An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By:

Brooke Rice

Thesis Advisor:
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Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

December 2006

Graduation Date: December 2006
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Advisor's Signature

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Abstract:

Throughout my college career, I have been preparing to become an effective classroom teacher. I have spent much of my time perfecting my skills in lesson-planning and in learning effective methods of classroom management, yet I know that I will need more than these things in order to be successful during my first few years in the classroom. For this reason, I decided to make a Classroom Starter Kit which will serve to better prepare me for organizing and running my own classroom. This kit includes a plan for conducting meaningful activities the first day of school, newsletter templates for encouraging positive teacher-parent communication, a rubric for use during parent-teacher conferences, and a classroom website among many other items.

Acknowledgments:

entifully I would like to thank Dr. Carolyn Walker for advising me during this project. Her input and encouragement were extremely helpful throughout the entire process.

I would also like to thank Cynthia Whitehair, my supervising teacher at Cowan Elementary, for all that she taught me about successfully running a classroom and making a difference in students’ lives. She is one of the world’s truly dedicated teachers.
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Rationale

As a new teacher about to enter the professional world, I feel that I have received the training and experience necessary to be a successful teacher. I have spent endless hours creating and perfecting engaging lesson plans and learning experiences, and I have had wonderful opportunities in working with elementary age students. I have had the opportunity to run a fourth grade classroom with the help of a supervising teacher, and I have the confidence and enthusiasm that I know it will take to be a great teacher. Yet, even with these things under my belt, I still know that it will take more to successfully run a student-centered learning environment. This is why I have decided to create this Classroom Starter Kit.

Research has shown that extensive planning ahead is essential for the first year of teaching and for the professional success of first-year teachers (Bosch 2000). According to most sources, the "preparation and organization at the beginning of the year" is what sets the tone and pace for the smooth running of the entire school year (Bosch 2000). Furthermore, "research shows that effective teachers create positive learning environments by using management skills to organize time, space, materials, auxiliary personnel, and students" for success throughout the school year (Bosch 2000). As a new teacher with the strong desire to have a successful first year to set the pace for my career, I have decided to do some extensive planning before I enter my own classroom to ensure that I can organize and manage it for running smoothly throughout the school year. I feel that in having done this preparation and planning before entering my classroom, I will have more time to dedicate to teaching my students once I am actually in my own classroom.
In planning for the organization and management of my future classroom, I have chosen to focus on a few elements that I feel will be integral to my success during my first year of teaching. First off, I have chosen to create a plan of lessons and activities for implementing during the first few days of school. According to one source, all students "need structured time and procedures" in order to feel secure and ready to learn in a classroom (Thompson 2002). For this reason, many of my first day activities focus on orienting the students to the classroom and establishing the routines and procedures for the classroom. The other activities for the first day focus on helping the students get to know each other as well as how to work together as a team for success in the classroom.

The second major area that I focused on in planning for my classroom was that of parent-teacher communication. Most professional educators believe that one of the major keys to student and teacher success in the classroom is the quality of communication and cooperation that exists between the students' parents and the teacher (Bosch 2000). For this reason, I have chosen to use several methods of communication in my classroom in order to keep in contact with my students' parents. I have chosen to design a classroom website as well as to create monthly newsletters for my classroom in order to keep the "lines of communication open" between myself and my students' parents (Milliken 1991). Furthermore, I have included a rubric to be used for conducting successful, student-focused, parent-teacher conferences.

In addition to these major areas of organization and planning, I have also done some planning for conducting cooperative-group lessons and activities with my students. Additionally, I have chosen to organize Literature Circle activities for my students in my future classroom. The
The reason I have chosen to conduct these group-work activities is because I feel that learning is often most effective when it is between peers instead of simply from the teacher.

Although I know that successfully running a positive learning environment takes effort as well as experience, I feel that this Classroom Starter Kit is a step in the right direction for me as a new teacher. It will help me to set the stage for teaching in my first classroom, and it will allow me the opportunity to focus on actually teaching my students during my first year instead of organizing my classroom.
First Day of School Plan

Activity:
Student Arrival and Welcome:

Teacher Introduction:
"Me Bag Activity"

Classroom Cues and Signals

Description:
• Greet students at the door as they enter the classroom.
• Instruct each student to find the desk with his or her nametag on it and to hang their book bags on the back of their chair for the time being.
• Ask each student to place Kleenex on the designated table and to have a seat at their desk.
• Have the students begin decorating the outside of their "Me Bag" with their name and fun doodles and facts about themselves.
• Promptly begin the teacher introduction activity when it is time for class to start.
• Introduce yourself and welcome the students to your classroom.
• Tell the students that you have made a "Me Bag" to help them to get to know you better.
• Take each item out of the bag and explain its significance.
• Then, explain that each student is going to make their own "Me Bag" to introduce themselves to the class with the next day.
• Assign the "Me Bag" as the first homework assignment. Record this assignment on the Assignment Board, and explain the Assignment Board and Assignment Book procedures to the class.
• Explain that in order to make things run smoothly, your class will have some special signals that will be used at different times. Tell the students that they will have some signals and that you will also have some signals to use.
• First, explain that their signals are important so that they can quickly get your attention without interrupting your teaching. Explain that 5 fingers signals a question related to the topic we are talking about, that 1 finger signals an emergency restroom trip, and a pencil in the air signals that it needs to be sharpened (only if two have been sharpened before the start of class).
• Next, explain that as the teacher, you also have signals that will be important. The first is simply to raise your hand to signal quiet. When this signal is used, the students should raise their hands, face the speaker, and listen for instructions.
• Another signal would be a clapping rhythm. After repeating the rhythm, the students should know to face the speaker and listen for instructions.
Classroom Tour

- Next, distribute copies of the I Spy Classroom Scavenger Hunt Sheet to the students.
- Give them 1 minute to find as many of the objects in the hunt as possible.
- Next, take the students on a "tour" of the classroom, pointing out the objects they found during their scavenger hunt.
- At this time, explain procedures such as placing their attendance card in the chart in the morning.
- Explain how to check books out of the classroom Library using the Library Log.
- Explain how to turn in homework into the homework trays each day.
- Also, explain the roles on the job board and how these duties are to be performed.
- Tell the students that in order to have a good year at school, the classroom will need some rules.
- Ask the students why they think rules are important. Give scenarios if needed.
- Tell the students that you are going to allow them to help you to make the class rules. Ask the class to brainstorm a list of rules.
- Narrow the list down so that they fit into the following categories:
  1. Be Respectful
  2. Be Prepared
  3. Do Your Best
- Discuss how each of the rules fits into these categories. Post these rules for all to see.
- Next, explain the classroom discipline procedures in case some of the rules are broken. Explain that in cases of misbehavior, a student will receive a warning, with his or her name written on the board. After that, check marks will be placed after the name to indicate further behavior issues.
  - √ Miss 15 Minutes of Recess
  - √ Miss all of Recess
  - √√ Isolation for the Day
  - √√√√ Lose Reward, Send Note Home
  - √√√√√ Visit to Principal
- Next, explain that good behavior can earn rewards. Explain that as a class, rewards can be earned by earning marbles in a glass jar. When the class fills the jar, a reward will be voted on.
- Also, explain that individuals "Caught Being Good" can earn special privileges such as lunch with the teacher etc...
Scavenger Hunt

I Spy: Classroom Scavenger Hunt

While staying seated at your desk, use your eyes to find as many of the following items in your classroom as possible. You'll have one minute to see how many things you can find! Good luck and have fun!

Assignment Board
Daily Schedule
Pencil Sharpeners
Kleenex Boxes
Attendance Chart
Homework Trays

Classroom Library
Job Board
Staplers
Lunch Menu
Clock

I Spy: Classroom Scavenger Hunt

While staying seated at your desk, use your eyes to find as many of the following items in your classroom as possible. You'll have one minute to see how many things you can find! Good luck and have fun!

Assignment Board
Daily Schedule
Pencil Sharpeners
Kleenex Boxes
Attendance Chart
Homework Trays

Classroom Library
Job Board
Staplers
Lunch Menu
Clock
Attendance Card Templates

Use the following templates to create student attendance cards. Using a digital camera, take each student's picture during the first day of school. Then, put each student's picture onto the template, and type in the student's name. Then, insert the student's attendance card into the attendance chart in the front of the room. Teach the following attendance procedure to the students:

Each morning, enter the room and place your attendance card into your numbered pocket in the chart. Each afternoon, remove your card from the chart and place it back in the basket for the next morning.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Date Out</th>
<th>Date In</th>
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Group Work Roles

**Timer**
- Watch the clock and keep your group on task so that you'll finish on time.

**Motivating Monitor**
- Encourage each group member to participate by cheering everyone on.

**Materials Specialist**
- You're in charge of gathering and returning all supplies.

**Recorder**
- Your specialty is writing down all of the answers your group comes up with.

**Captain Q & A**
- You're the speaker for your group—you are the one person who can ask for more directions and who can share information with the class.

**Job Reminders:**
Word Finder

Name: __________________________
Chapters: _______________________

You are the Word Finder. Your job is to look for special words in the story. These special words may be new, strange, funny, interesting, important, or hard. When you find a word that you want to talk about, record it on this sheet.

Word: __________________________
Page: ______
Why I chose this word: ____________________________

When your group meets, help your friends talk about the words you chose. Ask yourselves these questions:

- How does the word fit in the story?
- Does anyone know what the word means?
- Shall we look it up? If yes, do so.
- What does this word make you feel like?
- Can you draw the word?

Passage Picker

Name: __________________________
Chapters: _______________________

You are the Passage Picker. Your job is to pick parts of the story that you want to read aloud to your group. These can be parts that you think were good, funny, scary, interesting, well-written, descriptive, and so on. Write down your parts on this sheet to share during discussion.

Page: ______
Paragraph: ______
Why I liked this part: ____________________________

Page: ______
Paragraph: ______
Why I liked this part: ____________________________

Page: ______
Paragraph: ______
Why I liked this part: ____________________________

Page: ______
Paragraph: ______
Why I liked this part: ____________________________
Discussion Director

Name: ______________________
Chapters: ____________________

You are the Discussion Director. Your job is to write down some good questions that you think your group would want to talk about. During discussion, make sure everyone participates and stays on task.

Questions:
1. _____________________________________________
   _____________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________
   _____________________________________________

Connector

Name: ______________________
Chapters: ____________________

You are the Connector. Your job is to find connections between the book and the outside world. This means connecting the reading to:

• Your own life
• Happenings at school or in town
• Other people or problems
• Other writings on the same topics
• Other writings by the same author
• Similar events at other times and places
• Other books or stories

Try answering this question:
Some things today's reading reminded me of were...
Parent Communication
Parent Communication Documentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>Parents Names:</th>
<th>Home Phone:</th>
<th>Alt. Phone:</th>
<th>Email:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>22.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Parent Communication Documentation

Types: P = Phone  E = Email  N = Note  M = Meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Initiated By</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</table>
# Parent Conference Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference Rubric</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Needs Much Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Achievement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works well at grade level</td>
<td>Works at grade level</td>
<td>Sometimes works at grade level</td>
<td>Works below grade level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works above grade level</td>
<td>Understands most of the material</td>
<td>Does not understand some of the material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands most all material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Work Ethic</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does his/her best work</td>
<td>Does good work</td>
<td>Quality is often below average</td>
<td>Quality is below average</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starts immediately</td>
<td>Starts right away</td>
<td>Needs supervision</td>
<td>Needs constant supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearly always neat</td>
<td>Is usually neat</td>
<td>Needs to be neater</td>
<td>Needs to be neater</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does extra work</td>
<td>Work is usually completed on time</td>
<td>Work is sometimes on time</td>
<td>Work is seldom on time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is nearly always completed on time</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attention Level and Ability to Follow Directions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Listens carefully and nearly always follows directions</td>
<td>Usually listens and follows directions</td>
<td>Sometimes follows directions</td>
<td>Usually does not listen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks questions if help is needed</td>
<td>Usually asks questions if help is needed</td>
<td>Often has difficulty listening</td>
<td>Rarely follows directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes asks questions if help is needed</td>
<td>Seldom asks for help</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reaction to Frustration</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Always keeps trying</td>
<td>Usually keeps trying</td>
<td>Gives up or won't try</td>
<td>Gets angry and lashes out in inappropriate ways</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude Toward Other Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shows respect to most everyone</td>
<td>Usually shows respect to others</td>
<td>Shows respect sometimes, but really needs to make better choices in this area</td>
<td>Has little or no respect for anyone including him/herself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets along with others easily</td>
<td>Gets along with others most of the time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude Toward Teacher</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very cooperative</td>
<td>Usually cooperative</td>
<td>Can be cooperative and respectful, but often needs reminders concerning respect and appropriate attitudes</td>
<td>Disruptive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to go beyond what is expected</td>
<td>Usually treats teacher with respect</td>
<td>Needs constant reminders concerning rules and respect</td>
<td>Uncooperative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nearly always respectful</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nearly always follows rules and behaves appropriately</td>
<td>Usually follows rules and behave appropriately</td>
<td>Often needs to be reminded of appropriate behavior and class rules</td>
<td>Needs constant supervision</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Makes wise choices</td>
<td>Makes good decisions in most situations</td>
<td>Needs supervision</td>
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Student's Name: ________________________

Parent Signature: ________________________ Date: ________________________
Newsletter Templates
Dates to Remember:

Dear Parents,

Student Spotlight:
### Fun and Games:

**School Unscramble**
Unscramble the words below to make words that have to do with School:

1. dunpgreyo
2. olscoh
3. etehrac
4. nearigd
5. eears
6. negainr
7. morwheck
8. kabaqplk
9. hamth

Answers: playground, school, teacher, reading, nervous, learning, homework, backpack, math.

**School Supplies Wordsearch**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th>A</th>
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**Word Bank**

- Calculator
- Chalk
- Crayons
- Eraser
- Glue
- Journal
- Markers
- Notebook
- Paper clip/Paste
- Paste
- Pen
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Tape
Miss Rice's Class Newsletter

September 2007, Issue 1

Dates to Remember:

Dear Parents,

Student Spotlight:

2x3=6

News and Notes
Spelling List:

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Kid-Friendly Websites

- www.funbrain.com
- www.yahooligans.com
- www.kids.discovery.com

Fun and Games:

Sudoku:
Place a number between 1 and 4 in each cell so that every row, every column, and every 2x2 box has the digits 1-4 only once.

```
 1 4
 4 2
 2 3
 3 1
```

Contact Me:
Miss Brooke Rice
Email me at bmrice@bsu.edu or Call (317) 797-5297
Dates to Remember:

Dear Parents,

Student Spotlight:
Spelling List:

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Fun and Games:

Pumpkin Crossword Puzzle:

1. P _ _ _ _
2. _ _ U _ _ _
3. M _ _ _ _
4. P _ _ _ _
5. _ _ K _ _ _ _ _ _
6. _ I _
7. _ _ _ _ N _

1. Where a pumpkin grows.
2. You can make your pumpkin ________ by making it grow in a milk carton.
3. It takes about 4 ________ for a pumpkin to grow.
4. If your pumpkin is the best, it might win a _____!
5. What you carve at Halloween.
6. A yummy dessert recipe, first created by the Pilgrims. pumpkin _______.
7. The Pilgrims and the ______ planted lots of pumpkins.

Answers: 1-Patch, 2-Square, 3-Months, 4-Pint, 5-Jack-O-Lantern, 6-Pie, 7-Indians
Miss Rice's Class Newsletter

November 2007, Issue 1

Dates to Remember:

Dear Parents,

Student Spotlight:

Happy Thanksgiving

Eat more vegetables
Miss Rice's Class Newsletter
November 2007, Issue 1

Spelling List:
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Fun and Games:

Thanksgiving Crossword Puzzle:

Across:
1. Who were the first settlers that celebrated Thanksgiving?
3. These are the people you eat Thanksgiving dinner with.
5. What is the most common main dish for Thanksgiving dinner?
8. Who did the pilgrims celebrate Thanksgiving with?
9. What big holiday is celebrated in November?
14. You watch this Thanksgiving morning on TV.

Down:
1. This pie is orange. [HINT: You see a lot of them at Halloween.]  
2. What can you find inside of a Thanksgiving turkey?
4. What is another word for "sweet potatoes?"
6. Dad's watch this game on TV after Thanksgiving dinner.
7. This food is red in color.
10. Who is the famous guy who appears at the end of the Thanksgiving parade?
11. What does a turkey say?
12. What animal loves to beg for some of your turkey dinner?
13. What do you do most of on Thanksgiving day?

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or Call (317) 797-5297
**Miss Rice's Class Newsletter**

**December 2007, Issue 1**

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**Student Spotlight:**
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Fun and Games:

Winter Word Search

chilly
direct fireplace
frost
hibernate
hot chocolate
migrate

Kid-Friendly Websites

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www.kids.discovery.com

Contact Me:
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Happy Holidays!!
Dates to Remember:

Dear Parents,

Student Spotlight:

Happy New Year!
Miss Rice’s Class Newsletter

January 2008, Issue 1

Spelling List:
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Fun and Games:
New Year’s Day Crossword Puzzle:

Across:
3. On New Year’s Day, some people make ____ for the coming year.
5. A ____ is a period of 100 years.
6. ____ is the last month in the year.
8. On New Year’s Day, many college ____ teams play important games.

Down:
1. Who is the character that ushers out the old year?
2. ____ is the first month in the year.
4. A ____ is something you are going to try to do in the new year.
7. On New Year’s Eve at midnight, a ____ drops in Times Square.

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Miss Rice's Class Newsletter

February 2008, Issue 1

Dates to Remember:

Dear Parents,

Student Spotlight:
Spelling List:
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Fun and Games:

Valentine's Day Word Search

C D H P Y E F S R A Y S G U H
K H C E M G N T O M F E L K M
D A O D A U S N S K L S T U T
P N S C G R M L E I O S G X D
P O E G O T T N S W W I R X H
V C L I E L D D U C E K A C F
F E G Y R Q A C Q A R V O R O
W U L H Q F A T T X S O O Z H
C A N D Y R L T E T M O N L O
U J L Y D F I Z D S S G M Q

candy
hall
kiss
love
roses
smooch
snuggle

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or Call (317) 797-5297
Miss Rice's Class Newsletter

March 2008, Issue 1

Dates to Remember:

Dear Parents,

Student Spotlight:
Spelling List:
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20.

Fun and Games:
Help the Leprechaun get back to his Pot of Gold!

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Miss Rice's Class Newsletter

April 2008, Issue 1

Dates to Remember:

Dear Parents,

Student Spotlight:
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Fun and Games:
Help the dog find his bone:

Riddles:
1. What five-letter word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it?
   Answer: Short

2. What is the easiest way to throw a ball and have it stop and completely reverse direction after traveling a short distance?
   Answer: Throw the ball straight up.

3. What question can a person ask all day long, getting a different answer each time, yet all the answers are correct?
   Answer: What time is it?

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Happy April Fool's Day!
Miss Rice's Class Newsletter

Dates to Remember:

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Fun and Games:

Fill in the missing parts of speech with words of your own to create a funny story about something that could happen over your summer break. Have Fun!

Hints:
- A noun is a word that names a person, a place, or a thing.
- An adjective is a word that describes a noun. An adjective can tell what kind or how many.
- A verb is a word that can show action.
- An adverb is a word that describes a verb by telling how, when, or where.

A Day at the Zoo

Today I went to the zoo. I saw a ______________(adjective) ______________(noun)
jumping up and down in its tree. He
____________(verb: past tense) ______________(adverb)
through the large tunnel that led to its ______________(adjective) ______________(noun). I got some peanuts and passed them through the cage to a gigantic gray ______________(noun) towering above my head.

Feeding that animal made me hungry. I went to get a ______________(adjective)
scoop of ice cream. It filled my stomach.

Afterwards I had to ______________(verb) ______________(adverb) to catch our bus. When I got home I ______________(verb past tense) my mom for a ______________(adjective) day at the zoo.

Contact Me:
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or Call (317) 797-5297
My Website:

My website can be visited by accessing the following web address: http://bmrice.iweb.bsu.edu/ and clicking on the link titled, "My Classroom Website."

My website includes a homepage that will be updated weekly with a short note from myself to my parents and students regarding important things going on in class that week. Also, the website includes links to a page that is "About Me," a page describing the classroom rules, a page with our classroom schedule and calendar, a page detailing the supplies necessary for the school year, a page with a collection of the archived classroom newsletters, and finally, a page of fun links for the students and their parents to explore.

Here is a picture of what my homepage looks like when viewed on the internet:


