and strengthening the entire school community.

Standard 5: Families are supported by the school community to develop and use leadership and advocacy skills.

Standard 6: Families are supported in times of transition

**WIDA LANGUAGE STANDARDS**

Standard 1: Language for Social and Instructional Purposes: English language learners communicate for social and instructional purposes within the school setting.

Standard 2: Language for Language Arts: English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of language arts.

Standard 3: Language for Mathematics: English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of mathematics.

Standard 4: Language for Science: English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of science.

*See below for letters to parents, pictures for flashcards, and other printable resources.*

Dear Parents or Caregivers,

Your child will be learning how to count to 10 English. Do they know how to count to ten in your home language? If not, it's time to start practicing!

Try to have a daily routine where touch each child's fingers or toes to count up to ten along with your child. Can your child count to five touching the fingers on one hand?

Count to ten while touching different body parts.

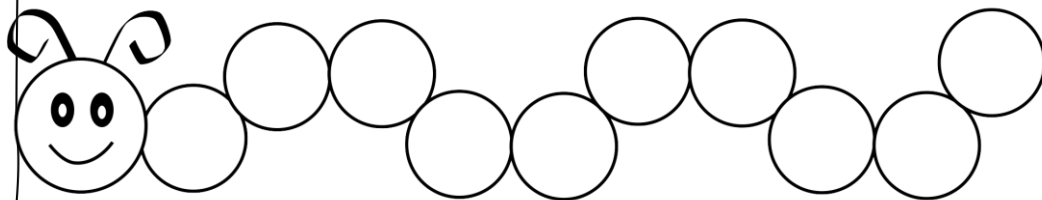
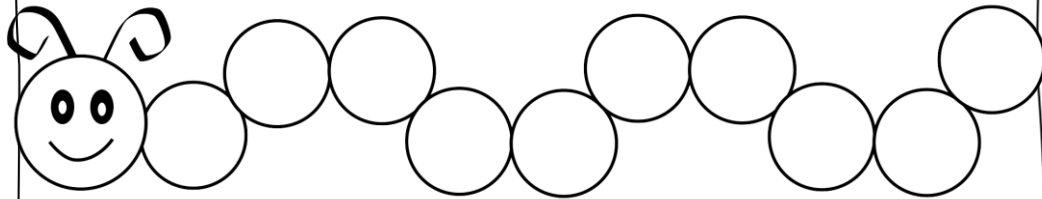
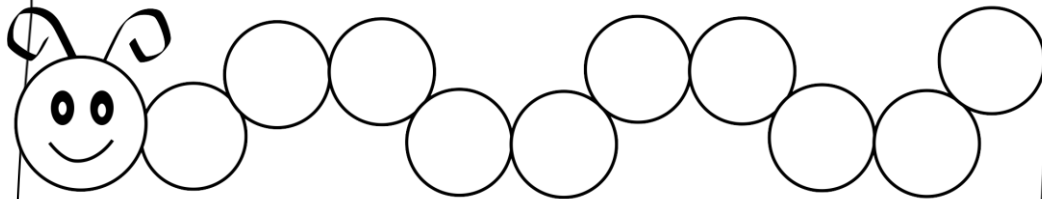
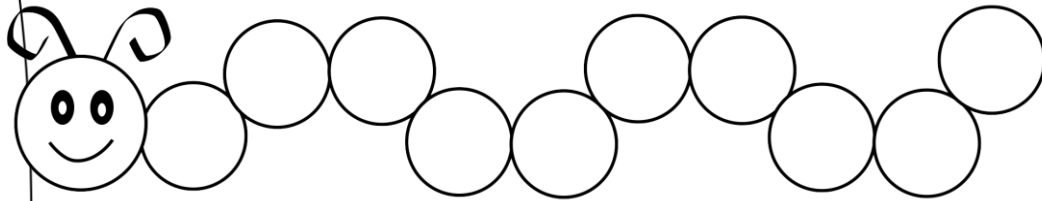
- 1 – touch toes
- 2 – touch shins
- 3 – touch knees
- 4 – touch thighs
- 5 – tap your bottom with both hands
- 6 – put your hands on your hips
- 7 – cross your arms and grab your elbows
- 8 – cross your arms across your chest
- 9 – touch your shoulders
- 10 – touch your head

Help your child also learn how to count in English and write letters in the air by sharing this video with them. [Counting and Writing Numbers 1-9- CLICK HERE.](#)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Caterpillar Counting

Write the numbers that are missing.



Dear Parents or Caregivers,

Your child will be learning the days of the week in English. Do they know how to say the days in your home language? If not, it's time to start practicing!

Try to have a daily routine where you tell your child the name of the day and tell them what will happen that day. Talk about what you did yesterday while saying that day of the week. Talk about what you might do tomorrow and say the day of the week.

Today is \_\_\_\_\_ we will \_\_\_\_\_.  
Yesterday was \_\_\_\_\_ we \_\_\_\_\_.  
Tomorrow will be \_\_\_\_\_ we will \_\_\_\_\_.

Help your child also learn the names of the Days of the Week in English by sharing these videos with them.

[Days of the Week Action Song – CLICK HERE.](#)  
[Sing and Sign Days of the Week - CLICK HERE](#)

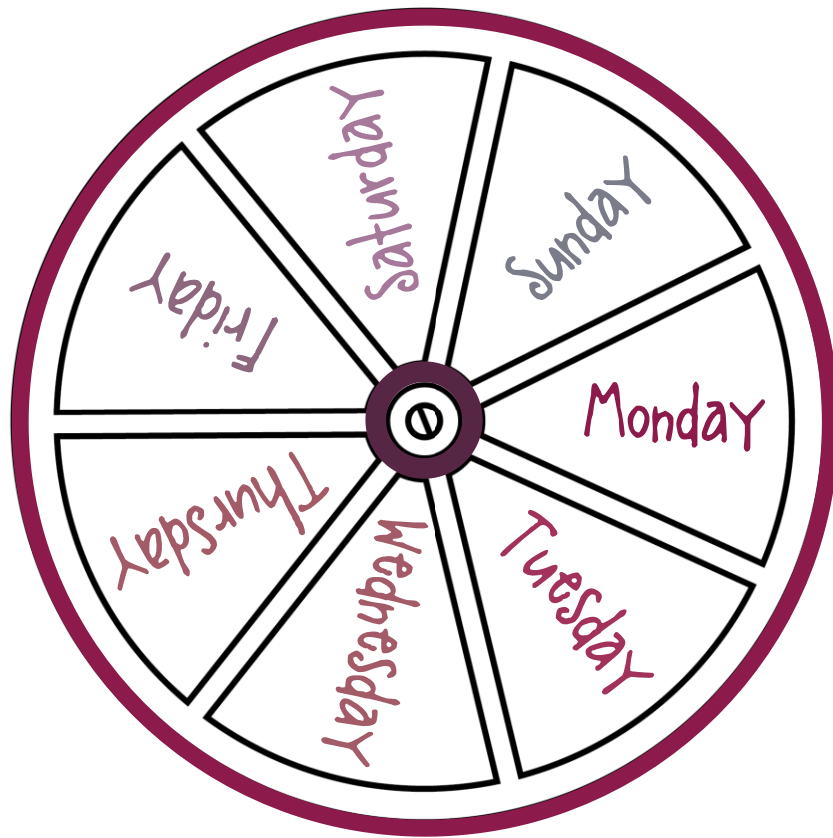
Here are the Days of the Week with American Sign Language. Adding movement to words can help children learn and remember new words.

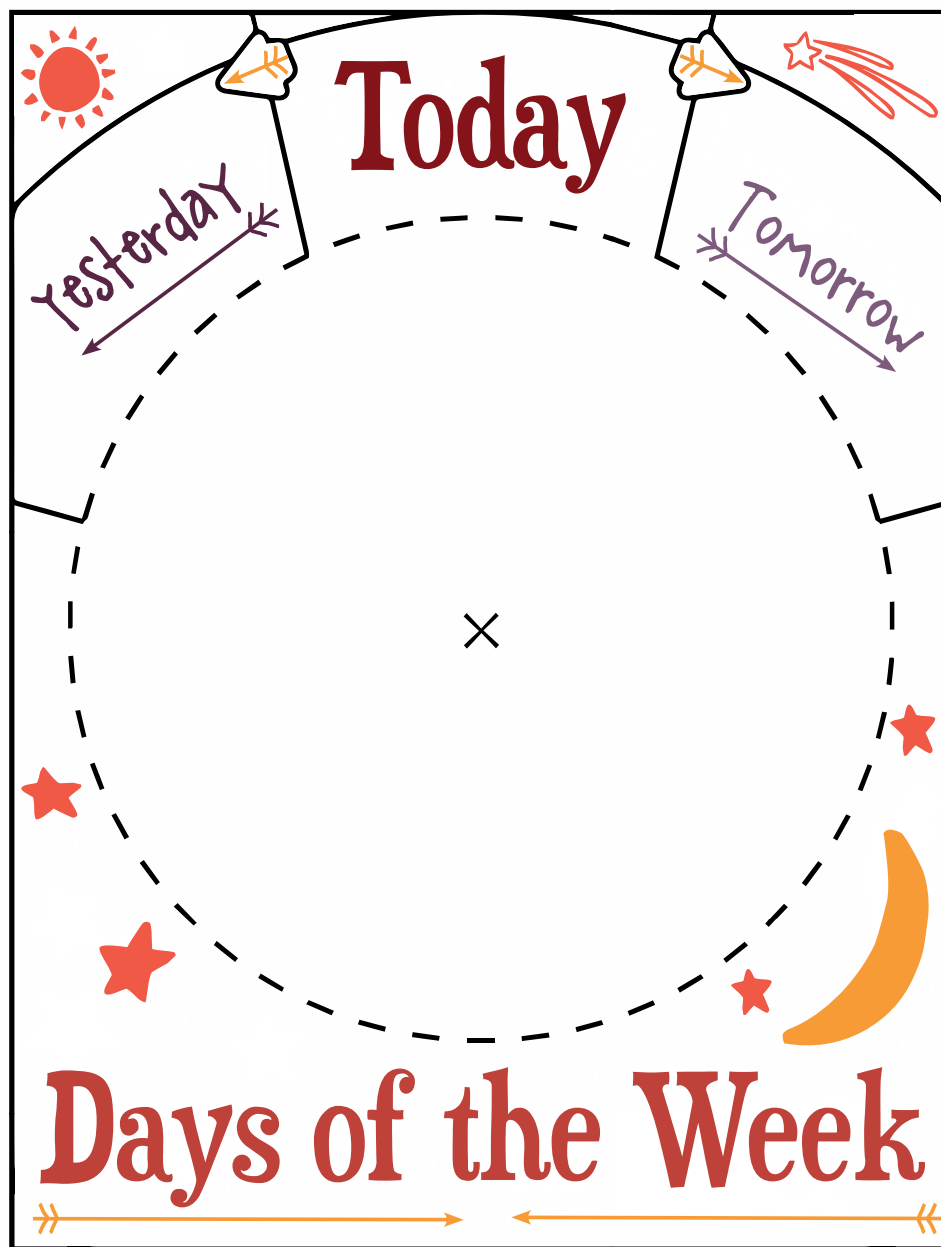
<a href="#"><u>Sunday - CLICK HERE</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Monday- CLICK HERE</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Tuesday- CLICK HERE</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Wednesday - CLICK HERE</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Thursday-- CLICK HERE</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Friday- CLICK HERE</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Saturday- CLICK HERE</u></a>	

[Sing and Sign Days of the Week](#)



**Cut and use a brad to attach**





Dear Parents or Caregivers,

We will be reading "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" by Eric Carle in class and learning about healthy food choices. Here is a video of the story for you to watch with your children.

[The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) - English

We will also be learning about the life cycle of the butterfly. Here is a video about the life cycle of a butterfly for you to watch with your child.

[Life Cycle of a Butterfly Video](#) - English

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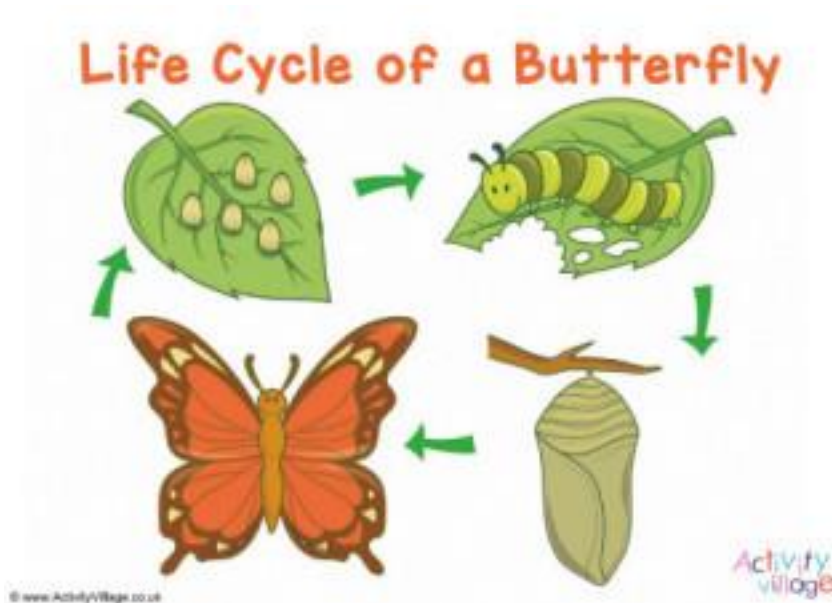
"Estimados padres o cuidadores:

Estaremos leyendo "La oruga muy hambrienta" de Eric Carle en clase durante las próximas dos semanas y aprenderemos sobre opciones de alimentos saludables. Aquí hay un video de la historia para que lo vean con sus hijos.

[Life Cycle of a Butterfly](#) - Spanish and English

Aquí hay un video sobre el ciclo de vida de una mariposa para que lo vea con su hijo.

[Ciclo de vida de una mariposa Video](#) – Español





Dear Parents,

We will be learning about making healthy food choices in school. We'd like to make a class poster showing all of the different kinds of foods our students eat, especially those that represent your home culture.

We will call "always" foods those that are healthiest. These foods include fruit, vegetables, egg dishes, rice dishes, noodle dishes, bread, cheese, beans, grains, soups, cereal, meat, chicken, fish, milk, fruit and vegetable juices.



We will call less healthy food "sometimes" food. These foods include, cakes, cookies, chocolate, candy, ice cream, snack foods like chips, fast food like McDonalds, and sugary drinks like soda.

Please talk about healthy food choices with your child. Also, please write or draw a picture of one healthy food your child ate at home for each day of the week. You may write the name of the food in your home language.

Day of the Week	Healthy Food
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	
<i>Sometimes snack food</i>	

Also, if you have a smart phone, please take a picture of your child eating a healthy food – especially one that is typical of a food you eat in your home country and email it to me at \_\_\_\_\_. We will print the pictures and make a poster for the class to show how we are alike (we all need to eat healthy food) and we are all different (the foods we eat are different.)

Talk about the photos of what different children eat found here [CLICK HERE for the LINK](#).

<div data-bbox="435 296 613 411"></div> <div data-bbox="251 394 430 430">Always foods</div>	<div data-bbox="829 296 938 401"></div> <div data-bbox="948 373 1169 409">Sometimes foods</div>