

## Teacher Commentary Transcript

J = Joanne Durham, Literacy Consultant; A= Apryl Whitman, Meadowfield Elementary School, Columbia, SC

### PRIOR TO THE LESSON

J: First, just tell us a little about your class.

A: We are a wonderful bunch of 20 first graders, very energetic and excited 6 and 7 year olds. It's a vast variety of learners.

J: And it's February now.

What's sort of the range of levels that you have in here?

A: We just finished our Fountas and Pinnell benchmark testing so I was able to see that currently a lot of children are on grade level, where they weren't on grade level when they first came in, which is fantastic growth.

J: And they're reading at about what levels?

A: Right now, about an F or G. And then I have the end of the bell curve so I have some who are reading at second grade level, and then I have some who we're still working to bring them up to first grade reading level.

J: So then what did you do to introduce this topic about the water to motivate the kids to get into it?

A: There were 2 things, one I couldn't control and one I could. One was unfortunately the flood that we had here in Columbia in October. It sparked some conversation with the children and educators in the building that I was working with. So that started some questions about what happened to our water, why couldn't we drink our water. I saved a bottle of brown water that they saw in the last lesson and that sparked a lot of their personal interest that they brought up on their own. Then here at Meadowfield we are a Padeia school, so we work on building children into a global society, democratic learners, a lot of philanthropy, and doing for others, and so the students along with the teachers came up with a project to help a third world country to help a particular village in that country to get a well, so they would have clean drinking water. So we viewed a lot of videos, had a lot of discussions about how not everyone has water that comes from the sink, but they have to go get it. We were able to watch videos of children actually having to go the well and do that work. So it made it real for them. So those 2 things put together – the flood and the project, navigated where we are today.

So now we're on the educational piece of where does that water come from, how do we keep it clean, what are we going to do about it. So bringing in that science content along with it.

J: So the big question for this whole unit, is what?

A: How can we keep our drinking water clean. How can we prevent the water pollution. So they're going to come up with those ways and then educate others in the school and in the community about those ways that they come up with. So that's our end goal, our end result. J: OK. So first obviously you have to learn what water pollution is, and how the water gets polluted

A: and where it comes from.

J: Right. And you're thinking ahead

A: They're already starting it, which is absolutely awesome. They're leading themselves in that direction without a lot of prompting from me.

J: Just talk a little about some of the actual – like last week what they did, some of the things they did to begin the study.

A: After all with the flood, I just did a basic, how do you use water in your house kind of thing, a basic awareness of what water is, because I know we tend to take it for granted, so made a conscious effort to say OK, these are the ways we use water. Then we went into some lessons about where our water comes from, that we drink fresh water not salt water, with videos, texts, some technology activities where they had another QR scan that they had to do with our technology educator. They learned that our drinking water comes from natural resources, rivers and lakes and ponds and things like that.

Then we through some inferencing lesson they were able to see that water gets polluted and different ways it gets polluted. We've done some whole group work about the cycle of the pollution and how it affects everything. I've got the graphic web – this is the one we used from the beginning about how we use our water. That was different ways that they listed – at the very beginning – of how they used their water. I did a basic KWL, and as we were learning and going through our basic learning about water, they were able to add their learning to that as well.

J: And then they started to research how the water gets polluted.

A: Yes, how it gets polluted, and that in turn would lead to how do we prevent it. So today and throughout the week, we'll finish our rotations so that children have a chance to use different resources, and they will be able to finish their research on how it gets polluted. We've finished with where does our water come from and why is it important, now we're on the pollution and then we'll be on the prevention side of it.