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Children and Writing: A Handbook of Effective Writing Practices for a First Grade Classroom

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CHILDREN AND WRITING
A HANDBOOK OF EFFECTIVE WRITING PRACTICES
FOR A FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM

by

Julie M. Lang

April, 1997

A handbook has been developed to aid in the design of a first grade writing program and/or to be used as a supplement to any existing first grade writing curriculum. The handbook consists of four main content areas of discussion regarding current strategies used in a first grade writing curriculum: Writer's Workshop, journals, partner writing, and parent involvement. Each section consists of a brief definition of the term and five distinctive lesson plans implementing the aforementioned category. Current literature and research regarding the topic of children's development in writing were explored.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Project.....	2
Significance of the Project.....	2
Limitation of the Project.....	2
Definition of Terms.....	3
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	5
Introduction.....	5
Writing in General.....	5
Characteristics of Effective Writing Programs.....	7
Writer's Workshop.....	8
Journals.....	9
Partner Writing.....	11
Parent Involvement.....	12
Summary.....	14
CHAPTER 3: PROCEDURES.....	15
CHAPTER 4: THE PROJECT.....	17
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	18
Summary.....	18

Conclusions.....	18
Recommendations.....	19
REFERENCES.....	20
APPENDIX.....	22

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

Educators realize that young children learn to write by writing (Beers & Beers, 1981; Goodman & Goodman, 1978; Graves, 1978.) Therefore, providing the necessary writing time is of the utmost importance. Graves (1996) suggests that students be permitted to write at least four times a week. Without this consistency children never quite get the rhythm and style of writing. As Holbrook (1984) states, "any writing program is more likely to be successful if students are given ample opportunity to write" (p.1).

Statement of the Problem

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement conducted a study in 1993 and found that "many schools are unable to give children sufficient instruction in writing" (p.1). The study concluded that many of America's children were becoming more and more frustrated and disgruntled with writing as they continued in their education.

Sharing the same concern is Graves (1996) who states that,

We rarely evaluate our programs to be sure they encourage all children to write and propel the lifetime writers--kids who will always love to write and need to write--to practice their craft. But we must, because if children do not see themselves as writers, chances are they won't use writing in their adult lives to help them to think, to clarify matters for themselves, to rediscover a sunset, to write letters to the editor, or to convince their bosses that a proposal is worth consideration. (p. 26)

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to develop a handbook of effective writing activities to be used in a first grade classroom. The project will focus on the following four writing practices: Writer's Workshop, Journals, Partner Writing, and Parental Involvement outside the classroom with the use of a Family Writing Backpack. This project also reviewed the literature and research available regarding writing and found these four areas to be documented as effective writing practices. The lessons and ideas generated from the project can serve as models for further materials constructed by the author or readers of the text.

Significance of the Project

In doing this project the author hopes to design a writing program which allows all first grade students to feel successful at writing. By creating a risk-free learning atmosphere filled with various opportunities to experiment with writing, the author hopes to see a significant personal growth in each students writing abilities.

Limitations of the Project

The lessons of this project were developed with the author's intention of being used with Hilton Elementary (Zillah, WA) first grade students. Some adaptation is necessary for use with older or younger students. The focus of the project is on the area of writing instruction. However some of the lessons could cross over into other areas of a first grade curriculum.

Definition of Terms

In order to better understand the purpose of the study, the following terms are defined:

Writer's Workshop: a structured period of time set aside daily, where students are encouraged to show their own literary expressions. It most often begins with a whole-group mini-lesson, followed by independent writing practice by the individual students, and concluded with shared reading at the Author's Chair.

Mini-Lesson: "The teacher models a whole group lesson on a skill or some aspect of the writing process to reinforce or introduce a learning" (Paulson, 1996, p. 36).

Author's Chair: A special chair placed in the room. The students gather around it at the end of Writer's Workshop and take turns sharing their stories with one another. Questions and comments are permitted from the audience.

Learning Logs: A notebook kept by the individual student that contains the student's written thoughts regarding the learning process. It can be applied in all areas of the curriculum.

Family Writing Backpack: A literal backpack that is filled with various art and writing supplies, (e.g. paper, pencils, markers, scissors, crayons, etc.). It is taken home each week by a different individual student. The student works with various members of his or her family to write a story which is then shared with the class upon its completion.

Partner Writing: A sharing of the writing process and experience with peer partners. This technique can also be applied with multi-grade levels. For example a first grade student could be paired with a fifth grade student (Bajjtelsmit & Naab, 1994).

Overview of the Remainder of the Project

Chapter Two is a review of the current literature available regarding the instruction and application of various writing techniques within an elementary classroom. It provides essential information that aided in the development of the

project. Chapter Three introduces the procedures undertaken and elaborates on how the project is organized. Chapter Four consists of the project itself. It contains a listing of previously known to be effective writing strategies, as well as recommendations on how to best implement them in a first grade classroom. Chapter Five is a summary of the project by the author. Personal recommendations regarding the projects use in the classroom are represented here.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The focus of this project is to design a handbook of effective writing practices for a first grade classroom. In order to support this project a review of the literature in the following six areas was conducted. I began by looking at the topic of writing in general. What is writing? I then focused my attention on some of the characteristics that contribute to the make-up of effective writing programs. What traits are shown to be effective time and time again? Lastly, I looked at four of the more commonly used practices in teaching writing: Writer's Workshop, Journals, Partner Writing, and Parental Involvement. How are they used in and out of the classroom and are they successful at getting children to write?

Writing in General

"Writing is a natural language event in which transferring meaning is the purpose" (Tyler, 1994, p. 7). It is practical, job related, stimulating, social, and therapeutic (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). Further, writing is more than just the physical act of transcribing words onto paper. "It's the final stage in the complex process of communicating that begins with "thinking" (U.S. Department of Education, 1993, p. 1). Hudelson (1989) states that early on children learn to make sense of language. They form opinions and make predictions about how language works. These ideas are displayed in each individual child's writing, evidence that every child's approach to writing is different. As the child's view of language grows and changes, so too does the child's literary style. This change can largely be affected by the classroom environment, as well as a student's own cultural diversity. As children

continue to develop as writers they use writing to carry out activities that are meaningful to them (Hudelson, 1989).

The actual process of learning how to write starts early on in life; in fact it begins during infancy (Maehr, 1989). Maehr (1989) states that, "the positive oral and written language experiences children have at home, day care, preschool, and kindergarten contribute to the developing capacity to communicate in writing" (p. 2). Children often will begin their writing careers with simple pictures. Calkin's study (cited in Manning, Manning, & Morrison, 1995) found that many young children write before or after they draw, as a way to rehearse what they will write. A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in 1993 revealed that parents who encouraged their children to communicate through drawings aided in their development on written language. Furthermore researchers suggested that parents ask questions which would encourage their children to continue in the writing process. Calkin (1986) has found similar results and states, "the act of drawing and the picture itself both provide a supportive scaffolding within which the piece of writing can be constructed" (p. 50).

Maehr (1989) noted that most children were not being encouraged to write until after they had become readers and masters in the mechanics of the English language. However, Maehr went on to report that,

Recent studies in emergent literacy, the early stages of learning to write and read, have shown that young children compose before they know much about the conventions of writing and reading or have the skill to control the formation of letters. (p. 3)

Most experts feel that the growth and development of writing is not a result of teacher instruction, but rather developed through the child's own personal experiences with writing (Tyler, 1989). Bunce-Crim (1991) notes reading and writing are

connected skills. In his words "children who read become better writers; viewing themselves as writers, they begin to read as authors" (p. 38).

Characteristics of Effective Writing Programs

There are a number of contributing factors that appear to aid in the development of children's writing skills. First, "Educators recognize that young children learn to write by writing" (Tyler, 1994, p. 2). Therefore the more opportunities that children have to practice the art of writing the greater chance they have at becoming successful (Holbrook, 1984; Tyler, 1994).

Secondly, create an environment where the student feels secure enough to take risks. "The environment should be structured so that writing efforts produce positive reinforcement" (Tyler, 1994, p. 2). Tyler (1994) further goes on to elaborate that, "a supportive atmosphere is a conducive learning environment in which a child can experiment with written language" (p. 3).

Third, set up some sort of writing routine, such as a daily writer's workshop. This appears to promote continuity in the writing process and allows the student to think and plan ahead if necessary (Bunce-Crim, 1991). "When children write only a couple times a week, in effect they are writing as if they are starting on a blank page" (Graves, 1996, p. 34). Phenix (1990) adds that,

Each writing experience should teach something that can be used next time...students should be able to think and operate as writers. The more they understand the process of writing, and how it can work for them, the better their future products will be. (pp.94-95)

Fourth, model the writing process for your students. Graves (1996) states that modeling writing for your students is an effective tool for creating lifelong writers. "When you write with students, they not only understand why people write, but they use the skills you demonstrate in their own writing" (Graves, 1996, p. 27).

Lastly, provide the students with positive feedback and encourage them to take chances in their writing (Maehr, 1989). "When adults respond positively to all efforts at written language, children learn that their decision to take a risk with writing was worthwhile" (Maehr, 1989, p. 2).

Writer's Workshop

"The term "writer's workshop" refers to an environment conceived to encourage written expression" (Bunce-Crim, 1991, p. 36). A particular time is most often set aside on a daily basis in which to conduct this routine. Writing flourishes best in a predictable atmosphere (Graves, 1996). Graves (1996) goes on to say that nothing can take the place of writing everyday to establish classroom structure.

A description of the classroom atmosphere during writer's workshop is given in the following statement by Bunce-Crim (1991): "In a workshop atmosphere, people share what they do. Participants become teachers; teachers become participants. This give-and-take structure promotes independence and interdependence" (p. 37). In writer's workshop the students are earnestly involved in the learning process. "If students are to become writers, they must be active participants in the writing process, conversing with each other, raising questions, making decisions, and evaluating themselves" (Bunce-Crim, 1991, p. 38).

There are a number of tools which together help make writer's workshop functional. Miscellaneous types of paper, writing utensils, scissors, tape, glue, date stamp, folders, and paper clips are just a few. These tools should be located at an easily accessible place within the classroom so as to allow free access for the students at any time during the day.

In writer's workshop the emphasis is on the writing process as a whole, which includes prewriting, drafting, and revising (Holbrook, 1984). "All lessons focus on the process of writing, and each child may be at a different point in the writing process at

any given time" (Baker, 1994, p. 372). The teacher serves as a model for writing. Teachers must show themselves as a writer and share their writing with their students, only then can they truly experience and understand that which they ask of their students (Bunce-Crim, 1991).

A portion of writer's workshop is set aside for students to share their work. This is often done with the student sitting in the "Author's Chair", simply a chair set aside for such sharing purposes. "Allowing children to read their work from an author's chair demonstrates their messages can be received and appreciated by others" (Tyler, 1994, p. 3). Tyler (1994) later goes on to state that, "reading the product aloud to self and others provides a sense of ownership" (p. 6). Listening to one's peers speak about their writing can also aid in the sharing of ideas and help to encourage risk taking (Tyler, 1994).

Journals

There are a number of different writing journals that a educator can apply in her classroom. Dialogue journals, literature response journals, and learning logs are just a few of those being used. "A dialogue journal is, ordinarily, a journal in which student and teacher write back and forth to each other" (Weaver, 1994, p. 98). Not only does this allow the teacher and student to carry on a private conversation, but it also promotes practice in the area of writing. Furthermore, Duffy's study (cited in Manning, Manning, & Morrison, 1995) found that a major advantage of dialogue journals with young children is that they provided a permanent record of the student's writing. Gayle Morrison used the idea of Dialogue journals to involve the parents of her students in their writing development. She had her students write weekly letters home to their parents, regarding various events that had taken place in school that week. These letters were kept in a three-ring binder that they referred to as their "newsbook". The parents of these children were encouraged to read and respond to

their child's writing. Not only did this provide incentive and a purpose for the child to write, but it also allowed the parents to share in their child's development as a writer. Furthermore this provided an opportunity for the parent to become a role model for their child's writing.

A comprehensive description addressing the importance of dialogue journals as concluded by Burke appears below (quoted in Tyler, 1994).

Written conversation is a way to entice students into writing. The teacher and the child take their turn writing responses to one another and read the responses aloud as the production occurs. Written conversation is an activity which gives the writer a purpose and audience for writing. It can serve as a strong motivational activity for reluctant writers. Short conversations that are familiar and of interest to the child will make writing seem almost impossible to avoid.(p. 9)

Literature response journals deal primarily with an assigned piece of literature. When students have completed their assigned reading, they then respond to what they have read in a journal. The focus of their responses can go two different directions. It may be their own personal feelings or thoughts about the literature, or sometimes it may simply be a reply to a question asked by the teacher. Most often these journals become springboards from which in depth literary discussions can take place.

Learning logs are merely diaries or journals in which students place written responses to any given subject, such as math or science (Weaver, 1994). These journals can be used as a form of debriefing. Simply put, the student can write down in his/her journal what things he/she felt were being emphasized in the learning process during the hour, day, or week depending on how the teacher wishes for them to be used.

Partner Writing

"Children are great motivators for other children and a cross-age literacy program makes becoming literate a friendly, natural process as children work together" (DeRita, Weaver, & Station, 1991, p. 248). DeRita, et al. further stated that cross-age literary programs have been shown to benefit children of all ages. Partner writing can be done between peers or with multi-age students. Having students work with one another in either situation can be a powerful tool. Morrow (cited in Tyler, 1994) found that children learn about the writing process by observing and participating in literacy events involving students of more skilled ability.

When children work with one another competition is not an issue, but rather can serve as an opening for children to support one another's efforts (Tyler, 1994). Writing can be used as an act of unity. Children who work together have a shared purpose and have to find ways to work through differences that might arise (MacGillivray, 1994).

Those involved in a cross-age literary program found that participating children grew in the areas of creative expression, editing, spelling, as well as showing an increase in personal social skills and self-esteem (DeRita, et al., 1991).

Bajtelsmit and Naab (1994) observed a first and fifth grade partner writing experience. They had the following favorable comments to say about it,

With writing being modeled in such a personal way, first graders soon began transferring some of the mechanics demonstrated into their own written work. This move toward independent writing empowered the first graders, while the fifth graders gained a greater understanding of story framework, sense of audience and a purpose for writing. (p. 93)

Parental Involvement

Getting parents involved in the education of their children is one of this country's national educational goals (Wilcox, 1995). Wilcox further states that many parents are unaware of the degree of influence they actually have on the success of their child's education. "Parents do not have to be published writers to be good models" (Wilcox, p. 1) Parents who allow their child "the opportunity to observe first hand the value of reading and writing" are found to be greater prepared for the literary experience they will encounter in school. (Dumas & Aldridge, 1995, p. 78) In 1993 the U.S. Department of Education Office of Education Research and Improvement confirmed the importance of Parental Involvement by creating and making available to the public a handbook designed for parents who wished to help their children in the area of writing. The handbook advised parents to encourage their young children to begin the writing process by creating stories through pictures. The study further listed the following suggestions for parents to consider when working with their child in writing: Help in the clarification of past personal events the child may wish to write about. Provide sufficient time for the child to write. Have your child read, it may stimulate her to write about a related topic. Assign a writing task that provides real-life meaning for the child. Practice, practice, and more practice. Teach your child how to revise and allow time for practice. Provide a special place for your child to write and supply the necessary materials. Respond to your child's writing both verbally and in writing. Praise your child often.

Parents serve as excellent role models for writing (Reife, 1995). Reife (1995) further states that a parent's role is to be a supporter and encourage of their child's writing. Such support serves to enhance a child's self-confidence in her writing which is the key ingredient in writing success. In addition, a parent should aid in the distribution of their child's writing to larger audiences, such as local papers or

children's publications. "The most confidence boosting activity related to kids' writing is seeing their names in print" (Reife, p. 14).

Linda Ryan a third grade teacher in Prescott, Arizona designed an effective tool for involving parents in their child's writing development. It's called the Family Writing Backpack. It is a literal backpack filled with all the necessary writing materials needed to produce a story. Ryan (1993) states,

The goal of this activity is for each family member to contribute to an original piece of writing by sharing ideas, illustrations, and writings. This has proven to be one of the most enjoyable and valuable activities for my students and their families. The backpack is supplied with an assortment of materials for each family to use and is sent home on a weekly basis. (p. 8)

Ryan goes on to report that the finished product can be celebrated in the classroom in a variety of ways, either by the student him or herself, or with the assistance of one or more family members. Furthermore, the student is encouraged to explain how the decision of the topic was reached and how his or her family went about completing the writing process.

The Bee Meadow School in Hanover, New Jersey developed a partnership with students and parents in the writing process when they established the district's first publishing center for children's writing. The school "envisioned it as a vehicle through which students would become authors, illustrators, editors, and publishers of their own writing, and as a way to involve students, teachers, and parents in the cooperative process of book publishing" (Williams & Bellomo, 1995, p. 26). What the school discovered was that not only was this a successful venture which produced, "more parent volunteers than any other project had...there was never a lack of stories to be published; in its first three years of operation, the Busy Bee Press had published well over 3000 books in a school with a student population of 300" (p. 27). Last and perhaps the most significant part of this partnership was how it helped to excite,

encourage, and substantiate the parents' role in helping their children become readers and writers.

Summary

Writing is what helps us to communicate our ideas, feelings, needs, wants, and thoughts. An effective writing program shares the following conditions: children have the opportunity to practice writing often; they feel secure in taking risks; writing takes place routinely so as to provide the student with time for planning as well as to enhance continuity; the teacher actively models the writing process, and responds positively to the student's efforts to write.

Writer's workshop is an environment which essentially fosters the above mentioned characteristics. Journals are a way for the student to practice his/her writing through direct communication, and modeling from the teacher. Partner writing promotes peer and multi-age modeling for the student. Lastly, parental involvement in the writing process helps to further build on what skills are formed and established at school.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCEDURES

The author first became interested in the topic of children and writing after attending a two day workshop sponsored by the Washington Bureau of Education and Research in Seattle, Washington. A review of current research available regarding the topic of children's development in writing was conducted at both Central Washington and Boise State University Libraries and was combined with information gathered from the Bureau workshop, as well as personal teaching experience with emergent writers as a first grade teacher. Lesson plans and mini lessons cited in the project were designed to emphasize writing as a developmental process which occurs over time with frequent experimentation with written language on the part of the student.

The author developed a handbook which is organized into the following sections:

1. Writer's Workshop
2. Journals
3. Partner Writing
4. Parental Involvement

The author produced a sampling of five lesson plans for each section of the project. It is the author's intention to generate creativity for future lessons on the part of the author or others.

Each lesson plan or mini lesson contains the following items:

1. Lesson objective
2. A brief introduction
3. A list of materials needed to complete the task assigned.

4. An outline of how instruction should take place.

The author utilized research and personal experience as a first grade teacher to create the lesson plans appropriate for teaching young children how to develop as writers. The lesson plans referenced in the handbook were chosen on the basis of the author's understanding of student need, interest level, and developmental status.

The lesson plans created for the handbook are located in Chapter Four and recommendations for their implementation are found in Chapter Five of the Project.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROJECT

The author using research and personal experiences developed a handbook of effective writing practices to be used in a first grade classroom. The handbook consists of four main components in the area of writing which are as follows: Writer's Workshop, Journals, Partner Writing, and Parental Involvement. Five lessons plans were written in each of the previously mentioned content areas. The completed handbook can be found in Appendix A.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Children learn to write by writing. Writing is a constructive and highly effective means of communication. As educators we need to teach writing skills and to provide time daily for our students to practice writing. The project was developed with the intent that it would assist first grade teachers in the content area of writing. After a considerable amount of research was conducted in the area of children and their development as writers, the author found that there were four notable areas of interest that kept reappearing as effective means for teaching writing. These four areas are as follows: Writer's Workshop, Journals, Partner Writing, and Parental Involvement. Further research regarding each of the aforementioned content areas were reviewed and subsequently five lesson plans for each topic were developed.

Conclusions

The lesson plans selected to represent each of the previously mentioned content areas were chosen based on their seemingly effective use in teaching writing. Although scientific data were not available to substantiate and/or reflect the degree to which each technique could be called effective, documentation of testimonials and/or recommendations from classroom teachers regarding these teaching strategies were discovered. In addition, the author's personal experience as a first grade teacher played an important role in determining which lesson plans were to be chosen.

After the completion of the final project the author was able to attend a Bureau of Educational Research Conference in Bellevue, Washington. The topic of the

Conference dealt with the acquisition of reading and writing in a kindergarten and/or first grade classroom. The speaker was a teacher who had the opportunity to teach in New Zealand for one year under the supervision of a Master Teacher. New Zealand is one of the world's top three most literate countries. Attending this particular conference helped the author to reaffirm the effectiveness of many of the activities currently present in the project. In addition, the author learned about many new teaching techniques that would complement her existing project.

Recommendations

The lesson plans in the project were designed with Zillah School District (WA) first grade students in mind and may not be appropriate for other grades. However, it is the author's intent that the lessons should be adaptable to other grades, as well as to serve as models for any additional lessons to be fabricated by the author or any others.

It is the intent of the author that the first three lesson plans found in the area of Writer's Workshop be used in succession with one another in order to create a healthy classroom environment for writing, as well as to construct a good foundation for future classroom management. With the exception of these few, all other lessons may stand on their own merits and be taught according to teacher need or preference.

It is the recommendation of the author that Writer's Workshop be done on a daily basis. This not only guarantees the student daily writing practice, but also allows the student to become comfortable with the writing process.

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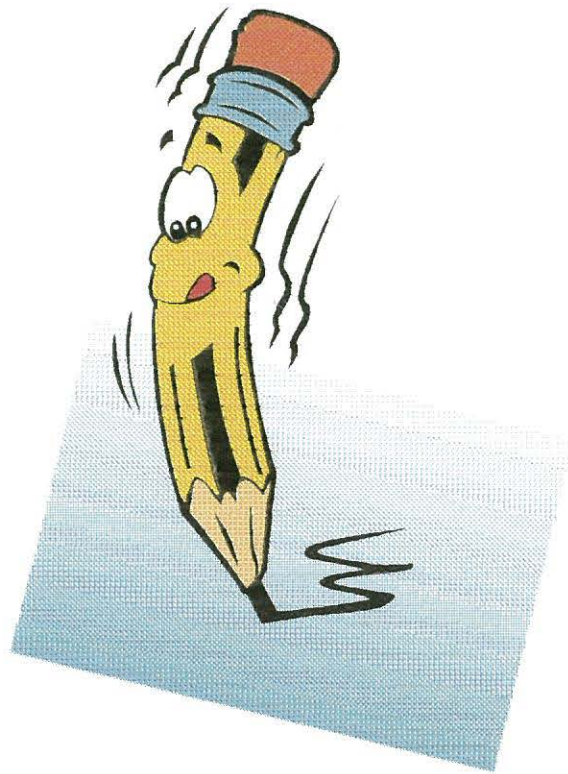
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APPENDIX A

Children and Writing

A Handbook of Effective Writing Practices
For a First Grade Classroom



by
Julie M. Lang

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Writer's Workshop.....	1
Lesson #1: Rules and Procedures.....	2
Lesson #2: Mini-Lesson - Labeling.....	4
Lesson #3: Mini-Lesson - Finger Spacing.....	6
Lesson #4: Mini-Lesson - Publishing.....	8
Lesson #5: Author's Chair.....	11
Journals.....	13
Lesson #1: Weekend Journals.....	14
Lesson #2: Learning Logs.....	16
Lesson #3: Dialogue Journals.....	18
Lesson #4: Literary Response Journals.....	20
Lesson #5: Thematic Journals - Plants.....	23
Partner Writing.....	26
Lesson #1: Stories in a Box.....	27
Lesson #2: Question of the Day.....	29
Lesson #3: Frame by Frame.....	31
Lesson #4: Shrinking Stories.....	33
Lesson #5: Shared Writing Across the Grades.....	35
Parental Involvement.....	37
Lesson #1: Family Writing Backpack.....	38

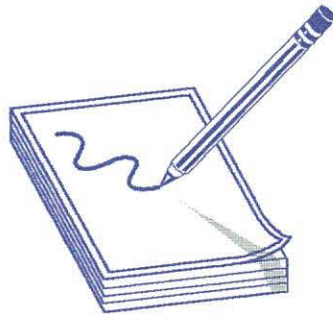
Lesson #2: Critter Zoo.....42
Lesson #3: Family Book Review.....44
Lesson #4: Family Acrostics.....47
Lesson #5: Newsbook.....49

Writer's Workshop

Writer's Workshop is a structured period of time set aside daily, where students are encouraged to show their own literary expressions. It most often begins with a whole-group mini-lesson, followed by independent writing practice by the individual students, and concluded with shared reading at the Author's Chair.

Mini-Lessons -

- Writing Folders



Publishing -

- Author's Chair

Writer's Workshop Lesson #1

Rules and Procedures

Objective:

To acquaint the student with the rules and procedures associated with Writer's workshop.

Materials:

- date stamp
- writing folder
- various examples of writing paper
- storage crate with hanging folders
- timer

Introduction:

The tools listed under materials are essential to the everyday routine of Writer's Workshop.

Procedures:

1. Gather the students together on the floor, saying that it is time for Writer's Workshop.
2. Tell them that Writer's Workshop is a time set aside everyday for them to practice their writing.
3. Show them their writing folders. Explain that this is where they will keep their stories that they are working on. Point

out that the alphabet strip on the front of the folder can be used as a tool for their writing. It can help them when they are unsure how to form a letter correctly.

4. Explain to the students that as beginning writers they might use a picture to tell their story. Show the students various types of paper that they may choose from to use in their writing.
5. Show the students the date stamp. Explain that when they finish with a story they need to stamp the date of completion on the front of their paper before starting a new one.
6. Show the students the storage crate with hanging folders. Point out to the students that each of them has a hanging folder with their name on it. Explain to them that this is where they will store their finished stories after they have date stamped them.
7. Tell the students that it is time for us to begin our first writing time. Show them the timer. Tell them that it is important when we begin writing that everyone has time to think and write on their own. Tell them that you will set the timer for five minutes. During this five minutes there is to be no talking.

Writer's Workshop Lesson #2

Mini-Lesson (Topic-Labeling)

Objective:

To instruct the students on the components of labeling their picture stories.

Materials:

- whiteboard or chalkboard
- various writing utensils

Introduction:

Mini-lessons are three to five minute lessons given to the whole group and cover a variety of topics necessary for growth in the area of writing. Examples of some topics are as follows: labeling, punctuation, capitalization, authors, illustrators, types of stories, etc.

Procedures:

1. Gather the students together on the floor, saying that it is time for Writer's Workshop.
2. Tell them that there are four steps in the writing process. First you begin by thinking of many different things that you could write about. The teacher models this by thinking aloud various topics that she could write about.

3. Tell the students that the second thing they must do is choose which of these topics they would like to write about. The teacher models this by choosing one of her own topics.

4. Tell the students that now is the time to tell about their story through drawings. The teacher models this procedure by drawing on the chalkboard as she tells her story.
5. When the story and drawings are complete, it is now time to label the picture. Tell the students that you are going to write the name of the objects beside them in the picture. The teacher proceeds to model this technique on the chalkboard. Labeling the objects in her picture slowly and aloud, being careful to spell the words phonetically and not necessarily correctly. The teacher may encourage the students to participate in choosing which letters are needed to represent the sounds heard when saying each word.
6. Review the steps to writing with the children. Think, choose, draw, and label. Send the children back to their desk to begin practicing the writing process independently. Remind them that the first five minutes of writing is always done without talking. Set the timer and let them begin.

Writer's Workshop Lesson #3

Mini-Lesson (Topic-finger spacing between words)

Objective:

To instruct the students in the technique of placing "finger" spaces between words.

Materials:

- whiteboard or chalkboard
- various writing utensils

Introduction:

Mini-lessons are three to five minute lessons given to the whole group and cover a variety of topics necessary for growth in the area of writing. The topic of "finger" spacing is fundamental for children when transferring from a continuous string of letters to traditional sentence structure.

Procedures:

1. Gather the students together on the floor, saying that it is time for Writer's Workshop.
2. Tell them that today we are going to learn how to put "finger" spaces between our words. Begin by quickly going through the beginning steps of writing; think, choose, draw, and label.

3. Using the chalkboard, model for the students these writing steps. When you finish, state to the students that you wish to write two sentences about your picture. Explain that a sentence is a group of words that tell about something. Slowly and audibly write your sentences on the board.

Don't put any finger spaces in your first sentence. In your second sentence be careful to stop between each word and place a finger beside the word before going on to the next.
4. Ask the students if they can see a difference between the two sentences. Take answers from the students and respond accordingly. Stress to the students the importance of leaving spaces between words in order for the reader or audience of the text to best comprehend the author's intentions.
5. Have the students begin practicing this skill while working independently on their writing.

Writer's Workshop Lesson #4

Mini-Lesson (Topic-publishing)

Objective:

To instruct the students on components needed to be met before publishing can occur.

Materials:

- editing checklist (see p. 10)
- sample of writing

Introduction:

Mini-lessons are three to five minute lessons given to the whole group and cover a variety of topics necessary for growth in the area of writing. Publishing is a time for celebration of the students work. However, there are some requirements that must be met before publishing can occur. Keep in mind that not all work has to reach the publishing stage.

Procedures:

1. Gather the students together on the floor, saying that it is time for Writer's Workshop.
2. Tell them that today we are going to learn how to get our stories published. Explain to the students that publishing means taking the time to make some necessary corrections on our stories. If available, show the students an example

of a previous student's published work. Point out to the students the nicely typed print and attractive binding. Explain that this is just one of many ways that their stories could be published.

3. Restate to the students that publishing a story takes a commitment on their part to make some necessary changes in their stories. Explain that not all of their stories have to make it to the publishing stage, it's their choice.
4. Introduce the Editing Checklist (see form p. 10). Go over the steps of the checklist item by item, giving examples of each article. It might be advantageous to spread these steps out over a period of two or three days, so as not to overwhelm the students.



Read your story to yourself. Does it make sense? _____

Read your story to a friend. Do they think it makes sense? _____

Title: _____

Dedicated to: _____

What kind of story is it? Check one.

Narrative _____

Factual _____

Pattern _____

other _____

Check your story for the following items.

Did I capitalize "I" _____

Did I use punctuation _____

Did I capitalize the title _____

Did I capitalize important names _____

Did I spell the core words correctly _____

Writer's Workshop Lesson #5

Author's Chair

Objective:

To introduce the students to the activity of Author's Chair, sometimes referred to as Author's Share.

Materials:

- a special chair or stool designated as the Author's Chair

Introduction:

Author's Chair is a time for students to celebrate and share their accomplishments with their peers. It is also a time in which they can receive feedback in the form of compliments or constructive criticism.

Procedures:

1. Have the students bring their writing and gather together in front of the Author's Chair. Explain that this part of Writer's Workshop is set aside for them to share their writing with the whole class. Their classmates will be allowed to ask questions about their writing, as well as give compliments.
2. Explain how important it is to be respectful of one another's feeling and to be exceptionally good listeners. Take a

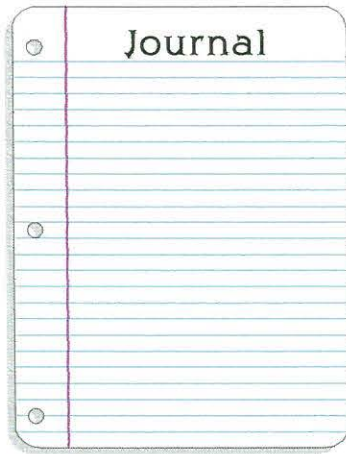
student volunteer who wishes to share their writing and have them sit in the Author's Chair while they read.

3. When the student has finished reading their story, allow them to ask for questions or compliments from the audience. Limiting the amount of questions to three is usually necessary for times sake.
4. In the beginning, the teacher might have to model various types of questions. The teacher can be a highly effective model when it comes to teaching valuable questioning techniques. In addition, the teacher serves as a buffer for any negative criticism that could occur.

Journals

There are a number of different writing journals that a teacher can apply in her classroom. Dialogue journals, literature response journals, and learning logs are just a few of those being used. In the following lesson plans I will demonstrate how to utilize five unique types of journals in the classroom.

Dialogue Journals



- Weekend Journals

Literary Response - Journals

Learning Logs -

- Thematic Journals

Journals Lesson #1

Weekend Journals

Objective:

The student will learn how to utilize a weekend journal.

Materials:

- a notebook for every child.
- a large piece of writing paper
- markers

Introduction:

Weekend Journals give the child a time where they are able to reflect back on events that happened to them over the weekend and write about them. It's any easy task for most students because the topic has already been determined. It also allows the child to look back over the course of the year to see their own personal growth as a writer.

Procedures:

1. Have the students gather in front of the chalkboard. Hang a large piece of writing paper on the board.
2. Ask the children to share some of the things that they did this weekend. Take some responses from the students and then share something of interest that you did this weekend.

3. Explain to the children that you are going to write down some the things that you did this weekend in your Weekend Journal. Model for the students using the large piece of writing paper and a marker. Be sure to say each word aloud as you write.

4. Explain to the students that each of them is going to keep a similar journal at their desk. Every Monday they will record their activities for the weekend in this journal.
5. Show the students how to place today's date at the corner of their journal page. Explain that this is important for keeping track of how they have grown as writers.

Journals Lesson #2

Learning Logs

Objective:

The student will learn how to utilize a learning log in conjunction with a given curriculum.

Materials:

- a notebook for every child.
- a large piece of writing paper
- marker

Introduction:

Learning logs are used with a variety of curricular subjects, such as math, science, social studies, etc. In these journals the student is often asked to respond to a particular question posed by the teacher. For example: Write in your journal how you would solve today's math problem of the day. Other times the topic of these journals are left up to the student. The teacher merely asks that the student to write about something that they have learned about today.

Procedures:

1. Have the students gather in front of the chalkboard. Hang a large piece of writing paper on the board. Tell the students that today they are going to be hearing about

Learning Logs. Ask the students to make guesses as to what they feel makes up a Learning Log.

2. Ask the students to share some of the things that they learned about today. Take some responses from the students. As the students respond, write down their answers on the large piece of paper.
3. Read back to the students the things that they have said. Explain to them that this kind of writing can be done daily in a notebook called a Learning Log.
4. Explain to the students that each of them is going to keep a similar Learning Log at their desk. Every afternoon they will record in their Learning Log something that they learned about today. Explain that some days you may give them a topic to write about, but most of the time it will be self-selected.
5. Show the students how to place today's date at the corner of their Learning Log page. Explain that this is important for keeping track of how they grow as writers.

Journals Lesson #3

Dialogue Journals

Objective:

The student will learn how to utilize a Dialogue Journal.

Materials:

- a notebook for every child.
- a large piece of writing paper
- a marker

Introduction:

Dialogue Journals are used as a written form of communication between teacher and student. In addition, they serve as an individualized modeling tool for the teacher to use with each student. Furthermore, it allows both the teacher and student to reflect back at his or her growth as a writer.

Procedures:

1. Have the students gather in front of the chalkboard. Hang a large piece of writing paper on the board. Tell the students that today they are going to be learning about Dialogue Journals. Ask the students to make guesses as to what they feel makes up a Dialogue Journal.
2. Tell the students that a Dialogue Journal is used like a telephone conversation between them and the teacher. In

this journal they may share anything that they wish the teacher to know. Once a week the teacher will collect their journals, read them and write a message back to them. Ask the students to name some of the things that they could write about in their Dialogue Journals. List these on the writing paper. Discuss why it might be important to have Dialogue Journals in school.

3. Explain to the students that each of them is going to keep a Dialogue Journal at their desk. They may write in these journals throughout the week, whenever time permits. Make sure that students understand that you will be responding only once a week.
4. In order to best manage the amount of time needed to respond to these journals, set a goal of answering five journals a night. Another management tip would be to color-code the journals and have a certain color turn in their journals on a certain day every week. For example, the red group would always turn in their journals on Monday, the blue group on Tuesday, the green group on Wednesday, and so on.

Journals Lesson #4

Literary Response Journals

Objective:

The student will learn how to utilize a Literary Response Journal as a supplemental tool of the regular Reading Curriculum.

Materials:

- a Literary Response Journal for each student
- overhead version of student journal page (see p. 22)
- an overhead marker
- any read aloud story

Introduction:

Literary Response Journals, also known as Reading Response Journals, are used as a supplemental tool with the regular Reading curriculum.

Procedures:

1. Read a story aloud to the class. Briefly discuss the story. Explain to the students that we are going to write down some of the information that we received from the story in what is called a Reading Response Journal.
2. Put the overhead version of the student's journal page on the screen (see p. 22). Take the students through the steps

on the page, item by item. Recording the information from the story previously read.

3. Tell the students that each of them will have their very own Reading Response Journal to keep at their desks. Every day the students will be responsible for reading a story of their choice on their own and recording the necessary information in their journals.

Reading Response Journal

Name of the Book _____

Author _____

How many pages were in this book? _____

Was this book:

A Holiday Book

A Just Right Book

A Challenge Book

Tell me something about this book:

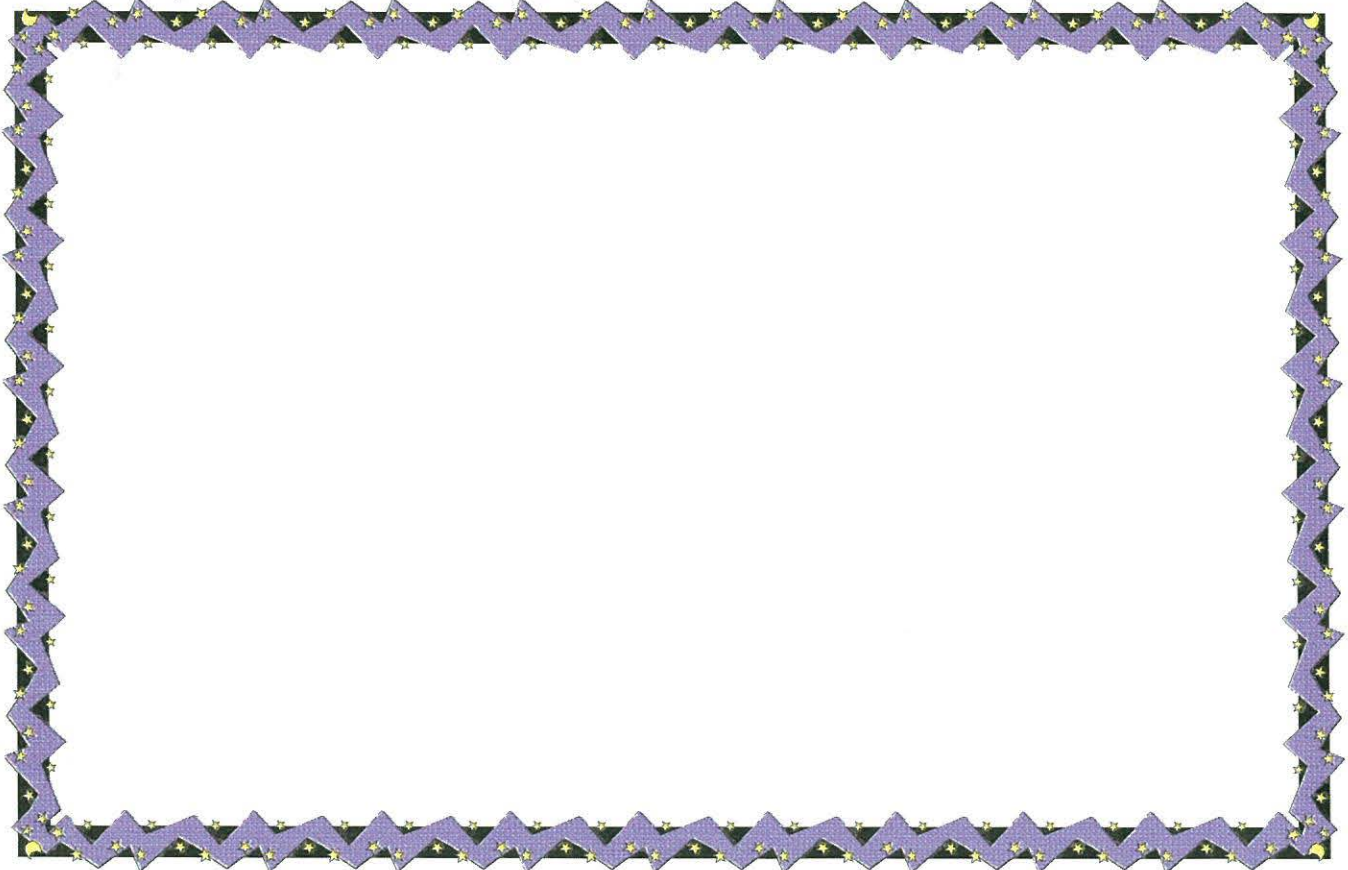
Narrative _____

Factual _____

Pattern _____

Other _____

Draw a picture from the story.



Journals Lesson #5

Thematic Journal (Topic - Plants)

Objective:

The student will learn how to utilize a Plant Journal as a recording tool for logging plant growth.

Materials:

- a Plant Journal for every student
- an overhead version of student journal page (see p. 25)
- an overhead marker
- a bean plant for every student to observe

Introduction:

Thematic Journals can be used with a variety of topics. I have chosen to illustrate their use as a supplemental tool in a plant unit.

Procedures:

1. Allow each student in the class to plant their own bean in a cup and talk about the attributes that help a plant to grow.
2. Inform the students that they will be keeping a written record of their plants growth in a Plant Journal.
3. Place the overhead version of the students journal page on the screen (see p. 25). Give the students a moment to study

their plants and then ask for suggestions on what plant activity they might record in their journals. Record the students responses on the overhead.

4. Give each child their own Plant Journal and explain that such journal entries will be a daily exercise and will help to scientifically document their own plants growth.



Plant Journals

Name: _____

Day ____ Date _____

Day ____ Date _____

Day ____ Date _____

Day ____ Date _____

Day ____ Date _____

Partner Writing

Partner writing can be done between peers or with multi-age students. Having students work with one another in either situation can be a powerful tool. Children are great motivators of one another's work. In the following pages you will find five lesson plans that call for partner involvement in the writing process.

*Shared Writing -
Across the Grades*

- Stories in a Box



Shrinking Stories -

Frame by Frame -

- Question of the Day

Partner Writing Lesson #1

Stories in a Box

Objective:

Students will work with a partner to compose a story based on objects in a box.

Materials:

- shoe box filled with miscellaneous small objects.
(examples: shoe, photo, medal, ribbon, etc.)
- writing paper for each pair of students.

Introduction:

Partners will work together to brainstorm, select, and create a story using the various items in the shoe box as cues for ideas.

Procedures:

1. Pair up the students in the classroom.
2. Inform the students that today they are going to be story detectives. Show them the shoe box.
3. Tell the students that in this box is a story just waiting to be discovered. It is up to each group of students to discover what that story may be.

4. Explain to the students that in the box they will find items which represent clues to the story. They are to carefully examine the items of the box and brainstorm about the possibilities of what stories could be told.

5. Once they have generated a list of possibilities, they are to choose one of them and create a story from this idea together.
6. Upon completion of this task, students are encouraged to share their stories with their peers and compare the similarities and differences found in their stories.

Partner Writing Lesson #2

Question of the Day

Objective:

Students will work with a partner to solve a posed question and write about the problem solving process.

Materials:

- writing material for the students
- chalkboard
- graph paper (optional)

Introduction:

Partners will work together to problem solve a question posed by the teacher, using writing as a tool for assessment. The question may consist of mathematical, scientific, or other curricular areas of interest.

Procedures:

1. Pair up the students in the classroom.
2. Write today's question on the board. Briefly explain its properties.
3. Tell the students that they will be working with their partner to find a solution to the problem. They are to write

their answer on the paper and then explain on paper how they were able to solve the problem.

4. Upon completion of the assignment, encourage the students to share their answers with their peers and discuss the various methods used to solve the problem. Write the different methods on the board.
5. As an extension to the activity, the teacher could graph the various methods of problem solving to show the most popular and perhaps most unusual means of problem solving.

Partner Writing Lesson #3

Frame by Frame

Objective:

Students will work with a partner to create a story set to the visual frames of a child's filmstrip.

Materials:

- writing material for the students
- filmstrip without subtitles.
- film projector

Introduction:

Partners will work together to create a story that follows the visual frames of a child's filmstrip. The key is to find a filmstrip where the actual story line is unknown to the students. The teacher runs the film for the students, being careful to stop on each frame long enough for the pairs to write their own version of the dialogue or action.

Procedures:

1. Pair up the students in the classroom.
2. Tell the students that today they are going to watch a film, but your not going to turn on the sound, in fact your not even going to tell them what the film is about.

3. Tell the students that they will decide what the story is about and what the characters are saying, just by looking at the pictures.
4. Begin running the film, stop on each individual frame and allow the partners adequate time to discuss and write what they think is happening in the picture. Encourage the students to write dialogue as well.
5. Continue on in this manner until the film is complete.
6. Upon completion of the activity begin the film again, but this time allow volunteer pairs to read their created stories as the film frames progress.

Partner Writing Lesson #4

Shrinking Stories

Objective:

Students will work with a partner to create a narrative story about the adventures of being shrunk.

Materials:

- full body pictures of each child to be cut out
- writing paper
- drawing materials
- various old magazines

Introduction:

Partners will work together to create a story about the adventures of being shrunk. The students will cut out their pictures and place them next to old magazine cutouts to create the illusion that they have been shrunk.

Procedures:

1. Pair up the students in the classroom.
2. Tell the students that they will be creating a narrative story about how life would be like if they were to be shrunk. Show them an example of one of the student's picture placed next to a life-size replica of something they would see everyday, such as a spoon, phone, etc.

3. Have the students cut out their pictures and then search through old magazines for pictures that they wish to use in their story. Glue them both onto a construction paper cover.

4. Have the students brainstorm about what kinds of trouble they might encounter if they were really this little in size and write a story about their adventures.
5. Upon completion encourage the students to share their stories with their peers.

Partner Writing Lesson #5

Shared Writing Across the Grades

Objective:

Students will work with a partner from a different class and grade level.

Materials:

- writing paper

Introduction:

The students will partner up with a student from an upper grade. For example, a first grade student with a third grade student.

Procedures:

1. Teachers from both grades work together to create favorable matches between students..
2. Tell the students that today they will be working together to create a story. Tell them each of them has strengths as a writer and that together they can learn from one another. Assign a topic, such as, "My Most Unforgettable Vacation."
3. Have the students begin brainstorming and writing about their topics.

4. Upon completion of their projects encourage the students to share their stories with the class. In addition you may ask the students if they would like to share what new skills they may have learned from working with one another.

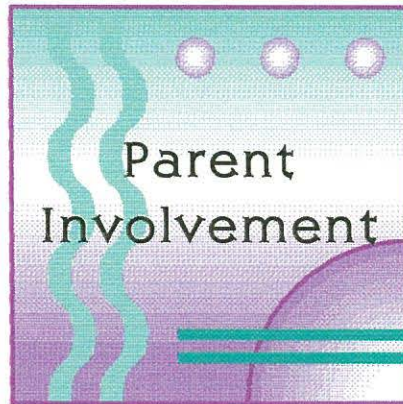
adapted from Mailbox Magazine, Vol. 17, No. 3.

Parental Involvement

Getting parents involved in the education of their children is one of this country's national goals. Many parents don't even realize the degree of influence that they actually have on the success of their child's education. The following five lesson plans are designed to involve the parents in the writing process.

"Newsbook" -

- Family Writing Backpack



Family Acrostics -

*Family Book -
Review*

- Critter Zoo

Parental Involvement #1

Family Writing Backpack

Objective:

Students will work with members of their family to create an original story.

Materials:

- backpack
- list of supplies (see pg. 40)
- list of suggestions for getting started (see pg. 41)
- various supplies named on list

Introduction:

The Family Writing Backpack is designed as a tool for parents and children to interact in the area of writing.

Procedures:

1. Present the idea of the Family Writing Backpack to parents and students at Open House Night, or a similar event. This will allow the parents an opportunity to ask questions. State that this is a family project and although the roles family members will play in the creation of the story may vary, each member of the family is important in making the story a success.

2. Select one child every weekend to take the Writing Backpack home with them. The student is instructed to create an original story with their family. Explain that inside the backpack are all the necessary items that they may need for story production.

3. The student is to return with both backpack and story on Monday. The student then shares his story with his peers. questions and compliments are encouraged.

FAMILY WRITING BACKPACK

The following is a list of supplies that are provided for your convenience. Please take the time to make sure that all supplies are returned to the backpack before returning it to school. Thank you, your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Lined and Unlined Paper



Construction Paper

Colored Pencils



Scissors

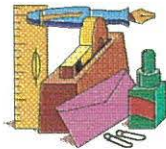


Eraser

(2) Regular Pencils

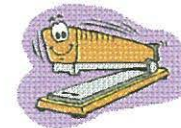


Crayons



Markers

Stapler



Hole Punch

Brass Fasteners



Tape

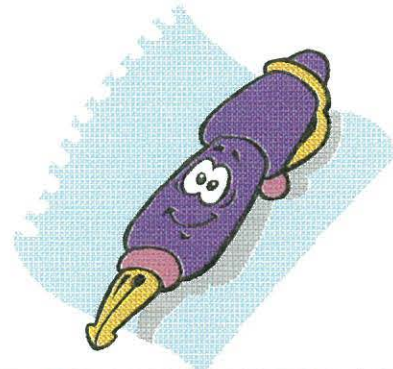
Ruler



Sharpener

Suggestions For Getting Started.

1. Take time to discuss or "brainstorm" ideas to write about. As a family select an idea.
2. Before writing, talk the story through. Decide where the story will take place, who the characters will be, and how the story will end.
3. Decide who will be responsible for each part of writing the story. Some of the jobs could be:
 - *Writing parts or all of the story.
 - *Checking for incorrect spelling and errors.
 - *Drawing the pictures.
 - *Designing and decorating a cover.
 - *Making a title page.
4. Your child will have an opportunity to share his/her story with their classmates upon its completion.
5. Enjoy and have fun!



Parental Involvement #2

Critter Zoo

Objective:

Students will work with members of their family to complete a journal entry.

Materials:

- various stuffed animals
- spiral notebook for each animal

Introduction:

The student is allowed to check out various animals and journals from the "Critter Zoo" in which to take home, play with and write a journal entry regarding the animal with the aid of family.

Procedures:

1. Present to the students the various animals available for check-out and their accompanying journals.
2. Everyday take one of these animal and their corresponding journal and model for the students a journal entry. Tell the students that in this entry they can share the adventures that they may have had with the animal, real or make-believe.

3. Explain to the students that beginning writers can use pictures to tell their stories and can have an adult or older sibling help with the actual writing if necessary.
4. Students are encouraged to share the new journal entries that they produce.

Parental Involvement #3

Family Book Review

Objective:

Students will work with members of their family to critique and review new editions to the classroom library.

Materials:

- various new books
- book review form (see pg. 46)

Introduction:

The student works with members of their family to critique new books for the classroom library. They are asked to read the book together, decide on how the new book rates, and complete an attached book review form.

Procedures:

1. Explain to the students that you feel that it is important that they have an opinion about the type and quality of books that are placed in the classroom library. Tell the students that whenever a new book is received by you, that a student and their family will be chosen to review the new book and give their opinion.
2. Model this activity for the students by first reading a new book to the class. Secondly, discuss and come to a

consensus as a class what rating the book should receive. Finally, complete the book review form together. Tape to the cover of the book the number of stars it received. This will alert students to favorite picks in the library.

-
3. Whenever a new book is received, assign a student and her family to review the book. The student is then asked to share the review with the class upon its completion.

Family Book Review

Name of the Book _____

Author _____

What did or didn't you like about the book?

Would you recommend this book to a classmate? _____

What would you rate this book? Color in the amount of stars you chose.

- Five Stars = Excellent
- Four Stars = Very Good
- Three Stars = Good
- Two Stars = Fair
- One Star = Poor





Parental Involvement #4

Family Acrostics

Objective:

Students will work with members of their family an original family acrostic using their last name.

Materials:

- writing paper
- pencils
- crayons

Introduction:

After having introduced the writing style of making an acrostic, students will be asked to generate with members of their family an acrostic of their own using their family's last name.

Procedures:

1. Model for the students how to make an acrostic by using your own last name. For example:

Likes to laugh.

Always tries to be friendly.

Nutty sundaes are my favorite.

Good times are when I go camping.

2. Have the students practice the technique on their own first names. Encourage the students to share their creations.
3. Tell the students that tonight they are to sit down with their family and together create an acrostic with their last name.
4. Have the students return their finished products to school and share them with their peers.

Parental Involvement #5 "Newsbook"

Objective:

Students and Parents will correspond with one another on a weekly basis in what is called a "Newsbook".

Materials:

- spiral notebook for each student
- large piece of writing paper
- marker

Introduction:

Students will write a weekly letter to their parents in their notebook telling of the weekly activities that have taken place at school. Parents are then encouraged to write a positive message back to their child in the notebook for them to read. In doing this the parent will become an important writing role-model for their child.

Procedures:

1. The "Newsbook" can begin the first week of school. In the beginning the teacher models the process of letter writing for the students by using large writing paper and a marker.
2. The teacher begins by showing how the date is used to keep a record of when things were written.

3. Secondly she models how to greet someone in a letter. For example: Dear Dad and Mom.
4. The teacher then asks the students to list some of things that they have experienced this week. The teacher slowly writes these various items down on the paper while saying each word aloud.
5. Lastly, the teacher models how to close a letter appropriately.
6. The first week that the "Newsbook" goes home, it is important that the teacher attach a brief note to the parents listing the intentions of the project and invite any questions they may have of their responsibilities. Stress the importance of their participation and the return of the notebook weekly.