

TEACHERS ACTIVITIES**Theme:**

Growing up may involve some painful changes, but even adults can have fun.

Topics For Discussion:

Before viewing the program, have students relate personal experiences with objects to which they have had a strong attachment, such as a blanket, a stuffed toy, or a pillow. Did this object have a name? Do they still have it? If not, what happened to it?



Have students recall their first day of school. What feelings do they remember having? What do they remember about their classroom and teacher?



Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being an older brother or sister, having older brothers or sisters, or being an only child.



Have students talk about different kinds of things they do themselves to have fun. Then discuss what their families do together for fun.



Discuss what it means to be a "good neighbor." Have students rate Mrs. Tweezers as a neighbor by telling ways in which they felt she both was and was not a good neighbor.

Curriculum Extension Activities:

Have students write and illustrate an autobiography of their lives before they came to school. As a group, brainstorm the questions they should answer in their autobiography, e.g., where they lived, what they liked to do, who their friends were, who was in their family, preschool experiences, etc. Invite them to interview their parents if they cannot remember details. Place the autobiographies in the classroom library.

Have students brainstorm a list of things they used to do when they were younger that they have now outgrown. Balance this list with a second list of things they can do now that they could not do when they were younger. Encourage them to talk about their feelings during these life changes. For example, in what ways were their “younger” child activities and habits hard to give up? What new challenges did new activities bring? What had to happen in order for them to be able to do “older” child activities (e.g., grow taller, become physically stronger, learn a skill, etc.)?



The story of *Owen* follows an easily identifiable problem-solution format. Use yellow (like Fuzzy) paper and make a problem-solution “map” of the story. Divide the paper into three parts. Label the left third “story problem”; label the right third “story solution”; and divide the middle third into three parts, labelled “Mrs. Tweezer’s solutions.” Have students fill in all sections. (For small group or whole class collaborations, use a 12- x 18-inch piece of yellow construction paper.)



Conduct a stuffed animal survey and record the data on a graph. Begin by brainstorming a list of common stuffed animals. Give everyone a copy of this list (with additional space for “other” stuffed animals) to take home. Have students search their homes for stuffed animals and mark the numbers on the survey sheet, adding unlisted ones as appropriate. When they return the sheets to school, compile totals and transfer the information to a chart copy of the survey form. (This exercise provides good practice for the students in using a calculator.) Have students make a graph from the data on the chart. Invite students to bring in a favorite stuffed animal from home and make a display. Provide each animal guest with a “name tag” for its owner to complete, that includes the following: “My name is

_____. I belong to _____. My favorite thing to do with _____(owner) is

_____.”



Working in cooperative groups, have students design their vision of the ideal playground. Before the groups begin work, discuss various objects and places that might be found at a playground. Have the groups draw their playgrounds on mural paper and label the different areas. Display their designs.

Extend the talk about siblings from the discussion topics above to conducting a survey of the students about their birth order.



Give each student a 3- x 3-inch square of paper and have them draw a self-portrait (head only—encourage them to use the entire space). Use the self-portraits to build a graph. Draw a baseline and label four columns: “oldest,” “middle,” “youngest,” and “only.” Have students place their faces on the graph according to their birth order. (Discuss the importance of placing the faces equal distances apart.) Give each student a yellow square of paper (5- x 5-inch) and have them create a design on it. Indicate that they will be putting all of their squares together to make a new blanket for Owen. They will need to decide on the arrangement of squares in the blanket by figuring the number of rows they need and the number of squares in each row. They will also need to decide which designs they wish to place next to each other. Fasten the squares together and display with the book. If possible, use cloth and fabric crayons instead of paper and stitch the squares together. Students can place this “blanket” on their knees or around their shoulders when they read the book.



Obtain these other “mouse” books by the author/illustrator of *Owen*, Kevin Henkes: *Julius, the Baby of the World*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Sheila Rae, the Brave*, *Chester’s Way*, and *A Weekend with Wendell*, and *Lily’s Purple Plastic Purse*. Discuss his style of illustration in these books and in *Owen*. Discuss the problems these characters have in relation to the students’ own lives. (The “mouse” children in these books are faced with life changes much like “real” children are.) Select scenes from these books for dramatic role playing.

Supplemental Books:

BLANKET

by Margot Apple (Houghton Mifflin)

NEVER SPIT ON YOUR SHOES

by Denys Cazet (Orchard)

THE BLANKET THAT HAD TO GO

by Nancy Evans Cooney, illus. by Diane Dawson (Putnam)

THE BIRTH-ORDER BLUES
by Joan Drescher (Viking)

SOMETHING FROM NOTHING
by Phoebe Gilman (Scholastic)

PLAYGROUNDS
by Gail Gibbons (Holiday House)

GERALDINE'S BLANKET
by Holly Keller (Greenwillow)

BIT BY BIT
by Steve Sanfield, illus. by Susan Gaber (Philomel)

TIMOTHY GOES TO SCHOOL
by Rosemary Wells (Dial)

EDWARD UNREADY FOR SCHOOL
by Rosemary Wells (Dial)

Distributed by:

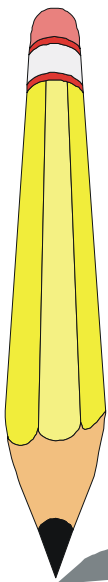


P.O. Box 80669
Lincoln, NE 68501-0669
Phone: 800-228-4630
Fax: 800-306-2330
Email: gpn@unl.edu
Web site: gpn.unl.edu



- **Playground math--estimation, weight, size.** Go out to the playground on a math hunt. Begin by having students identify activities, games, and equipment that include math, and then involve them in some practical playground math application. For example, many school playgrounds have hopscotch, four square, or other blacktop games; basketball goals; and ball diamonds. Possibilities for activities using playground equipment include: estimating the number of children needed on one side of a teeter-totter to lift an adult (teacher, principal, parent volunteer) on the other side; estimating the number of times a swing (holding a child) will go back and forth before it stops; estimating the distance from the ground to the top of the monkey bars; estimating the distance from the ground to the top of a slide; estimating how much time it takes to walk around the perimeter of the playground, crossing the monkey bars by grabbing odd or even rungs, and many others. Test all estimations with actual experiences and record the data, so that students can do calculations when they return inside. Students might also participate in some activities, such as jumping rope, determining how far they can kick or throw a ball, etc., over a period of days, trying to achieve a "personal best," rather than in competition with others.

- **Spatial relationships.** Working in cooperative groups, have students design their vision of the ideal playground. Before groups begin work, discuss various objects and places that might be found at a playground and the need to appeal to a range of age groups. Have the groups draw their playgrounds on large pieces of paper and label the different areas. Allow groups to present their designs, explaining the rationale for their organization. Display all designs so that everyone can have a closer look.



- **Surveying and graphing.** The themes of the Owen program suggest many different topics for conducting surveys and recording the data on graphs. Possible surveys include: favorite piece of playground equipment, favorite activity to do after school, favorite game to play with friends, favorite board game, favorite activity to do with one's family, ownership of stuffed animals, birth order (oldest, middle, youngest, only), and others. For example, to do the stuffed animal survey, begin by brainstorming with the students a list of common stuffed animals. Give everyone a copy of this list (with additional space for "other" stuffed animals) to take home. Have students search their homes for stuffed animals and mark the numbers on the survey sheet, adding unlisted ones as appropriate. When they return the sheets to school, compile totals and transfer the information to a chart copy of the survey form. (This exercise provides good practice for the students in using a calculator.) Have students make a graph from the data on the chart.

● **Using a square shape for estimation and problem solving.** Cut two or three large pieces of yellow (like Owen’s Fuzzy) paper, some square and some rectangular, in different sizes. Give each student a 5-x 5-inch square of white paper (a handkerchief for Owen). Working in small groups, have students estimate how many of the white squares will fit in the yellow shape. When they have arrived at an estimation, have them creatively problem solve how to determine the actual number of squares that will fit. Discuss their solutions to the problem.

In another activity, indicate to the students that they will put all of their small squares together to make a new blanket for Owen. Have students create designs on their individual squares. They will need to decide on the arrangement of squares in the blanket by figuring the number of rows they need and the number of squares in each row. They will also need to decide which designs they wish to place next to each other. Cloth may be substituted for paper in both of these activities.

Do-At-Home Activity

● **Working with time concepts.** In the Owen video, LeVar was very concerned with his time schedule before he started having fun. Have parents assist their child in writing a “My Day” book. (Two reproducible pages and a My Day book cover may be found on the following page of this guide. Copy the book pages 2-sided — Side A is the front; Side B is the back, even though it looks upside down. Make 4 pages for each student. The pages can be folded over, giving each child an 8-page book.) The book involves drawing a series of pictures representing different times in the child’s day. The child needs to write a caption for each picture and mark the clock face and digital clock with a time for the activity depicted. Have students return their “My Day” books to school to share with the class.