Writing Grows from Kindergarten Through Fifth Grade

Forest Avenue Academic Magnet Elementary School
Montgomery, Alabama

Jan Hill, Principal
Jennifer Rodopoulos, Teacher
Forest Avenue Facts

- Elementary School
- 660 students: Kindergarten – 5th grade
- Housed in a building half of which is 1920’s era, half-state of the art 2001, located near downtown Montgomery, Alabama
- 43 certified teachers, 17 classified staff members
- SAT-10, Alabama Reading and Math Test, Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
- Academic Magnet Accelerated Curriculum
Roots of Writing

In All Grade Levels:
*Baseline sample—1st week
*Field trip writing
*Writing across the curriculum
*Journals, portfolios, folders
*Revising and editing
*Rubrics
In Kindergarten…

Sowing the Seeds of Writing

• Copy sentences from board and illustrate
• Word family sentences and illustrate (The cat sat on a mat.)
• Field trip sentences and illustrate
• Progress from looking at pictures and writing words to writing sentences
• Finishing stories read aloud
In First Grade...

- Compare and contrast a story read in class to a play seen on a field trip
- Participate in a regional holiday writing contest
- Recreate stories such as “If You Give a Mouse a Cookie” by substituting new characters and events
- Write stories about Native American culture—the importance of bravery in the tribe
- Field trip writing using various genres learned during the year

Adding Water
In 2nd Grade...

- Paragraph formatting—indenting; five sentences with topic sentence and conclusion
- Descriptive writing using adjectives
- Transition words (first, next, then, finally)
- “About Me” narratives
In Third Grade…

- Expose students to 3 modes of writing
- Writing prompts based on subject matter and current events
- Teach figurative language—similes, metaphors, adj/adv
- Book reports, poetry, imaginative writing

*Family Ties project, Pet Rock report, moon and sky journal, math journal*
In Fourth Grade…

- Alabama portfolios-year long project
- Chapter summaries for novel chapters
- Narrative—Beginnings & endings, purpose, audience, characters, dialogue, transitions, vivid verbs
- Expository—Main idea, supplying details, sequencing
- Writing a report from outline

Adding the Fertilizer
In Fifth Grade…

- Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing—narrative, descriptive, expository
- 4th quarter-persuasive
- Math and science journals
- Poetry unit
- Lab and research reports

Pray for a bumper crop!
If at first you don’t succeed…

• REDO is a four letter word
• Sometimes a rough draft and final copy are not enough
• Redo means…re-grade 😞
• Reward better “redos” with better grades
• Student conferencing

Try, try again… and again!
Principal Gardener

- ADAW day—whole school writes
- “Graded” by principal
- Prompts developed by principal
- Contests—Holiday essay, Reflections, local and state, publications

Jan Hill tends her garden of writers with care.
Summary Points

- Teaching writing is a learning process for students AND teachers.
- The “perfect” method of teaching writing does not exist.
- The more fun and interesting writing is for the teacher—the more fun and interesting it is for the student.

Challenges:
1. To make children enjoy writing
2. To keep teachers enthusiastic about writing
3. Keep test scores high