

# The Crystal Clarion

## Our PETS™ Newsletter

Issue 3

Editor-in-Chief  
Yolanda the Yarnspinner

Summer 2005



### From the Editor's Desk

Happy summer, everyone!

Along with the onset of halcyon summer days, here's our 3rd issue. Of course, it's full of some hot ideas to store away for next year. Enjoy and stay cool!

As many of you know, the PETS™ (or *Primary Education Thinking Skills*) curriculum introduces elementary students to those higher level problem-solving strategies used in convergent, divergent, visual, and evaluative thinking. In the years since Dudley, Sybil, Max, Isabel, Jordan, and I first developed this program, we know that many teachers across the country have not only tweaked our original ideas (improving them immeasurably, we're sure), but have also created wonderful, new activities. And our inquiring minds want these ideas, too!!!

In this newsletter, we're inviting teachers around the world (yes, this means YOU!) to share their ideas with the rest of us. In each issue, we'll *Spotlight* one or two of these ideas as well as share other ideas through *Brief Bytes*. We're also including a question and answer column: if you ask, we'll see who has an answer!

Sheba, Sammy, and Pras at Pieces of Learning agree with us that this is such a great idea that anyone whose ideas are **In the Spotlight** will receive a **\$20 POL gift certificate**. You *know* it doesn't get any better than that!



### Clarion Contributors

Summer 2005



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### Spotlight YOUR Ideas!

You can e-mail your PETS™ enhancements to me at:

**yarnspinnr@hotmail.com**

or snail mail them to me at this address:

**The Crystal Clarion**  
c/o Dodie Merritt  
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From the Trenches

Love Those Testimonials!

Dear Yolanda,  
Don't you think that having PETS™  
puppets would be a great idea?

Just Curious

[This program] really gives all students an opportunity to put their thinking skills to work and allows those with potentially gifted behaviors, regardless of reading or mathematical ability, to "bubble up" and be noticed!

Patti Cannaday

PETS™ puppets is an oft heard request and one we investigated several years ago. However, the price range we ran into for customized individual puppets (\$50-\$75) seemed a mite pricey for most teachers. Here, however, are suggestions from other teachers:

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Instead of dressing up, I have stuffed animals for my introductions. You would be amazed how the students warm up to them and even take them home for weekend visits!

Wendy Limerick

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I was really impressed with what [the students] remembered this fall from the lessons last year. They remembered the characters. The detective badge is a good hook for them to remember. They are learning and using the vocabulary for the matrix logic problems.

Bonnie Trubee

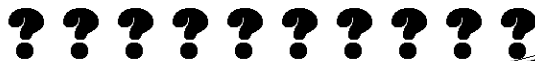
I also like that sometimes it is different kids who get to continue on for the small group lessons. In fact, one little boy who is resource room really stood out during the creative thinking skill area (he has quite an imagination) and went on to write a story that was entered in our local reading association contest and he won honorable mention! Thanks for writing these books.

Sharon Groene

Dear PETS™ Creators,  
I love your program! It has been an important and enjoyed activity here in Maryland for three years now. A colleague told me that you were discussing PETS puppets at the [2004] NAGC conference. I have attached pictures of characters I created using Folkmanis puppets, a stuffed animal (Sybil), and your ideas. Thought you might enjoy them.

Carolyn Lang

See the photos of her PETS™ characters on page 5!



Send in YOUR questions and let's see how other PETS™ users have resolved your predicament!



Remember ...

YOU can be a part of all this fun simply by ...

- using PETS™ in your classroom
- reading this newsletter
- giving us feedback:
  - What else would you like to see here?
  - Sending us your email address if you want to be notified directly when each new *Clarion* issue is posted on the POL website.
- sharing your ideas!!! To recognize your support of colleagues-in-need:
  - POL is offering a **free literature guide of your choice** (by N. Polette) to anyone whose ideas are used in **Brief Bytes**.
  - POL is offering a **\$20 gift certificate** for ideas used **In the Spotlight**.

Well ... what are you waiting for ... ???



## What Might This Be?

(From *PETS™* the Red Book — pp. 72–77)

When a small group of six students start to brainstorm together, chaos often reigns. In order to maintain some semblance of control so I can keep up with my diagnostic notes, I began using these role cards. Giving everybody a “job” has worked wonderfully! Not only does each student have something to hold on to, but this also enables the students to focus more productively on the activity. At the end of each turn, the cards and their respective responsibilities rotate to the right so that everyone gets a chance to do each job.

I also discovered that the hot seat of being the Brainstormer often tends to turn many an agile mind to mush. At the same time, every other person at the table has at least a thousand ideas and hands are flapping frantically in bids for attention. As I need an opportunity to observe individual work for diagnostic purposes, I still start each turn with one brainstormer. However, whenever that person feels completely stymied, s/he can announce, “Group!” and then call on any of the others. We continue to count out beans for every idea, which turns the focus towards a group product from a more competitive individual one (while I still have my notes on each individual child from the beginning of the turn).

With each round, the students try to “beat” their best group score. Ultimately, we tally their ideas for the whole session which just wows them! They’re amazed by how many ideas they could generate and leave feeling very successful.

Contributed by Dodie Merritt

The **Brainstormer** tells the Timer when to turn the timer and starts the brainstorming.

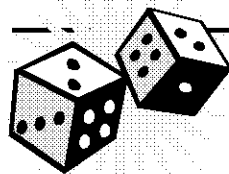
The **Counter** takes out a bean for each new idea. We tend to be more inclusive than exclusive of ideas.

The **Timer** is in charge of the timer. Only when signaled by the Brainstormer can the Timer start timing.

The **Manager** makes sure that all is in order for a round to begin.

The **Checker** makes sure that the Counter doesn’t forget to take out a bean for each idea.

If another job is needed, the **Cheerleader** is responsible for encouraging the group to come up with more ideas!



## Spin-Out!

Instead of having a spinner on the board, I use 2 dice. One die is rolled to tell the number of spaces to move and the other die is used to tell what shape to talk about. The shape circle on the game board is numbered from 1 to 6 using a red sharpie pen and the die that corresponds to the shape number has a red dot on each side. Now students are rolling 2 dice instead of a die and a spinner. For example, a student rolls a 5 and a 4 with a red dot. The student moves 5 spaces forward and has to use the shape of the oval to play her turn.

Contributed by Janet Piehl

# The Manager

Is everything under control?  
Are we ready to start?

# The Brainstormer

How many things are  
that shape in that place?

# The Checker

Watch the Counter.  
Is it the right number of beans?

# The Counter

Count one bean for each idea.

# The Cheerleader

Good idea!  
More ideas! Keep going!

# The Timer

Take care of the timer.  
Time's up!



PETS™  
characters



Created  
by  
Carolyn Lang  
from  
Folkmanis  
puppets  
and  
a stuffed  
animal.

