

Writing, Grade K

Introduction

Writing, Grade K

This course focuses on the progression of young children through the phases of the writing process and the introduction of basic concepts about the purposes and forms of writing. (See the Program Appendix in the *Teacher's Editions* for a detailed discussion of writing in *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!*.) You should consider the course content in a classroom in which kindergarten students are learning about sounds and spellings and making connections between reading and writing.

The students will choose a person as a subject and write a biography about that person. This will give them the opportunity to progress through the writing process (prewriting/planning, writing/drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing) and express their ideas about an important person in their lives. They will consider their topics, think carefully about the information they need to gather, write drafts of their biographies, revise, proofread, and publish. They will learn to share their ideas and give each other feedback. Most of all, they will learn that the experience of writing is exciting, challenging, and rewarding.

Teaching Example 1

In Teaching Example 1, Wendy Martinez begins the series of writing lessons by introducing biography as a narrative form. As an underlying structure, Mrs. Martinez uses the writing process and guides the students through the process as they apply it to writing biographies.

After introducing the students to biography and making sure they understand what a biography is, Mrs. Martinez and the class brainstorm who they might be able to write about. This first round of brainstorming involves classes of people—friends, relatives, teachers, and so on. Later in the class, students will choose a person about whom they wish to write.

Before her students choose a person, Mrs. Martinez makes sure they understand that they will need information on their subject. To model this, Mrs. Martinez and her class choose a person they all know—the school principal. Using the principal as model, Mrs. Martinez leads the class in compiling information they might want to use if they were going to write his biography.

Finally, the students each think about and choose their own subject. Mrs. Martinez writes each student choice so they can return to the list in the next lesson when they will begin planning.

Getting Ideas: Brainstorming

Getting ideas or brainstorming is the first step in the prewriting stage. Prewriting is when students think of ideas to write about and plan how they are going to write.

In this lesson, students know they will be writing a biography. They brainstorm about whom to write. Often, deciding on the genre is part of the preplanning that goes into good writing.

As Mrs. Martinez leads the students through this phase of their writing, she:

- Prompts each student to choose someone to write about.
- Makes sure they understand that they should pick a person about whom they have information.
- Helps them limit their choices to only one person.
- Reviews their choices.

In conclusion, Mrs. Martinez tells her students that in the next lesson they will continue planning for their writing. Brainstorming and planning, although sometimes time-consuming and seemingly disorganized, is a valuable exercise that allows students to begin organizing and defining their ideas.

Teaching Example 2

Teaching Example 2 continues the prewriting phase of this writing project. Mrs. Martinez models the process of gathering details for possible use. Using her grandmother as the subject of her biography, Mrs. Martinez draws a picture that incorporates details about her grandmother. Her picture and the pictures the students will draw of their subjects will act as graphic organizers. They will refer back to the pictures to remind themselves of details about their subjects as they write.

After Mrs. Martinez completes her drawing and discusses it, the students produce their own drawings.

Planning for Writing

Young, inexperienced writers want to jump in and start writing. Experienced writers, however, have learned the benefits of planning. During this phase of writing, writers think about their topics and what kinds of information they will need. They also think about the genre and intended audience. By approaching writing in a patient and systematic manner, good writers know where they are going. They know what information they have and what they will still need. They know the genre and the likes and dislikes of their audience. All of this makes the writing flow more smoothly and keeps the writer on track.

In this course, the genre of the writing—biography—has been designated. The students need to choose a subject and make sure they have enough information to write a short biography. Since the goal of the lesson is to teach the students about writing biographies, most of the instruction revolves around what is needed for this genre. Little time is spent considering the audience; the assumption is that the students in the class will be the audience.

Teaching Example 3

In Teaching Example 3, the students will write the first draft of their biographies. Before having the students write, Mrs. Martinez once again models the process using the example started earlier. Using the picture of her grandmother as support, Mrs. Martinez and the class decide what information about her grandmother they will include. They choose some details and leave out others.

After clarifying the writing assignment, Mrs. Martinez has her students use their *Open Court Reading Writer's Workbooks* to begin writing. As the students write, Mrs. Martinez circulates around the room offering encouragement and suggestions.

Finally, the students share what they wrote. Mrs. Martinez and the students offer feedback.

Writing (Drafting)

At this stage, the writer has planned and has an idea of what he or she wants to write. The goal is to get all of the ideas on paper with little concern for conventions or correctness.

Each student writes several details about his or her subject. These ideas are subject to change. The students are just writing as much as they can about their subjects.

Teaching Example 4

In Teaching Example 4, the class continues to work on their biographies by revising their first drafts. Mrs. Martinez introduces the idea of elaboration and they discuss the importance of including enough details in their biographies to let the reader get a good idea of what the person is like. Once again using her grandmother's biography as a model, Mrs. Martinez elaborates on what she wrote the day before. In addition, she uses the students' own work as a model as they discuss one of the biographies from the day before.

Revising

The purpose of revising is to make sure that the writer has expressed his or her ideas clearly and completely. It has been said that there is no good writing, just good rewriting. A major distinction between good writers and poor writers is the amount of time and effort they put into revision.

Revising is the step that inexperienced writers most resist. They simply don't want to go back and rewrite, or they are sure that what they wrote the first time is perfect. Helping students develop the habit of revising is critical for them to become good writers.

Teaching Example 5

Teaching Example 5 addresses the last two phases in the writing process—proofreading and publishing. Once again, Mrs. Martinez models for the students by proofreading her biography. She checks for capital letters, spaces between words, and end punctuation. Because these are very young children who are just learning to write, Mrs. Martinez limits the focus to proofreading skills students have been discussing not only in writing but also in their discussion of concepts of print. This helps students focus their attention on skills they are currently learning and also keeps them from becoming discouraged.

Once Mrs. Martinez has proofread her biography, the students return to their seats and proofread their own work.

Finally, they share their completed biographies with each other.

Checking and Sharing (Proofreading and Publishing)

Writing that is free of grammatical, spelling, and technical mistakes is clearer and easier for readers to understand. By proofreading their pieces, students also notice which errors they make repeatedly and learn not to make them in the future.

Proofreading is an integral part of writing done by students in *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!*. The students should proofread their own work. It not only ensures that the finished writing will be grammatically and mechanically correct, but it also places responsibility for correcting the work on the student. Although Mrs. Martinez will help her students in their efforts to correct their work, she makes it clear that proofreading is their responsibility.

Publishing is the process of bringing private writing to the reading public. The purpose of writing is communication. Unless students are writing in a journal, they want to present their writing to the public. This helps them learn about themselves and others, provides an opportunity for them to take pride in their work, and motivates them to write more.

Publishing can be as simple as displaying papers on a bulletin board or as elaborate as creating a class newspaper. Publishing does not need to involve large blocks of class time.

Mrs. Martinez has several of the students read their biographies to the class. She assures the other students that they too will have a chance to share their writing.