

Learning about “Penguins of the Arctic”
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In my first grade classroom we start our study of the Iditarod in January, learning first about Antarctica as part of a polar regions study. While this may seem strange, I have found that the in-depth study of Antarctica gives students a foundation about the cold weather that is common to both polar regions. When we transition into our study of the arctic, the students learn about similarities and differences between the two regions.

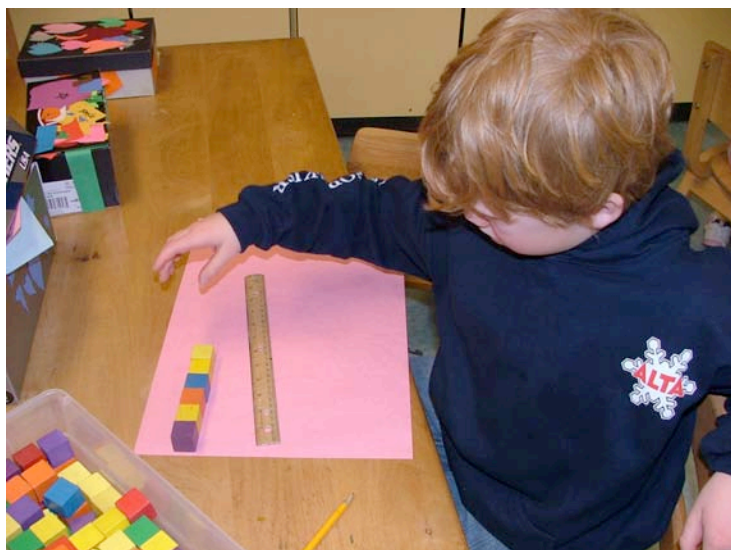


Colorful little auk cutouts.

Since my students are so interested in wildlife and loved learning about penguins, my intern teacher decided to teach them about the little auk, a bird known as “the penguin of the arctic.” Since the students had learned about animal adaptations, they were curious about why the little auk can fly when the penguin cannot. We used this as a starting point for our lesson.

Using the and the Planet Earth DVD, we showed the children videos of the Little Auk, asking them to think about the similarities and difference between the auks and penguins. The children discovered that for penguins in Antarctica, the only predator is the seal. For the auks, they found many predators that hunt on the land. This was the reason the auks maintained the wing structure to fly. (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/l/littleauk>)

Once the children had the background about little auks, we made life-size versions of the auk. Using rulers or inch cubes and colorful paper, the children made two 6 by 3 inch rectangles that they cut into wings. Using the extra paper, the students measured a 2 by 4 inch rectangle that became an oval for the auk’s body. They glued together their bird on a separate sheet of paper and then decorated the background.



Measuring little auk wings.

Now that my students are familiar with measuring using rulers, we will use this skill for making sleds, measuring a gangline and making life-size Iditarod dogs!