Instructional Design Project

8th Grade Language Arts: Narrative Writing Unit

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**Rationale**

Teaching students to write is a challenging, but very important task- perhaps one of the most important skills a student can learn. In fact, “writing is the primary basis upon which your work, your learning, and your intellect will be judged- in college, in the workplace, and in the community” (Marquette, 2011). Writing shows up everywhere in life, and in every subject in school, yet it is a continuous struggle for students at all grade levels, particularly in my 8th grade classroom.

The writing abilities found in my own classroom and certainly not limited to my students; they are similar to those of other Ohio students. Recent results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Persky, Salahu-Din, & Miller, 2007) show that 10% of Ohio 8th graders cannot write at the Basic level, which simply includes completing organized, accurate writing assignments during an allotted time. At the same time, only 32% of 8th grade students write at the Proficient or Advanced level, which includes sequencing, creative thinking, and accurate spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Clearly, writing needs to be a major area of focus in the language arts classroom. The question now becomes, “What can teachers do to help increase the writing abilities of students?”

In the past, language arts teachers have used traditional methods of giving students writing assignments, passing them back with red marks, and beginning the process all over again. However, based on the results of the state and general experience in the classroom, these methods are not the best for teaching students how to become proficient writers. Teachers need to be focusing on key standards like sequence, point of view, narrative techniques, transitions, sensory language, and strong conclusions (Common Core State Standards, 2009). These particular skills need to be taught specifically, rather than being clumped together into one major piece of writing.

This particular unit on narrative writing will include a combination of constructivist and behaviorist approaches. It will move beyond the traditional methods of teaching writing and include interactive, innovative lessons to teach students writing. Daily lesson plans will include mini-lessons on specific concepts, and it will include ample time for students to practice their skills in a workshop setting. Students will receive a great deal of individual attention, and they will often construct understanding and meaning from experiences (Chiarelott, 2006).

This unit includes the first narrative writing assignment of the school year, and the five lessons include narrowing the topic, using descriptive details, adding transitions, editing, and using technology to produce a piece of writing. Later in the year, more specific on grammar, spelling, and punctuation will be covered, as well as audience, verb tenses, and organization. This narrative unit acts as an introduction to the writing process. Also, the best part about it is that students are learning all of these concepts in context. Rather than covering a lesson on transitions and completing a worksheet, students get the chance to apply the concept in their own writing. This will help students to better internalize the concepts and implement them in their own writing. By using constructivist and behaviorist approaches to teach writing concepts in context, students will be successful in learning how to write in a new way.

References

Common Core State Standards (2009). http://www.corestandards.org/

Chiarelott, L. (2006). *Curriculum in context*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Marquette University. (2011, July 7). What makes writing so important?. In *Writing across the curriculum*. Retrieved October 27, 2011, from http://www.marquette.edu/wac/WhatMakesWritingSoImportant.shtml

Persky, H. R., Salahu-Din, D., & Miller, J. (2007). The nation's report card: Writing 2007.

Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved October 27, 2011

from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008468.

**Unit Outcomes**

Objectives Organized by Bloom’s Taxonomy

**Knowledge**

* + Students will use appropriate and varied transitions, precise language, and domain-specific vocabulary.
* Students will demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
* Students will demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
  + Students will spell correctly.

**Application**

* Students will write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
  + Students will engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
  + Students will use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
  + Students will use a variety of transition words, precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language.

**Synthesis**

* Students will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
* Students will develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
* Students will use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Source: Common Core State Standards (2009). http://www.corestandards.org/.

**Pre-Assessment**

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being the most comfortable and 5 being the least comfortable), share how you feel about the following skills.

Writing about personal experiences \_\_\_\_\_

Using transitions \_\_\_\_\_

Spelling \_\_\_\_\_

Punctuation \_\_\_\_\_

Grammar \_\_\_\_\_

Using descriptive details \_\_\_\_\_

Using sequence and organization \_\_\_\_\_

Adding dialogue \_\_\_\_\_

Writing to a specific audience \_\_\_\_\_

Editing and revising writing \_\_\_\_\_

Using technology to publish writing \_\_\_\_\_

Generating ideas in writing \_\_\_\_\_

What do you enjoy most about writing?

What do you enjoy the least?

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How can I help you with your writing skills?

In the space below, brainstorm idea for one of these topics.

* The Biggest Lie I Ever Told and Its Consequences
* The Best Decision I Ever Made
* The Hardest Thing I Ever Had to Do
* My Favorite Childhood Memory

Then, on a separate sheet of paper, use your writing skills to write a short narrative on one specific idea from your brainstorming.

**Lesson Plans**

**Day 1**

1. **Concept**: Focusing a topic
2. **Lesson Objectives:**

* Students will write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
  + Students will engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
* Students will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

*Key Question*: How do you narrow a topic in order to get to a manageable writing topic?

1. **Materials**:
2. **Procedures**:
3. Introductory Activity (15 min): Interactive/Engagement

* Write a broad topic on the board, like “food.” Have students write a short journal entry about this topic.
* Then, call on individual students to narrow the topic further- ex: hamburger, McDonalds hamburger, how McDonalds hamburgers are so cheap…
* Have all students write on the narrowed topic in their journals.

1. Developmental Activity (20 min): Discussion and Group Work

* Discuss the differences between the broad and narrowed topics. Ask students which piece of writing is more interesting, accurate, specific, and detailed.
* Have students pair up with a partner and grab a dry-erase board and marker. Write words on the front board- one at a time. Instruct partners to narrow the topic on their white boards until they end at a good place to start writing. It may look like a flow chart.
* Broad topics: Snow days, summer, presents, sports, homework, movies, etc.
* Have partners share their narrowed topic with others at their table after each word “round.”

1. Concluding/Closure Activity (10 min): Reflection

\*Students show be able to narrow their narrative topic from broad to specific.

* Pass back pre-assessment narratives and have students reflect on their topics.
* Ask students to fill out the Narrowing the Topic checklist/worksheet.

1. **Assessment**

* Formatives assessments will take place throughout the class during the dry-erase board activity, as well as after class by reviewing student checklists.

**Narrowing the Topic WS**

1. What broad topic did you begin with (this should be the topic on the pre-assessment sheet)?
2. What specific topic did you choose based on the broad prompt?
3. Is this specific enough to write a clear, original narrative? Why or why not?

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1. How can you narrow your topic even further?
2. What other details do you want to include in your writing?

**Day 2**

1. **Concept**: Learning to use descriptive details
2. **Lesson Objectives:**

* Students will write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, **relevant descriptive details**, and well-structured event sequences.
  + Students will use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
  + Students will use a variety of transition words, precise words and phrases, **relevant descriptive details, and sensory language**.

*Key Questions:* How do you add relevant descriptive details to your writing?

What is sensory language and how does it affect a piece of writing?

1. **Materials**: Projector, 3 pictures on computer, narrative pre-assessment papers, highlighters, exit slip
2. **Procedures**:
   * 1. Introductory Activity (15 min): Engagement

* Instruct all students to take out a piece of paper. Tell students that you are going to be showing students several pictures, and for each one, they will be describing what they see.
* Then, project one picture on the projector for 30 seconds only and ask them to describe the photo. After that, project the picture for 2 minutes and ask them to write a new description of the photo.
* Repeat with the remaining two photos.
* Have students share their descriptions of the photos- both the 30 second and the 2 minute description.
* Discuss the differences in the descriptions, including which description is more interesting and accurate.
  + 1. Developmental Activity (20 min): Discussion, Chalk Talk, Peer Editing
* After discussing what made the picture descriptions more accurate, ask students to take a moment to reflect on their own writing.
* Conduct a “Chalk Talk” on the front board by having students come up and write different ways to add detail to a piece of writing (examples may be dialogue, sensory details, specific words or phrases, etc)
* Pass back students’ pre-assessment narratives and instruct them to highlight places where they can add more detail to their piece.
* After students have worked on their own paper, have them find a partner, read their partner’s paper, and also highlight or write in places where more detail could be helpful. Have students discuss their reasoning after this activity.
  + 1. Concluding/Closure Activity (15 min): Revision and Reflection

\*Students should be able to add descriptive details and sensory language to their own writing.

* Have students begin to revise their narratives by rewriting their narratives based on the highlighted sections on their papers.
* Walk around and visit with each student to check in on their details!

1. **Assessment (5 min)**

* Pass out exit slip to each student and have them complete it before leaving the room.

3 pictures to place on the projector:

 

http://jiaxin99599.web.officelive.com/ice\_cream\_cone.html



**Descriptive Details Exit Slip**

*Use descriptive details to transform this sentence into something more detailed and interesting!*

I went to Mr. Freeze and ordered a sundae.

**Day 3**

1. **Concept**: Using transitions
2. **Lesson Objectives:**
   * Students **will use appropriate and varied transitions**, precise language, and domain-specific vocabulary.

*Key Question*: What is a transition and how do you use it in your writing?

1. **Materials**: Small bags of legos (1 for each pair of students), transition posters
2. **Procedures**:
3. Introductory Activity: Group work/Hands-on activity (12 min)

* Pass out a small bag of legos to each pair of students and place a folder or divider between students.
* Have each person build a model using legos, and then write out directions for the other person to build it.
* Trade the directions and have students try to build the model. When finished, have students compare their models built with just directions to the original.
* Have students discuss their methods of writing out directions and what they should have changed.

1. Developmental Activity: Group work (25 min)

* Ask students if anyone knows what a transition word is. Then, explain that they are words and phrases that help your writing to flow smoothly. They connect sentences and paragraphs so that writing is easier to read.
* Discuss a few examples with the class, including transition words that they used to help their partner build their lego model.
* Instruct students to take a look at the posters around the room: To show location, to conclude or summarize, to compare, to show contrast, to show time, to add information, to emphasize, to show numbers/steps.
* Have students work in groups and walk around and add any transition words that they can think of to each category.
* After, discuss the categories and add in important transitions that may be missing.

1. Concluding/Closure Activity: Revision (10-15 min)

\*Students should be able to add transitions to their narratives to help with the flow of their writing.

* Ask students to return to their narratives and find places where transitions could help their writing to flow more smoothly.
* Help students individually during this time.

1. **Assessment**

* Students will be assessed informally during the poster activity, as well as during individual meetings on transitions in their personal narratives.

**Transitional Words and Phrases**

**To show location**

above

across

along

around

behind

below

beside

between

down

inside

near

off

outside

over

throughout

under

**To conclude or**

**to summarize**

all in all

as a result

consequently

finally

in conclusion

in summary

last

therefore

to sum up

**To indicate time**

after

all at once

before

during

earlier

eventually

finally

first, second, etc.

immediately

later

meanwhile

next

not long after

not long before

quickly

slowly

soon

suddenly

then

yesterday

**To show contrast**

however

in spite of

instead

nevertheless

on the other hand

otherwise

still

**To compare**

also

as

in the same way

like

likewise

similarly

**To show emphasis**

again

for this reason

in fact

to emphasize

to repeat

truly

**To add information**

again

along with

also

and

an example of this

another

as well

as well as

besides

equally important

for example

for instance

furthermore

in addition

moreover

next

**Day 4**

1. **Concept**: Editing for spelling, grammar, and punctuation
2. **Lesson Objectives:**
   1. Students will use appropriate and varied transitions, precise language, and domain-specific vocabulary.

* Students will demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
* Students will demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
  1. Students will spell correctly.

*Key Question*: How much editing needs to be done in order to share with an outside source (Education Northwest, 2010)?

1. **Materials**: Editing sample paper, computer, projector, editing checklist, exit slip
2. **Procedures**:
3. Introductory Activity: Editing (15 min)

* Pass out a sample paragraph to the class and have students work with a partner to edit the paragraph. Instruct them to look for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and even capitalization.
* When students are finished, show the paragraph on the projector and ask students to give their input on things that need edited. Discuss errors that they might have missed, and discuss the importance of editing.

1. Developmental Activity: Editing/Peer editing (30 min)

* Guide students as they edit their own papers- tell them about different techniques, like editing a paper backwards (last sentence first) to catch all of the errors.
* As students are working, walk around and help students with their editing.
* Then, give students the chance to be the teacher! Pass out a peer editing checklist to each student and have them spend time editing a peer’s paper.
* Have students discuss their comments with each other. If time allows, have them edit more than one person’s paper.

1. Concluding Activity/Closure (10 min)

\*Students should be able to edit their papers for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors

* Have class discussion on errors they found most often, and how they corrected them to make their papers easier to read.
* Instruct students to complete an exit slip before leaving the classroom.

1. **Assessment**

* Students will be informally assessed throughout the editing process, and I will use their exit slips to check their understanding.

**Edit this paragraph and pay close attention to errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and even capitalization.**

my favorit childhood memory is going to disney world with my whole family. When i was five years old, my parents told me and my brothers that we were going to florida to see mickey mouse. Pack your bags my dad said. And off we went! when we got there we upaked our bags at the huge hotel and went swimin in the large pool. The next day we went to majic Kingdom and road all of the rides their. i even got autographs from the characters i was most excited about goofys autograph. It was a grate day!

**Editing Exit Slip**

*Edit and rewrite the sentences below using the skills learned in class today.*

today I went to the grocery store and bought ice creme, candy, and apples.

Last night i watched the little mermaid i ate popcorn two.

Peer Editing Checklist

Writer:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Needs work | Good | Outstanding |
| Writing holds the reader’s attention |  |  |  |
| Topic is narrowed and specific. |  |  |  |
| Writing is well organized, with an introduction, body, and conclusion |  |  |  |
| Narrative includes descriptive details that are interesting and accurate. |  |  |  |
| Grammar is correct. |  |  |  |
| Spelling is correct. |  |  |  |
| Sentences and paragraphs are punctuated properly. |  |  |  |
| Sentences are clear and concise. |  |  |  |
| Narrative has a good title |  |  |  |
| Narrative includes transitions that help the writing to flow. |  |  |  |

Questions you still have after reading the narrative:

Best parts of this narrative:

Areas needing more work:

Checklist adapted from Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

**Day 5**

1. **Concept**: Drafting final narratives using technology
2. **Lesson Objectives:**

* Students will use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

*Key Question*: How can you use technology to produce and publish writing?

1. **Materials**: Narrative rough drafts, computers
2. **Procedures**:
3. Introductory Activity: Think-Pair-Share (10 min)

* Have students think about what their final draft should look like when it is typed. Then, have students discuss this with a partner and later, share with the class.
* Students should mention some of these elements: title, author, double-spaced, indented paragraphs, 12-point font

1. Developmental Activity: Typing final drafts (30 min)

* Head down to the computer lab and instruct students to type their final drafts, keeping the style elements in mind.
* While students are typing, walk around and make sure all students are using the correct format.

1. Concluding Activity (Remaining time)

\*Students should have been able to use a computer to produce a typed narrative.

* When students are finished, conference with each student individually about the writing process. Ask students how they saw their writing improve, what they still need help with, and what they liked/disliked about the weekly writing workshop.
* After, collect their narrative for assessment.

1. **Assessment**

* Student narratives will be assessed using the 6 Trait Ideas and Conventions Rubrics from Education Northwest (2010). The post-assessment will also be completed during this time.

**Ideas Rubric**

Education Northwest. (2010). 6 + 1 Trait Rubrics. In *6 Traits*. Retrieved October 28, 2011, from http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/464.

**Conventions Rubric**

Education Northwest. (2010). 6 + 1 Trait Rubrics. In *6 Traits*. Retrieved October 28, 2011, from http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/464.

**Post-Assessment**

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being the most comfortable and 5 being the least comfortable), share how you feel about the following skills after completing the Narrative Unit.

Writing about personal experiences \_\_\_\_\_

Using transitions \_\_\_\_\_

Spelling \_\_\_\_\_

Punctuation \_\_\_\_\_

Grammar \_\_\_\_\_

Using descriptive details \_\_\_\_\_

Using sequence and organization \_\_\_\_\_

Adding dialogue \_\_\_\_\_

Writing to a specific audience \_\_\_\_\_

Editing and revising writing \_\_\_\_\_

Using technology to publish writing \_\_\_\_\_

Generating ideas in writing \_\_\_\_\_

What do you enjoy most about writing?

What do you enjoy the least?

What would you still like to know about writing?

Turn in your final narrative draft for a final assessment!

Writing Assignment 1: Personal Narrative

**Narratives provide human interest, spark our curiosity, and draw us close to the storyteller. In addition, narratives can do the following:**

* Create a sense of shared history, linking people together.
* Provide entertainment. Most people enjoy a thrilling movie or an intriguing book.
* C:\Users\Kerry\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\OFWANDYH\MC900440428[1].wmfProvide psychological healing. Reading or listening to the narrative of someone who faced a life crisis similar to one you are experiencing can help you through the crisis. They can also help the writer deal with the crisis.
* Provide insight. Narratives can help you discover values, explore options, and examine motives.

**Personal Narrative Topics (Choose 1 and make sure you are able to be SPECIFIC)**

* \_\_\_\_\_ The Weirdest Thing That Ever Happened to Me (or My Family)
* \_\_\_\_\_ The Best Decision I Ever Made
* \_\_\_\_\_ The Hardest Thing I Ever Had to Do
* \_\_\_\_\_ My Favorite Childhood Memory

**Your narrative will be assessed using the IDEAS trait rubric.**

A perfect paper should include:

* A well developed and focused topic
* A simple, original storyline
* Specific, interesting, and accurate details
* Original information that supports the main idea