

## Writing from the Inside Out

*Cheryle L. Boyd-Julien*  
Carrillo Elementary

### INTRODUCTION

I believe that a small voice dwells inside of all of us. Some of us are very sensitive to this voice and are even clever enough to share it. In order to share it, you must be quiet enough to hear it and confident enough to convey it. Those fortunate enough to have honed in on this particular skill are better known as our great writers. Their voices are clear, sharp, and expressive. We sometimes embrace their characters so much so that we “lose ourselves” in their situations. Hence the phrase, “lose yourself in a good book.”

It is imperative that students recognize writing as a mode not only of communication but also of representation. Often, it is the written word that introduces us rather than a personal meeting. Creative writing is like anything else, the more often we do it, the more comfortable we become doing it. It is important for students to understand the many types of writing and why they should be prepared to try them all.

Young children are naturally curious. However, as a teacher, I have faced difficulty when I try to get children to express their thoughts. This problem intensifies when you attempt to produce writing samples. I propose to prepare students for the writing process by providing a variety of opportunities and experiences upon which they can reflect. Students must become familiar with generating a thought, voicing that thought, and writing it down.

Writing is an essential skill not only to our survival but also to our success. As emails and text messages overshadow phone calls, the ability to communicate effectively in writing is paramount. Technological advances such as these have developed more quickly than the rules that govern them. Therefore, users must exercise caution when considering word choice and punctuation. For example, the use of all caps implies yelling. At the same time, it must be understood that the reader of such messages is inflecting his or her own tone and emphasis when reading the text. Students must understand that there are ways in which they can do this effectively. They can and will learn to do this with opportunity and practice.

At the center of each piece of writing is the vocabulary. This is sometimes referred to as “word choice.” Students must learn the differences in words such as angry, mad, and upset. Although their meanings may be similar, they are not synonyms. Learning the nuances of language such as these will help the student not only to write more effectively but also to express himself more effectively.

Students also need a variety of opportunities that afford them the luxury of response. There is much to learn in the today’s curricula. For this reason, much of what teachers do is interdisciplinary. Therefore, writing experiences in this unit are not limited to the language arts. There will be opportunities to write about science, math, social studies, and science. Students who write for various purposes develop a greater sense of the nature of writing. For example, a student who can write out the steps explaining how to solve a problem is a testimonial to their mastery of that skill. Students who can make convincing arguments for going on a particular fieldtrip are sure to be successful when asked to write a persuasive essay.

My unit will be comprised of a series of writing assignments given to the students throughout the year. Most of the assignments will be complimented by parental input. Students will begin the assignment by writing simple sentences about their families, pets, best friends, favorite foods, shows, and colors. It will gradually become more complex by requiring greater thought before producing the writing. Another activity will be an interview that they will conduct with their parent(s) to discover the reason for their name being chosen for them.

## **UNIT BACKGROUND**

This unit will be a year-long opportunity for students to practice various forms of writing. It will begin with familiar forms, such as narrative, descriptive and persuasive. These forms are not examined on standardized tests as they have been in the past. However, students need to understand what they are and when that particular type of writing is appropriate.

I actually began working on this idea sometime in 2002. It was at that time that I planned on implementing the project in the fall of 2003. I originally considered the title, "It's All about Me in 2003." The more I thought about it, the freer flowing the ideas became. I knew that these were meaningful activities in which students should be involved. However, I didn't have the time to look at them with a critical eye. The Houston Teachers Institute afforded me a huge opportunity when it offered a Creative Writing course. I finally had the time and support for my project, four years after its inception.

Children love stories. They love to hear them and they love to tell them. It is during this time that we are allowed a glimpse of what is going on inside those busy minds of theirs. However, often the stories are busy, clouded with too many details that jump quickly from problem to problem. These ideas merit attention and respect. This is why the writing process begins many times with the speaking process. During this process students will share their stories. At the same time, the teacher and classmates will pose questions. Children benefit greatly from dictated stories, and this might very well be a good time for one. As the student tells his story, the teacher writes. At the end the teacher might read it back to the class and model appropriate questions. For example, "I see here where the princess gets on a magic carpet, but I don't see where it tells me where she went."

The language used when discussing writing is critical at this point. Students must understand that writing is a form of communication. It must stand on its own. You can't write something, then look over the reader's shoulder and explain what you wrote. They should know exactly what meant when they read it. A student might respond to the question regarding the magic carpet by saying, "Oh, she went to a far away land, then got on a flying horse and lived happily ever after." A teacher would acknowledge the great ending, but ask where it was written. These are not skills necessary for merely mastering standardized tests; these are life skills. It is important for teachers to establish this sense of accountability.

I remember I once surveyed the class on their writing experience. It was early in the year, and several hands went up. I quickly passed out lined paper like a Vegas card shark. I couldn't wait to see the wealth of ideas pour from these bright minds. I collected the papers, and found that there were some that I couldn't figure out. I've taught first, second and third grade and thought that I had seen most forms of invented spelling, but this was different. I called the students up one by one to my desk. We had a conference about each of their writings. I explained to one student that I was having a tough time reading his story. I asked if he could read it to me. He said, "Oh, I can't read that; it's just some writing." I was astonished. Here I have a student who is willing to accept that writing and meaning are not related. I asked if he understood the assignment. He said, "Yes, you told us we could write a story about anything we want." So I asked if he thought about his story when he wrote this, and he said, "No." He said that what he did was writing; he would have to tell me the story. I then knew from where I was beginning. The student saw writing as merely the handwriting of letters. He didn't understand that it was a mode of communicating thought and ideas. I have found this to be quite

common in very young writers and even some older ones, too. They write but are not prepared to talk about it, read it, share it, or revise it. They just want to finish it. However, it is the implementation of all these practices that develop students into good writers.

Students will gain a better understanding of the level of expectation when they have sufficient experiences. Often times, there is so much to do that you sometimes don't have the time to give each student the time he or she needs for individual mastery. Therefore, it's off to the concept and keeping the pace to cover the curriculum. Many students understand this, and figure if they can just "wait it out," this particular thing will be over. I propose that it's never over. I propose that we do a little bit each day.

There is considerable discussion in the primary writing community about "voice." Ruth Culham describes voice in primary students as, "Voice is the writer's passion for the topic coming through loud and clear. It's what keeps us turning the pages of story long after bedtime. . . . voice is what primary writers use to assert their own way of looking at an idea" (137). This is a tall order and will take time to develop. We begin preparation for this monumental task just as you would eat a whale, one piece at a time.

This unit may be utilized in many ways. You may choose individual writing activities to explore, or you may choose them all. Ideally you would do them all over the course of the school year. I will suggest a calendar later in the unit should you choose this particular format. In addition to the writing activities, there is time allotted for putting the project together. This is important, as much of what students are being asked to do requires their knowledge of process skills. It is imperative that students have a deep understanding of what is taught so that they may apply that knowledge to all subject areas. A student's ability to convey his thought and understanding is critical. For this reason, this unit provides students with a variety of modes in which they can communicate. It is the participation in these exercises of study, application, and reflection that will prove most valuable to all students.

### **Types of Writing Appropriate For Young Children**

It is important to discuss the types of writing appropriate for young children. Many times as educators we are ambitious with our goals for students. Writing is a process, and its evolution can sometimes be painstakingly slow. Fear not! Students do improve with continued support.

#### ***Dictated Writing***

Young children have a wealth of ideas, and it is important that they understand that those ideas are valuable and can be shared. As a teacher you do this when you have students tell you stories. As you write them, actively listen and question students when their stories conflict with previous details or don't exactly flow. Usually a gentle question about a character will remind the student of an omitted detail or two. You can do this one on one, or have the entire class participate by contributing. By using a marker and butcher paper or a large-lined spiral, students are compelled to read this text. Even those not yet reading will be able to find meaning in something on the page. I did this once by going around the room and asking students for details for the story. I changed the color of the marker as I changed students. I read it aloud when I finished and left it posted in the class. Students were all abuzz as they moved about the class later that day. They were drawn to read their part of the story. They later would get a buddy and read each other's parts; hence, we have the desire to share the writing.

There is also paper available which is blank at the top half and lined at the bottom half. A student can use this to draw at the top and dictate sentences to the teacher about the picture. The teacher can use this opportunity to ask about certain parts of the picture so that the details of the picture can be reflected in the writing.

### ***Shared Writing***

This activity may be done with all students seated on the floor in front of the teacher. It may also be done with students seated at their desks. Nevertheless, the teacher is in front of them with some form of writing tool. Long gone are the days of the teacher, blackboard and a mere piece of chalk. Teachers now have access to butcher paper, markers, dry-erase boards, overheads, and computers connected to projection devices.

The teacher can initiate this activity by providing a story starter, such as, "Once upon a time there was a . . . ." She then continues around the classroom asking each student to add something. The first student might say, "Frog." Hence, the teacher writes, "Once upon a time there was a frog." An added twist to this activity is to use a different colored marker as the author changes. Children will be able to readily see the changes in the story as the color ink changes. There are no rules for this activity, so to speak, unless you like. Historically, my kids got a kick out of making very silly stories. Below is such an example done by a group of four students:

Once upon a time there was a princess. She lived in the city. She had three brothers and two sisters. Everyone loved her because she could count to 100. One day everyone came to her because they were afraid. There was money falling from the sky. They were worried because they didn't know how to count. They asked the princess to count the money for them. She would not count the money for them. She collected all the money. She told them that they could not have it until they learned how to count. So she took some of the money and paid for schools to be built. When they were ready they told the princess. She gave them a test. If they got an "A" or "B," they would get their money. If they got a bad grade, they had to go back to school until they learned how to count dollars and cents because the dollars can get hard when there's a lot.

### ***Journal Writing***

Journaling is a unique process in that it has so many connotations. The first being that of a time and space provided for random thoughts to be put on paper. This type of writing can be a very private opportunity to pour one's soul onto the page. In this journal you may find a child's hopes, fears, wishes, and dreams. In the early stages this may be a mere collection of pictures that depict their thoughts. It is a good idea to keep these writings as portfolios of sorts. They are excellent tools that can be used to show a student the evolution of their writing. The journals are not used for critiquing purposes. They are primarily used to jumpstart the creative writing process. In order to develop voice in students' writings, it must be cultivated on other levels. Personal journals can be those of personal reflection. They can be lines and lines of words, fragments, and pictures of combinations of all of the aforementioned. Journals also can be a very public document to be passed among classmates to respond. Journaling is not limited to mere sheets of lined paper.

Journals that include pictures can be very useful for those reluctant writers. Drawings that result from thoughts are excellent springboards for dialogue. The drawings from these journals can be used to generate conversations. From these conversations the teacher can make a list of vocabulary words. This vocabulary can be used in the student's writings. It is from activities such as these that students develop "voice." Attention can be called to the details in the picture. The details in the picture can translate into details in writings. This is also an excellent opportunity for an assignment that is started at school to be completed at home. The picture could be sent home with instructions for the parents to assist their child in writing about it. It is situations such as these that clearly demonstrate the power of the parent-teacher-child relationship. Activities such as these may begin slowly in parental response or student involvement. However, this is most effective when it is part of a cycle. This assignment could be part of a rotation of activities that both parents and children come to expect. The greater the frequency of this activity, the easier it becomes for everyone involved.

## ***Interviews***

It is important for children to recognize that writing is a form of communication. They need to understand that writing is a tool that must be maintained. This tool called writing can be used for various purposes. All students must understand that writing is not limited to narratives. For this reason, participation in this unit's many different activities is important. Students interview their parents, former teachers, and even other students. Students can be provided with a questionnaire and be responsible for recording answers. This is an important skill that will be beneficial as they become older. This activity dovetails very nicely when introducing note taking as a skill.

## ***A Final Word About Writing Activities***

Teaching children to write effectively can be a painstaking process. However, it is important to remember that it is in fact a process. It has been my experience that the more often an activity is done, the better students become at it. For example, my school required a weekly writing sample from each student each week. The samples were to be turned in to the Assistant Principal for her review. As a first grade teacher, it was a huge undertaking. The students' handwriting was all over the place, and the sentences were incomplete. Initially, the students complained and the parents complained. But the writing prompts just kept coming. I made a point of grading the writing within the week. I returned the papers to the parents for their review and signature. Improvement was made. Some students improved quicker than others; others improved more than others. To facilitate their writing, I would always have children write in response to experiences at school. They came to expect to write about fieldtrips, presentations, and plays. I knew that I was successful when a parent asked if she could be a chaperone on a fieldtrip. Her fueled not by a desire to accompany her child, but to help her child with the writing assignment.

The key to successful learning is integration. We see it in standardized testing. The passages on the reading portions of the tests are often based on information found in science and social studies textbooks. Therefore, we must fluidly move between these subjects in our teaching, so that students may do the same in their learning.

In conclusion, I believe it important to vary the types of writing taught to children. Students should also have the opportunity to formulate rough drafts and final drafts. Writing activities should vary on a rotational basis.

## **THE ACTIVITIES**

These activities are designed to be stand-alone activities or can be maintained throughout the year, bound, and sent home. They are also excellent for maintaining writing portfolios. Should you choose to bind them, there will be a paragraph that addresses various ways in which that can be done as well.

### **Who Am I?**

This group of activities is appropriately titled, "Who Am I?" It is at this time that time that you should take pictures of each student. This picture will be used as part of the outside cover of the project. I suggest that you as the teacher take the picture because if you ask them to bring them from home, you will get everything from ultra-sound images to a small spec representing the student taken at a family reunion. You really want a true image of what the child was like at this age at this time. However, if you want to include a pictorial history, be prepared to do just that. You may not be at liberty to affix photographs sent from home. The next part of the activity involves recording all the pertinent information. Students will take home a sheet requiring the child's name, age, address, city, state, zip code, phone number, phone number, grade, teacher and school. Information and work samples at will be used as a cover sheet for the project.

## **In Case Of Emergency**

This phrase is often used by adults, and misunderstood by children. Take this opportunity to explain exactly what an emergency is and what to do should one occur. Students should understand that an emergency is a situation that requires immediate attention of an adult. In the event of an emergency, they should know whom they can contact and how to do that. This and all activities in this unit are introduced at school. They are reviewed with oral as well as written examples. This activity begins with the introduction and definition of the word, “emergency.” The teacher asks the class if anyone knows what an emergency is. Responses may include a house on fire, or someone being hurt. The teacher should acknowledge all answers. This may be done verbally or by writing them for all to see. I prefer writing them so that students can see what examples have already been provided. At the close of this portion of the lesson, the teacher can pose other emergencies, such as being lost in a store, missing a ride after school, or seeing someone else in trouble.

These are situations which warrant the immediate attentions of an adult and are seldom considered by the child. The teacher can then ask the class, “If you can’t find or call your mom or dad, what should you do?” As the teacher you can take this opportunity to teach students to identify those who can help them. If they are in the store, they should look for someone with a name badge on; locate the Customer Service Counter, security guards, or police officers. Students should not seek the help of any adult.

For this activity, students could produce a piece of writing from information obtained from their parents. The student could use a simple form filled out by the parents. This is an important step for the student as well in that they are taking information in one form and converting it to another. Whereas the parents simply fill in blanks, providing information, the student takes that information and puts it in a form that they understand.

Parents will understand that their children must know their full legal names. This is important in the event that they become lost and manage to make their way to someone who could possibly page the parents. An interesting note here, my father worked for Sears many years and encountered a multitude of lost children. He once told me of a lost child that he once encountered. The child came up to him and announced that he was lost. My father asked the child what his name was, and the child told him. He then asked who brought him to the store, and the child replied that he came with his dad. My father then asked what his father’s name was, and the child replied, “Daddy.” Realizing that he was getting nowhere, my father asked the child what his mom called his dad. The child replied, “Stupid.” The moral of this story is, teach your child your full name.

Children should also know their phone numbers, including area codes, and the names and phone numbers of others that they can call. Again, this information should be obtained from the parents. Once completed and turned in, students can use the information to generate a writing such as this:

My name is Sally Sue Smith. My mom’s name is Sylvia Sue Smith. My dad’s name is Stan Steven Smith. My phone number is 123-456-7891. My mom’s cell number is 112-134-415-1617. My dad’s cell phone number is 181-920-2122. If I can’t get in touch with my parents I can call my grandmother. Her name is Tina Taylor, and her number is xxx-xxx-xxxx. I can also call my neighbor, Mrs. Jones. Her number is yyy-yyy-yyyy.

Once again, I can’t tell you how valuable this collection of writing samples will be at its completion. It also provides a constant line of communication among you, your parents, and your students. There is the constant process of sharing information among the three of you. This is a valuable tool and an excellent opportunity to have students interact with their parents.

## **The Name Game**

Students will interview their parents to ascertain why they chose the name they did. Students and parents will be provided with a sheet of questions to guide the discussion. Questions may consist of, but are not limited to, the following: Is there anyone else in the family with the same name? From what country does your name come? Who chose your name? Why did they choose it? Did everyone agree on your name? How long did it take to make a decision about your name? Is there anyone famous with the same name? It is important to note here that this activity can be combined with a social studies lesson on map skills. You may even want to include a world map as part of the assignment, and require students to place a star on the country that is the origin of their name.

## **Acropolis Poem**

An acropolis poem is one that takes each of the letters of a word to come up with another word that begins with the same letter to describe the original word. For example, a student named Sam might write, “So Always Motivated.” This is a great opportunity to explore adjectives. Although you don’t have to only use adjectives, they are an excellent start.

## **My Favorite Recipe**

Who doesn’t like to eat? This activity is a tried a true one. I really enjoyed doing this with my students and got a special surprise at the end. I started with the general brainstorming activity of favorite foods. I then found it necessary to direct the conversation from foods to recipes. Some of the responses were apples, bananas, and fries. Yes, these were in fact foods, but that was not what I was really looking for. So I then asked the students what the favorite food that their mother prepared for them. After their responses, I was able to attach a new vocabulary word to what they had told me. I separated the foods from the recipes and then labeled them as such. They truly understood what a recipe was. After making this determination, they were ready for the writing process.

This activity is perfect for generating what is commonly referred to as a “How To” paper. Students must generate a list of materials that would include ingredients. They then must include the steps in order to complete the recipe. This is a somewhat difficult concept because there is so much that they take for granted.

I prepare the students for this my conducting a fun demonstration. I tell them that I want to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I ask them to give me a list of the materials, so that I will know what to buy from the store. They initially told me that I needed peanut butter, jelly, and bread. I told them that we would do the activity the following day. I returned the next day with nothing. I explained that when I went to the store I saw crunchy and smooth peanut butter. I added that there was Jif™ and Peter Pan™ and I simply didn’t know which to choose. Then I explained my dilemma with the jelly. There was grape, apple, and strawberry. So we returned to the board to edit our grocery list. After a lively discussion about the virtues of creamy versus crunchy, we decided to take a vote. We followed the same format and voted on a favorite jelly flavor. At that point I dared not introduce jam versus jelly, but you may test these waters if you dare. There is also the great bread debate, wheat versus white, but I chose white for the sake of time. Older students will enjoy including the details of manufacturers. The student’s writing improves greatly when details such as name brands and sizes are included. For example, “First you will need a jar of peanut butter,” does not sound as interesting as, “First you will need a 16 ounce jar of Jif™ Extra Crunchy peanut butter.” These are the kinds of details that draw the reader in, and get them interested in the rest of the paper. At the close of this introductory lesson, the students were better prepared for the actual assignment of formulating a recipe.

Next you need to prepare a rough draft. Students can do this alone, but ideally, they should work with their parents. Even the most reluctant parent will be happy to hear that his child enjoys a meal that they prepare. I like to provide students with a framework within which to work. This framework is much like the interview process mentioned earlier in the paper. Provide students with form that

includes lines for the materials and their quantity or sizes. I didn't include examples of the forms that I used because they kept changing. As the year progressed, so did the students, and they didn't need the guidance of the form. I noticed that they relied heavily on the introductory lessons at the beginning of the year, but not so much at the end. I'm sure that you will experience the same success.

At the beginning of this section I mentioned an unexpected surprise that I received at this lesson's end. The class' final products turned out very well, so well that I typed them all, bound them and each mother received one as a Mother's Day gift. I placed a picture of the student author inside the front cover. That student's writing about his favorite recipe preceded the others. I got this idea from a book that I read a long time ago, *Like Water for Chocolate*. This book was very enjoyable, as it told a great story and recipes, too. The reader really got an understanding of how much food was a part of this family and their story. A similar idea was depicted in the movie, *Soul Food*. You didn't get the recipes, but you saw this bountiful table every Sunday when the family convened.

The mothers were all so very happy with the cookbooks that they suggested that we have a party featuring the dishes. Regretfully, it was too late in the year to do it, but I plan to have it next year, as I will have these same students as second graders. Of course an alternative to this would be to do it around the holidays and have it in lieu of the traditional Winter Break party.

### **My Favorite Book**

This title of this activity pretty much speaks for itself. However, the value here is that the students' attention is turned to the technical aspects of the book. Students should generate a writing based on their favorite book. In the writing they should include the author, illustrator, publisher, and year. In addition to this general information, they should give a reason as to why they selected the book as their favorite. Students may also include an illustration from the book. They could also suggest an alternate ending. This activity is an excellent opportunity to discuss point-of-view or persuasive writing. Students may also include a part of the story that they did not particularly like.

### **My Found Poem**

A "found poem" is the result when pieces are taken from different genres. Sources of for the found poem may be songs, speeches, other poems, or essays.

### **My Favorite Sport**

Students may choose to write about a favorite sport that they like to play or watch. They can also include information about a professional player of this sport. Students can also include pictures of the sport being played. You may consider bringing in magazines, or allowing students to access the Internet for research purposes. As students write about the sport, they should note if it is a team sport or one that is played alone. At the end of the activity it would be interesting to compare a team sport to one that is played alone. You could also classify team sports and non-team sports. All of this can be done at the conclusion of the activity and makes for an even nicer extension. Students may also discuss honors that are attained in the professional sports.

They may already be familiar with terms such as Super Bowl and the World Series. A good extension to this would be a unit on the Olympics. You could also compare American football with soccer. This is especially interesting since everyone else refers to soccer as football. Soccer has a global following and is gaining popularity in America. This can turn into a wonderful social studies lesson as well. Consider the implications of discussing the different countries and their bordering countries.

It is often difficult to integrate higher order thinking skills and writing. This activity calls for the utilization of these critical thinking skills that encourage the student's analysis of the subject.

## **My Favorite Song**

Everybody's got one! The only problem is that some of them contain inappropriate lyrics. However, if you perceive this to be a problem, you could always limit the choices. Perhaps you could have them choose from a selection of songs that you use in the classroom. Older students may consider obtaining the lyrics and writing in response to them. Again, extreme caution and good judgment should be exercised. Students can also use the Internet to obtain the artist's name, record label, and year. My students were astounded to find that they enjoyed a song that was originally recorded in 1971. One student even asked if there were dinosaurs "back then." Older students who study music might even obtain the musical score and note the time signature and other musical dynamics.

## **My Favorite Hobby**

I had to give several examples of hobbies prior to this particular writing activity. Even after reading books about hobbies and giving examples, the students either understand or decided that they didn't have a hobby. Therefore, the assignment evolved into writing about a hobby in which you are interested. Nevertheless, the activity stayed true to the theme. This was still something about them. Besides, isn't there some interest that we all wished that we could pursue? Students should consider of what value is the hobby? It is important to understand that for many children, this is uncharted territory. Students will need a lot of background information in order to have a sufficient knowledge base from which to write. However, I encourage you to continue to build on this foundation by doing other activities that require them to recall important information.

During the introduction stage of this activity, I focused on quilting. There was a wealth of information available. The students drew the natural conclusion that quilting was really an art form. I gave them each a 4" x 4" piece of paper. For homework, they were to draw something on the paper that said something about them. They returned the next day with the squares completed. I provided a large piece of butcher paper upon which they were to glue their squares. During our research, we learned how the squares of a quilt are laid out and its design planned. We replicated that process in the class. They were all so proud of the final product! I think that it is integration of art and language arts that is the true star here. When we, as educators, try to concentrate on certain objectives so much so that they become isolated from all else, we have missed the mark.

## **Where in the World...?**

I considered this as an activity at the beginning of the project, but discovered that my students needed a better understanding of some important science and social studies objectives before I could go forward. For this activity the student begins with the most abstract sense of their location to the most concrete. The student defines his location by noting his planet, continent, country, state, city, county, neighborhood (subdivision), and address. Although I did this later in the year, I placed it with information at the front of the binder containing all of the activities from this project.

Preparation for this activity began with an introduction to the Solar System. Students identified Earth and the other planets. We then proceeded to study maps. We used blank world maps to color only the continent of North America. A map of North America that had its countries outlined was reviewed. The students colored only the United States on this blank map.

This is a large section of the project. It involves a lot of map skills. In the following activities, students are asked to produce floor plans. By using centimeter grid paper, students will transfer their homes and classroom onto floor plans. As always students should be provided with a multitude of examples. These are very easy to access. You can start by utilizing the Fire Evacuation Map that is usually posted inside each classroom.

## **EVALUATION**

You may choose to view each activity independently and make an assessment at its completion. Should you choose to view all of the activities as parts of a whole, you can grade the project's final compilation and their oral presentation. As activities are completed, it is important to note that although the activity may have been a writing lesson, the content area may be mathematics, science, or social studies, and grades can be recorded in those areas as well.

Listening and Speaking are objectives noted in CLEAR and can be assessed throughout the unit. Students need to be mindful of being a good audience. They must understand the importance of sitting quietly and listening attentively.

Equally as important is the skill of presentation. Students must be taught how to abbreviate information for the purpose of presentation. Practicing this skill now, will make other related skills such as summarizing and note taking much easier later.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **How to Make a Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich**

#### ***Materials***

- One 16 ounce jar of peanut butter (any brand and type)
- One 16 ounce jar of jelly (any brand and flavor)
- 1 butter knife
- Enough bread for two slices per person
- Paper plates and napkins to accommodate everyone
- Butcher paper or other writing surface
- Markers

#### ***Introduction***

The teacher explains that everyone will make a peanut butter sandwich. The teacher should survey if anyone has allergies to peanuts, if so they will need to omit it. Before beginning the actual process, the teacher will survey the students on how to make the sandwich.

#### ***Guided Practice***

The students' directions will be recorded on the writing surface as it is received. When the students determine completion, the teacher will begin making the sandwich according to the written directions, not what he/she may know to be right. During this time, the teacher verbalizes questions and concerns as they arise. The directions are changed to reflect those of the group's consensus.

#### ***Independent Practice***

Students will proceed to an area designated by the teacher to make their peanut-butter sandwiches.

#### ***Evaluation***

Students will write a paper on how to make a peanut-butter sandwich.

#### ***Extension***

The teacher discusses details such as brand names of peanut butter. The types of peanut butter are reviewed as well, smooth, crunchy and extra crunchy. The sizes of the containers are noted as well. After these new details have been discussed, they are added to the original writing done as a class. The class then sees the improvement of the writing by including the details.

## **A Story Among Friends**

### ***Materials***

- 1 piece of lined paper 18 x 24 inches in size
- 4 different colored markers for each
- Group of four students
- A writing surface and writing tools for the teacher

### ***Introduction***

The teacher announces that the class will write a story together. It is explained that every one will have a part to contribute to the story.

### ***Guided Practice***

The teacher goes around the room soliciting a title and details for the story. The first student provides the title, and each student gives each subsequent detail.

### ***Independent Practice***

The students are divided into groups of four. Each group is given a piece of paper and four markers. Each student chooses a color with which to write. They begin the activity by using their markers to write their names at the top of the page. Students then proceed to write a story. Each group is reminded that each person in that group has a turn to write. Each person should have three turns. When they finish, they must determine a way in which to present the story. They must decide if each person will read their own part or if the group will have a spokesperson.

### ***Evaluation***

Upon completion, each group's story will be affixed to the wall. The groups will present their stories orally.

### ***Extension***

The teacher will choose one story whose ending the class will change and extend. The teacher records the contributions of each student.

## **Sports Illustrated**

### ***Materials***

- Sports magazines
- Newspapers, or pictures found on the Internet
- Scissors
- Glue
- 8 ½ x 11 inch writing paper
- Pencils
- Writing surface and tools for the teacher.

### ***Introduction***

The teacher will direct the class in a discussion about sports. During the discussion, the class will identify sports teams and players. They will then be asked to consider their favorite player.

### ***Guided Practice***

The teacher will choose name his/her favorite player. I suggest that this be someone from the 80s or earlier. If not, you run the risk of using someone that the students will choose. Moreover, if you choose the same person, they will be very tempted to repeat the same things that you say in this part of

the lesson when they should be generating their own ideas. The teacher will use write a few sentences about the player, sport, and team (if applicable). Any honors obtained by the player may also be mentioned. The teacher will then use pictures of the athlete to illustrate the piece.

### ***Independent Practice***

Students will generate writings about their favorite sport, noting a prominent figure if they choose. Should they choose not to name an athlete in particular, they may include various illustrations of anyone playing the sport. Should they choose to focus on one particular athlete, they may use a picture if available, or draw one.

### ***Evaluation***

Students will work in pairs, exchanging their final products. They will be asked to read their partner's paper and pose any questions, and make at least three positive comments.

### ***Extension***

After the evaluation portion of the lesson, students would present their partner's writing to the class.

### **Suggested Timeline for Unit**

#### ***Week One and Week Two***

Obtain a picture of the student and pertinent information.

#### ***Week Three***

Obtain information on physical attributes, height, weight, hair color, eye color, and fingerprints.

#### ***Week Four***

Acquire accurate emergency information, including alternative contacts.

#### ***Week Five***

Extend Week Three's activity by measuring head, waist, and wrist circumferences, and arm, leg and foot lengths.

#### ***Week Six***

Denote and favorite food and write its recipe.

#### ***Week Seven***

Identify and favorite song. Research its artist, label, lyrics, and year published.

#### ***Week Eight***

Identify a favorite book, its author, illustrator, and year published.

#### ***Week Nine***

Choose a favorite sport. Identify a favorite player of the sport. Collect information on professional teams and honors.

#### ***Week Ten***

Identify a favorite hobby or one that you wish to pursue.

#### ***Week Eleven***

Identify where your planet, continent, country, state, county, city, neighborhood, and address.

### ***Week Twelve***

Make a floor plan of your dwelling.

### ***Week Thirteen***

Make a floor plan of the school.

### ***Week Fourteen***

Make a floor plan of the classroom.

### ***Week Fifteen***

Write about what you want to be when you grow up.

### ***Week Sixteen***

Write about a college that you would like to attend.

### ***Week Seventeen***

Write about where you would like to live and what kind of house in which you would like to live. Use pictures from the Internet, newspapers, and magazines to help illustrate your point.

### ***Week Eighteen***

Compile all work and prepare for presentation. Make a calendar for the presentations that will be held during weeks twenty through twenty-four. Take this opportunity to invite parents and administration. Obtain a video camera or other photographic equipment if you so choose.

### ***Week Nineteen***

Complete the process of binding all activities.

### ***Weeks Twenty Through Twenty-Four***

Presentations conducted, one per day.

## **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Culham, Ruth. *6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 2005.

This book appears to be the most concise presentation of creating good writers in the classroom. There are two editions available, one for the primary grades (K – 2) and one for the elementary grades (3 – 5). Excellent collection of theory and practice, there are very good examples of students' writings as well.

Diller, Debbie. *Literacy Work Stations: Making Centers Work*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2003.

A practical guide to establishing literacy centers in the classroom. This guide is a good one in that it serves as a road map, for both teacher and student, for the journey of writing.

Fleischman, P. *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices*. New York: Harper Collins, 1988.

This is a very nice collection of poetry that really communicates that poetry is to read aloud and shared.

Fleischman, P. *I Am Phoenix: Poems for Four Voices*. New York: Harper Collins, 1989.

This is an excellent companion to the previous publication by this author. This publication is designed for up to four voices. It is a natural accompaniment to any classroom that works in groups and studies poetry.

Freeman, Marcia. *Teaching the Youngest Writers: A Practical Guide*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Publishing, Inc., 1998.

A nice blend of theory, practice and examples. This book is very helpful in navigating the writing process. It also includes a nice sequence for the writing process.

Freeman, Robin Lee Harris. *Science and Writing Connections*. Parsippany, NJ: Dale Seymour Publications, 1999.

This book presents a collaborative approach to writing and the sciences. It includes black line masters and assessment tools.

- Freyman, S. and J. Effer. *How Are You Peeling? Foods with Moods*. New York: Scholastic, 1999.  
This book takes a not-so-serious look at the moods of foods. Nice photographs mix art and emotion. This is a must-have when teaching point-of-view.
- Jones, Fred. *Tools for Teaching: Discipline, Instruction, Motivation*. Hong Kong: Fredric H. Jones & Associates, Inc., 2000.  
A good tool to understanding the classroom management process. Teachers are led through a series of steps to create a classroom of high expectations and achievement.
- Laden, N. *The night I followed the dog*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. 1994.  
This book tells the interesting tale of a dog's escapades one evening. This volume is essential for explaining that everyone has a "voice". The author gives a dog a "voice" and the reader is hooked.
- Lewin, L. *Great Performances Creating Classroom-based Assessment Tasks*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998.  
A very clear and concise explanation of the assessment process of writing. An excellent tool to use for evaluating not only the production of the work but also its quality.
- McCarrier, Andrea. *Interactive Writing: How Language and Literacy Come Together, K – 2*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000.  
A good handbook for establishing literacy centers in the classroom. There is a variety of activities presented which may be used for portfolio assessment.
- Slocumb, D. Paul and Ruby K. Payne. *Removing the Mask Giftedness in Poverty*. Highlands, Texas: aha! Process Inc., 2000.  
This book takes the reader on a critical journey. It is an in-depth look at what many of the students in today's classrooms face.
- Tompkins, G. *Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Balanced Approach*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1996.  
This book is a good guide to establishing a classroom with a climate conducive to literary excellence.