

Butterflies Are Free

These colorful insects continue to amaze Saint George's students

Kathy Johnson releases the Painted Ladies on Graduation Lawn, then everyone wants to hold a butterfly before they fly away

I was hired to help develop science curriculum for the National Science Foundation in July of 1992. The Life Cycle of the Butterfly unit – that I have taught for the past eighteen years – was a result of the curriculum that I and other members of the National Science Foundation Institute helped design and test.

The Life Cycle of the Butterfly unit was designed for second-to-third grade instruction. However, I felt that with slight modification I could successfully use it with my Kindergartners.

For me, the metamorphosis of a butterfly never ceases to amaze me! I am just as excited as the Kindergartners when they observe the formation of a chrysalis and watch a butterfly emerge from its chrysalis. And we share mixed emotions as we release the butterflies on the lawn by Graduation Bridge.

I purchase the tiny caterpillars (about six days old) from Carolina Biological Supply Company in North Carolina. The excitement is contagious as we wait for the caterpillars to arrive! When the caterpillars

arrive become a part of the “nursery.”

Through ongoing observation, the children witness and record the complete metamorphosis of the butterfly. The children learn about the molting process by molting themselves out of a sleeping bag. Once the caterpillar forms a “J” with a strong silk button, the children keep a close eye on the caterpillar to witness the final molt into a chrysalis. With much care, each chrysalis is removed from the plastic “home” container and placed in a flight cage.

The emergence of a butterfly takes about nine seconds. It is this final stage that is awe-inspiring — not only to the children, but to all the teachers and older students who come running when the words “it’s emerging” filters through the hallway. It is a teachable moment that lives with the child forever.

The most frequent response my seniors (that I had as Kindergartners) give when asked what they remember about Kindergarten is the butterfly unit. Even as my former students go forth into the world and come back to visit, they inquire, “Are you still



arrive the week after spring break, the students make a “home” for each caterpillar — a small plastic container with food. This year, we had 66 caterpillars, but I have had as many as 102 arrive. Each child gets to have two caterpillars to observe and let crawl up and down their arm! The rest of the cater-

pillars become a part of the “nursery.”

So if you are out on campus in early May, you may find a Painted Lady butterfly that was tenderly nurtured by a Kindergarten teacher. The joy of learning at its best!

– Kathy Johnson, Kindergarten Teacher



**Watching Science
Take Wing**

**“The metamorphosis of a butterfly
never ceases to amaze me!”**

**— Kathy Johnson,
Kindergarten
Teacher**