



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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The Inner Voice: Writing as a Tool to Control Anger in the Classroom

Curriculum Unit 02.04.03
by Andrea Bailey

Students jump quickly at the opportunity to relate their emotions to their writing process. The hard part, then, for an educator is to make the classroom and the school as interesting as the students' emotional environments. Educators need to be active, out-spoken and structured about what will happen in the classroom. Students have to be actively engaged in writing that is relevant to their own experiences.

Primary grade students begin to go through the process of several different writing experiences during their school career. Drawing and scribbling, for example, lead into short writing and maybe one finished processed piece of work. The development of writing in the primary grades motivated me as a third grade teacher to do the research on writing and social development.

A teacher needs to think out an approach to values carefully, concentrating on those connected to the controversial issues of students in today's society. The writing process has to do with the thinking process. If teachers assume that the students possess basic skills of logic and thinking, when in truth they are lacking in them, then we as educators set the students up for failure before they can ever begin a writing assignment. This unit will help teachers tap into the students' thinking. It will help me develop the students' inner voice, which, in turn will allow the students to become better writers and practice useful anger management skills.

Looking at my students' experiences with writing was difficult, because the programs that we have been following to teach writing have advised us to prompt many of the students writing experiences. You find a key in your desk. It starts to pull you down the hallway. Where does this key lead you? You are walking through the forest. You come upon a fairy. This fairy grants you three wishes. What are your three wishes? Explain your adventure. These are just some of the forty-five minute writing prompts that a third grader may attempt during a typical writing assessment. Would you be able to write about a forest if you have never been in one? A fairy: what is that? The students' daily life was never written about. The students' feelings, thoughts or emotions were never really tapped into at all. That is why I felt I should try to integrate social development and the craft of writing, which will help the students hear their inner voice. I needed writing activities that will help improve my students' anger management skills in the classroom. This unit can easily be adopted in the curriculum used in k-3 grades across the New Haven Public School System Project Charlie.

Project Charlie is a prevention program set up to help teachers' help their students deal with drug, alcohol and anger management. This program is fine but how am I going to fit this in to my daily instruction? This unit will incorporate anger management skills (understanding the inner voice) and writing during a series of forty-

minute writing lessons.

Writing, as well as social development, needs to begin at an early stage of a child's schooling. If improper social development skills are not in place, many problems can occur. The biggest of, the problems high school drop out. This unit will empower practices in teachers' that will enable students to stay in school.

The unit "The Inner Voice: Writing as a Tool to Control Anger in the Classroom" consists of a nine step-writing organizer with a focus on managing anger. Students will evaluate their own work with checklists. Assessment consists of teacher formal and informal checkpoints. They will take place daily. The students will write about their thoughts and daily feelings to help them reflect and to pull feeling words (new vocabulary) from for their writing. It is towards these ends that I present the following unit objectives.

Academic Setting

The unit is designed for a 3rd grade classroom at Vincent E Mauro Science, Math Technology Magnet School in New Haven. Vincent E. Mauro services k-5 and next year will add on pre-kindergarten. Mauro is currently a Priority School. It is located in the Hill section of New Haven, Connecticut. It is one of the largest Kindergarten-Fifth Grade Elementary Schools in New Haven.

Vincent E. Mauro presently accommodates 490 students: 54% are African American, 45% are of Hispanic descent and 1% other. We currently have 23% of our students serviced in our Bilingual Program and 6% of our students serviced in our Special Education Program. Currently 11% of kindergarten has scored below standard on CAP. 67% of our first graders, 59% of our second graders and 38% of our third graders scored below district standard on the DRA. Many students did not achieve mastery on the 2001 CMT.

There are four third grade classes. Each class consists of no more than 27 students. Classes are fully mainstreamed with about 20 special education students who are fully integrated into a third grade class. A special education teacher team-teaches with the regular education teacher in the academic core classes for 1 hour a day.

Rationale

This unit will allow the students to feel comfortable during the CMT writing prompt. It is an attempt to help students hear their inner voice through their writing. My team's unit will give the students the tools they need to be successful in writing through Social Development, Physical Education and Social Studies. I hope that the team project will allow them to gather an abundant amount of experiences to reach mastery on the CMT and in their own life experiences. The team members will place a book in each school library that the team members are teaching in. The book will consist of several pieces of writing gathered from each teacher's unit: Social Development, Social Studies and Physical Education.

Objectives

My first objective is to teach students in third grade that writing can be a means of self-expression as well as a tool for communicating with others. I will attempt to show them that writing is an extension of how we think and speak to one another. Other techniques will be used in the classroom. I will assess the lessons on a daily basis.

My second objective is to teach third graders the use of good writing techniques using journals. All journal writing will be done in a marble notebook. I choose this type of notebook because of its durability. We will use the journal writing as a vehicle to hear the daily inner feelings of the students.

Third, I will introduce the writing graphic organizer along with paragraph structure, capitalization and punctuation skills in the written language. All writing pieces will be kept in individual folders, which will be used to create a finished piece of work. This will allow the students to experience writing in parts, which will become eventually, a published piece in our Author's Corner.

Fourth, I will combine writing skills with artwork. The students will draw what each emotion looks like. This will introduce the students to an unfamiliar vocabulary. In their writing it will allow them to express their inner voice.

Strategies

At first, I will allow my students to speak and write in whatever voice they feel comfortable with. Next, I will let the students know that the way you speak and the way you write (Standard English) should be brought together with a lot of hard work. Our journals will allow the students to be free in their writing or find their own written inner voice. The students will use these journals as a way to write their emotions or feelings towards daily activities in our classroom or in other classrooms. Standard English will not matter here.

Another way we will use our journals is to experiment with the narrative style of writing. The craft of writing narrative is very hard for our inner city children due to the lack of experience, experience with language, activities and/or literature. In this unit the students will be able to experience other ways to express their emotions. In turn this will open up doors to new vocabulary and a means for them to control their anger.

The students will call their first draft in their journals their sloppy copy. The entire vocabulary that they will need to explode their main event, discuss in more detail about their characters, setting problem and solution are in their journal writing. The students will be able to work with their sloppy copies during editing. This process will also give the students a sense of proper sentence structure, paragraph formation and any other mechanical errors found in their writing. The unit will take the students through the following writing process, which follows these steps:

Brainstorming week 1

I modeling the strategy will do brainstorming. I will be standing up at an easel with chart paper and a marker. I

will make a web on the paper. (1.0) The center square is the main idea of the piece. Five other squares will connect around the center square. These squares will be the supporting details. This is where I slip in a social development lesson talking to the students about how they are the center square. The five squares around them are their support team. That support team may include a teacher, a parent, a sibling, an aunt, uncle, or a mentor. You can not start your writing without support, just as you can not start dealing with anger management without support. I use the diagram below to illustrate my point.

(1.0)

(figure available in print form)

Good Beginnings (sound, action or dialogue) week 1

(Examples in lesson plan section) The lesson plan I use to teach this topic is First Impressions. This lesson is a teacher-sponsored writing lesson. I ask the students to read and discuss their pieces. Having the students write about a first impression will show the students how similar it is to a first paragraph in piece of writing. You either like it or not. A writer has to grab the reader in their first paragraph.

Another lesson I use is lesson four. In the lesson I introduce the students to the topics, I will cover with them. Dialogue and thought are very good opportunities for me as a teacher to incorporate a social development lesson. I explain to the students that talking with another person or to ones, self when you are older can be a good way to work out anger. Talking is somewhat of a cooling off period where your mind evaluates the problem at hand.

Good Beginnings should include

An action: put the character in the setting doing something.

A sound: something you might hear in that setting.

Dialogue: characters speaking to one another.

Thoughts or Questions: asking or thinking that takes place in the mind of the character.

Example of Good Beginnings (student work)

Sound

Yippee! I was so excited because I was going on a camping trip. I am going with my six cousins and their parents, my parents and my sister and brother.

“Arrrgh!” he yelled.

Action

I was riding my bike to the tree covered woods. Suddenly, I saw a bee hive. A bear was trying to get the

beehive. I began to ride my bike quickly past the huge bear.

I sank my teeth into that green apple, juice squirted in my eyes.

Explode the Moment (use the five senses) week 2

This means to write about the most important event in the story as if it was going on in slow motion. Describe the main characters and setting (when and where). Include the character's thoughts and feelings in the story.

The lesson I use to teach this topic is Coloring our Feelings. Students most of the times want to write in more details but do not have experience with that vocabulary to do so. Coloring our feelings will teach my students new vocabulary to use about feeling a character is going through in a main event of a story. Being able to use your words to express your feeling rather than violence is another skill grasped from this lesson.

Lesson 5 is also good to teach this topic as well. I find the main event hard for students to grasp. Therefore, I do revisit this topic throughout the year using lesson five but substituting the books. I tell my students that the only time it is OK for them to explode is in their writing. I find that the vividness of the main event comes to life when they are writing about their own feelings. They are letting themselves become the characters in their pieces.

Good Endings (wish, hope or dream) week 2

A story ending should include a memory of the main event, the main character's feelings, hopes or wishes about that event. Lesson 6 is the lesson I use to teach this. I find that this is a good lesson to do throughout the year to promote self-expression in a non-violent way. I also take this chance and sneak in a social development lesson about how to reflect in a positive way on the event that has happened to make you so upset.

Self-Conference (checklist) week 3

The checklist will allow the students to check their piece. (Attached in unit lesson plans) I use lesson three with the self-conference. Paragraph patterns brush the students up on indenting, capitalization, punctuation, and five sentences being in a paragraph. I find this to be a good time to do this lesson right before the students conference with me.

I also talk to the students about how it is good to have your own checklist when you are dealing with anger. In my classroom, we use the stoplight method. Red light: stop, think and reflect. Yellow lights: slow and ask your self will this effect my life tomorrow? Green light deals with the problem at hand. This approach seems to work with my students. I will continue to use it.

Teacher Conference week 3

This will allow me to evaluate all students on the same criteria. (Attached in unit lesson plans)

Rewrite week 4

The students will correct errors from the conference.

Teacher Conference week 4

A time to revisit the finished piece. Fix up any last minute errors. (Attached in unit lesson plans Writing

Evaluation Scale)

Final Publication week 4

Type and post piece for viewing.

My overall writing goal is to equip the students with a writing process that they can always use in narrative writing.

The following excerpt is from *A Student-Centered Handbook for Teachers* . Each of the following five points are taken directly from this book by Moffett wrote. I strongly believe that you should look at the entire piece. This book helped me understand the role the teacher plays in the students writing experience.

The stuff to be conceived and verbalized is primarily the raw stuff, not the language matters themselves. Rendering experience into words is the real business of school...

The role of the teacher is to help students expand their cognitive and verbal repertory as far as possible, starting with their initial limits.

The most effective and best-motivated learning process for approaching this goal is trail and error. The teacher selects the trials, the speaking, reading, and writing assignments....

The only way, short of tutorial, to provide responses is to develop small-group interaction into a sensitive learning method....

Producing language is more difficult than receiving it (*A Student-Centered Handbook* Moffett, pp. 11-12)

Implementation

This unit is designed to be used three days a week for a month in a forty-minute block with second and third grade students.

Assessment

Assessment will be ongoing. The journals will house all “sloppy copies”; class discussion and assignments will provide assessment opportunities. Students will evaluate their own work working with the self-conference checklist.

Lesson Plans:

Lesson 1

Week one

First Impressions

Materials:

Marble Notebooks for each student

Timer

Objectives:

Students will write for 10 minutes.

Students will understand the meaning of their inner voice.

Students will listen and question my first entry in my journal.

Explanation about Journal Writing:

First, I will distribute a journal to each student. Then I will explain to them that all of their writings will be in this journal. "The journal writing will help us together hear your inner voice." I will explain to my students that their inner voice is that little voice inside you that makes you special.

" This journal is a place where you can write good things, bad things or things about me or any other adult that is getting on your last nerve." " You will get credit for every full page in your journal that is written. Not drawn on! Written on!" "Your writing will become easier when you start to discuss things that matter to you. This journal will help you gather vocabulary about your everyday feelings and thoughts, which, can be used during your graded writing prompts. Everyday we will write for 10 minutes about our feelings and then maybe even share them." "I know all of this listening sounds overwhelming, but tomorrow we will do a lot more hands-on things and a little less listening."

Instruction:

During the course of these lessons, I came to classify three general types of writing, journal entries, teacher-sponsored writings and finished products. The first writing task I ask my students to complete is teacher response writing. What were your first impressions of the class?

This is a lesson I will always use to begin all my writing classes. We all wrote for ten minutes. I asked for volunteers to read their piece. When no one raised his or her hand to read. I read my piece.

My hands are sweating, my heart is racing. I hope this lesson works. I want my Students to be excited as I am. I know that writing is very hard. However, I want them to grasp that writing is a wonderful way to express themselves. I want my students to feel safe, to view me as someone they can trust.

I'm scared. Writing is such an important skill to master. I believe in these students. I hope they feel the same. Writing helps me think, become a better writer, and learn more about myself. I hope they understand I am hearing to listen and help them.

I hope that breaks the ice. Students should read their pieces. The first writing should be very tailored. Students grasp at this age anything they put down on paper will be evaluated by their teacher. Here is where I explain my expectations of the following lessons.

Assessment:

I will assess the students through oral and written strategies.

Lesson two

Week 2

Coloring our Feelings

Materials:

Journals

Timer

How are you Peeling? by Saxton Freymann and Joost Elffers

Crayons

White construction paper with feelings already written on the top in black marker (angry, sad, embarrassed, shocked, anxious etc.)

Objectives:

The students will write about their feelings and thought for 10 minutes.

The students will color an image that corresponds with their feeling.

The students will present their feeling poster.

Instruction:

First, my students and I will write in our journals for 10 minutes. We will start the lesson off by reading and discussing the book How are you Peeling. The laughter should fill the room. Then, I will have a poster already done by me to model for the students. I will show them how I thought of an action my body would do when I feel that way. "For example, when you are sad you hang your head down. When you are anxious your palms start to sweat." I will pass one piece of construction paper to each student. I will inform them of how much time they have to accomplish the task. When there is five minutes left, I will give them a warning. These posters are a good thing to hang up all year to allow students to pull description words from for their writing.

Assessment:

I will assess the students orally as well as observing the colored pictures of their feelings.

Lesson 3

Week 3

Paragraph Patterns

Materials:

Journals

Paragraph or Not Hand out

Transparency of the worksheet

Overhead projector

KWL chart (*What* you already know, *What* you want to *Know* and *What* you have *Learned*)

Marker

Dry erase markers

Objectives:

The students will recognize a paragraph or not.

The students will write for 10 minutes about their feelings.

The students will orally fill in the KWL chart.

Instruction:

My students and I will journal write for ten minutes.

I will brainstorm with the students about what their prior knowledge is about paragraphs. I will fill in the graph while they answer orally. I will not prompt the students at this time. I am assessing their prior knowledge.

Then, I will ask the students what they would like to learn about paragraph formation. This is a time when I will not prompt the students about information I know I am going to cover in this lesson (Indenting, capitalization, punctuation, and 5 sentences in a paragraph about the same information and chronological order). I will leave the learned column for the conclusion of the lesson.

I will pass out a Paragraph or Not handout to each student. My copy is on the overhead. I use different color markers for each skill I am teaching. I teach each skill that is on our "W" column of our chart. When the worksheet is done, I have the students fill in their "L" on their KWL chart. I have the students respond to the question: Why do think learning the correct way to form a paragraph is important? Make sure the answer is in paragraph form. The journals will be collected for assessment today!

Assessment:

I will assess the students informally through their brainstorming activity. A formal assessment will be done on the worksheet. The writing in their journals this far will be assessed. I will just make sure that they have been keeping up on the assignments.

Lesson 4

Week 1

Nine Step Writing Process

Materials:

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Journals

Nine step outline

Objectives:

The students will write for ten minutes in their journals.

The students will read and understand the five senses.

Instruction:

10 minutes write in your journals.

1. Brainstorming
2. Good Beginning
3. Explode the Moment
4. Good Ending
5. Self-Conference

Teacher-Conference

Rewrite

Teacher-Conference

Final Publication

“Let’s start with a Good Beginning. We need to grab the reader as soon as they read the first sentence. We need to start our first paragraph off with our own original HOOK! We have to help the readers see the first event happen, hear a noise, feel the moment or taste the object as soon as it begins.” I will have the students brainstorm as I record the answers on chart paper. I will keep the chart paper up all year long.

Example of chart

See words	Hear words	Feel words	Taste words
Bright	bang!	Anxious	scrumptious
Sharp	bomb!	Sleepy	delightful
Large	splat!	Over-whelmed	sweet/sour
Tiny			

Color words

Assessment:

I will conduct an informal assessment done when the students are brainstorming about the different feeling

words.

Lesson Five

Week 2/Week 3

Explode the Moment

Materials:

Journals

Overhead models of explode the moment examples

Eyes of the Amaryllis by Natalie Babbitt

The Great Gilly Hopkins by Katherine Paterson

Objectives:

The students will identify elaborate detail.

The students will journal write for 10 minutes.

The students will listen and answer verbal questions about two stories.

Instruction:

After you write the first paragraph you are to find one event out of the three that you can really explode. “We need to ask ourselves detailed questions about that one event. What does the color, size, age, shape or weight remind you of? If all of these questions are discussed then the reader can be right there at the event. This is where your journals will come in handy. Use them to take feeling vocabulary to make your story your own.”

Assessment:

I will assess the understanding of the topic verbally when the questions about the two stories are reviewed.

Lesson 6

Week 2/Week3

Good Endings

Materials:

Journals

Overheads of Good Beginnings

Objectives:

The student will write for ten minutes in their journal.

The student will read a good ending piece.

The students will role-play with another student.

The student will act out a feeling.

Instruction:

My students and I will write in our journals for ten minutes about our feelings today. Then I have them get into groups of five. I line them up like a train. Their backs are facing one another. The person at one of the ends thinks of a feeling in their head. The person in front taps the person in front of them on the shoulder and acts out that feeling. The feeling goes down the entire line but with different expressions to go with it. The last person has to say the feeling that they are acting out.

After this is done, I have the students' think about the activity they have just completed. "How is this like an ending of a story?" I explain to the students that an author is trying to incorporate that beginning of a story at the end. However, the way the author goes about it is different from the beginning of the story. Just like the different actions we all did with that one emotion. Together we read a good ending and have the student discuss why this is a good ending. I keep reminding the students that wishing, hoping or dreaming about something can always connect you back to the beginning.

Assessment:

The assessment will be an informal one that is done after the role-play game is done. The students will make similarities between the role-playing and the end of a story.

Writing Evaluation Scale Teacher Conference Week 4

Title _____

Content Qualities Yes No

Focus on one idea or event

Details create picture and explode

Organized with beginning, middle and end

Five sentences in a paragraph

Vivid description

Variety of word choice

Ending has a wish, hope or a dream

Beginning has an action, sound, dialogue or though question

punctuation errors

spelling errors

run-on sentences

neatness

Comments:

Self-Conference Checklist (Student) Week 3

Name _____ Date _____

Title _____

Read over your draft. Make any revisions you notice.

Read it again, this time asking yourself the questions below. If you answer the question with a **yes**, check the line next to the question. If the answer is **no**, revise your writing, and then put a check mark next to the question.

_____ Does my writing make sense?

_____ Do I have a good beginning, middle, and end?

_____ Did I include vivid detail?

_____ Have I “exploded” the most important part of the story?

_____ Did I get rid of the unimportant parts?

_____ Was my beginning interesting?

_____ Is my writing well organized?

_____ Did I change words that I often used too often (said, he, she)

I really like the way I

Next time I will concentrate on

Student Bibliography

Freymann, Saxton and Joost, Elffers. *How are you Peeling?* New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, Scholastic Press, 1999. Feelings and food, what a great combination. Children love this book and teachers do too.

Kunz, Roxanne. *What Should I do?* New York: Dillon Press, 1986. This book takes a look at several situations children go through on a day-to-day basis. Ideas and suggestions on how to handle the situation are given in the book.

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Nixon, Joan. *If You Were A Writer* . New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1995. This book talks about a little girl who has a writer for a mother. Her mother works hard towards the goal of being a good writer.

Teacher Bibliography

Bentley, Tom. *Learning beyond the Classroom* . London and New York, Routledge, 1998. Tom Bentley argues that if education is to meet the emerging challenges of the twentieth century, we must recognize that learning takes place far beyond the formal setting.

Blatchford, Iram and Priscilla, Clarke. *Supporting Identity, Diversity and Language in the Early Years* . Philadelphia: Buckingham, 2000. This book touches upon how important it is to expose children to a wide variety of learning experiences during the early stages of development.

Brand, Alice. *Therapy in Writing* . New York: Lexington Books, 1980. This book takes a week-by-week approach, which, lays out lessons that are helpful and useful in a classroom setting. Students are examined on their own writing ability through out the book.

DeRoche F.Edward. *Educating Hearts and Minds* . New York: Corwin Press, Inc, 1998. This book takes a look at the school as a community. The school community is looked at as a whole that can change the performance of the students.

Elbow, Peter. *Everyone Can Write: Essays toward a Hopeful Theory of Writing and Teaching Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. This book takes an easy approach to the art of writing. Although not geared towards elementary school children the ideas presented in the book were on a whole worthwhile.

Elbow, Peter. *Landmark Essays on Voice and Writing* . Davis, California: Hermagoras Press, 1994. The voice is the focus of the book as a whole. Working towards allowing the children to open up by writing their own experiences.

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Kitson, Neil. *Teaching in the Primary School* . New York : Routledge, 1997. This book focuses on the Primary teaching atmosphere. Giving ideas on how a teacher can incorporate all the aspects of teaching.

Lamme, Linda. *Growing Up Writing* . New York Colortone Press, 1984. Writing is an art form a lot of children grow up with. In this book ways in which a parent and teacher can incorporate writing in everyday life are touched upon.

Linston, Daniel. *Teacher Education and the Social Conditions of Schooling*. New York: Routledge, 1991. Tests are not the only factors in a child's learning environment. The social conditions of a school setting can play a big role in the education of our children. This book touches upon just that.

Mariconda, Barbara. *The Most Wonderful Writing Lessons Ever*. New York: Scholastic, 1999. This book has everything a teacher needs to teach the essential elements and magic of wonderful writing.

Moffett. *A Students Centered Handbook* . New York, 1890. This book consists of a five-point guideline that will help teachers understand the role they play in the students writing experience.

Pappas, Christine. *Teachers in Literacy Teaching-Learning* . London: Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2001. Students are not the only people learning during a school day. In this book teachers are learning along with their students.

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