

Fun with Polka-dot

Ideas for your classroom

Friendship Quilt

Give each child a six-inch square of white tag board. The child then uses two or three favorite marker colors to decorate the square. A child could draw dots, stripes, checks, hearts, geographic shapes – whatever he or she likes best. The class works together to arrange the squares into a quilt-like piece of art, using a large sheet of paper as backing. The teacher uses strips of colored duct tape to stick the squares together and create colorful borders.

Goal: To create a visible reminder of how things that are different can come together to create something beautiful.

How are we alike?

Hold up two large pattern pages and ask children how the two are alike. Repeat with several pairs of pattern pages.

Then progress to the stand-up/sit down game – an activity aimed at showing how children are alike in ways we **cannot** see. Tell the group: *Stand up if you...*

- ❖ *Have a dog.*
- ❖ *Have a brother or brothers.*
- ❖ *Have a sister or sisters.*
- ❖ *Ate cereal for breakfast this morning.*
- ❖ *Are wearing blue today.*
- ❖ *Are wearing red today.*
- ❖ *Like spaghetti and meatballs.*
- ❖ *Like to read stories about monsters.*
- ❖ *Have ever been really scared by an animal.*
- ❖ *Have ever been called a mean name.*
- ❖ *Have ever gotten angry and said something mean to someone else.*
- ❖ *Sometimes wish you could stay home with your mom, dad, grandma or grandpa.*
- ❖ *Have ever felt scared someone might laugh at you.*
- ❖ *Have ever felt lonely, even when there are lots of people around.*

You can customize the prompts to your class, being sensitive about issues specific to your students.

Goal: To show how things that look different can also have a lot in common.

Classification activity:

Divide students into groups of two, three or four, and give each group 10 to 20 printed patterned squares (available at www.catherineurdahl.com). Each group decides how to classify the squares into piles. For example, one group might put all the polka-dot pieces in one pile and all the striped pieces in the other pile. Another group might classify the squares based on their predominant colors or whether they feature small or large prints. You can repeat the activity several times, challenging students to find new ways to classify the squares.

Goal: To practice classification skills and to see how things can be alike and different in many different ways.

Irregular past-tense verb matching game

One of the challenges of learning to read is the mastery of irregular past-tense verbs. Many children—especially second-language learners—automatically create past-tense verbs by adding 'ed.' Often they need extra help to learn the many exceptions to the 'ed' trick.

Using words from *Polka-dot Fixes Kindergarten*, this game challenges students to match a verb with its past-tense form. To create the game, make two sets of cards using the pattern and verb templates (available at catherineurdahl.com). One set will have polka-dots on the fronts and present-tense verbs on the backs. The other set will have stripes on the fronts and past-tense verbs on the backs. Print multiple sets double-sided on heavy paper. Then cut them into cards and mix one set of polka-dot cards with one set of striped cards. You also can use the template to create your own pairs of past/present tense verbs.

Divide the children into groups of four or five and give each group a set of cards. Children take turns flipping over a polka-dot card, then a striped card. If the striped card is the past tense of the polka-dot card, the child puts the two cards in his or her lap. If the cards don't match, the child flips them back over and play continues.

Write your own fix-it story

Polka-dot brings a fix-it kit with runny soap, dotted bandages and duct tape to her first day of kindergarten. Now you create your own character, send the character somewhere exciting and give him or her a problem. Help the character out by giving him or her a fix-it kit. What will you include in the kit? Why? How does the character use the kit to solve the problem? Once you answer these questions, you'll be on your way to writing a fabulous story.

Or...if you really like duct tape, use the following title to get you started on a new story: *How Captain _____ saved the world using only duct tape.* You can choose your character's name!

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