



Enhancing Ego-Strengths to Develop Writing Skills

Curriculum Unit 81.04.05
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Introduction

When was the last time you assigned a written composition to your class entitled, “What I Did on My Summer Vacation” (or some variation of this kind of theme)? When was the last time you heard a student say, “I don’t know what to write”? Does this sound familiar to you? As a teacher I once assigned similar types of compositions, and I very often heard students’ negative responses. Through my experiences I realized that the above kind of assignments are horribly dull and that students are being honest with their responses.

Writing is often painful for students and there are some who cannot pull together their thoughts. It requires close coordination between the brain and hand. Attention must be given to spelling, punctuation, choice of words, sentence structure, and a number of other aspects that consist of good writing skills. It is a complex process far more demanding than speaking and unfortunately the last of the language skills to receive attention in school.

Teaching students to write is not an easy task. It is difficult, frustrating and exasperating for both the teacher and the students. One of the crucial aspects of communication is the students’ ability to write effectively. Teachers have been preoccupied with the development of basic skills in grammar, usage, and mechanics. In our obsession with their acquisition of the subject, we very seldom have stopped to explore the students’ interests and experiences which are relevant to them. Consequently, students are engaged in laborious language activities which have no relevance to them. We are being unfair when we expect students to respond to writing assignments. It is no wonder that they balk at such assignments and are incapable of writing. In order for students to write well they must draw from their experiences. Writing inevitably is self-expression.

Students are imprisoned by the physical mechanics of writing and we as teachers need to free them. We must turn our attention towards looking at our students as individuals who have a language of their own and a way of looking at the world. We must try to help students to develop positive feelings. The way students feel about themselves is detrimental to their successful academic performance. My readings have indicated that a positive self is teachable. The classroom should be a place where successful experiences are provided which produce feelings of adequacy. It should be a place that encourages exploration and discovery which facilitates changes in self-perception.

Design of Curriculum Unit

This curriculum unit is designed for students entering the middle school. It is based on the premise that if students develop positive self-concepts then written communication will no longer be a frustrating task. The concept of developing ego-strengths can be adapted to any grade level. It is designed for teachers who feel concern about the self-concept as a legitimate part of the educating process. The strategies, classroom activities, and resources referred to may be used by teachers as aids towards enhancing ego-strengths in students.

Background—The Middle School

The middle schools' organizational structure usually includes any combination of grades five to nine. It is designed to accommodate a unique period between early adolescence and puberty, or roughly the age bracket of ten to fourteen.

The middle school students are ready to learn certain social skills, but only in ways that are suitable to them. In order for students to acquire good social skills we must provide many opportunities for social participation. One way of promoting good attitudes is in being reasonable and consistent in our own. We can condition students to behave in certain situations by standards we impose. Students will make knowledge their own from their personal experiences. At this age level students need first hand experiences in taking turns in listening, talking and doing. They should have practice in accepting and giving criticisms objectively. This is the stage in their development where they may learn to establish reasonable standards of initiative and responsibility for becoming socially aware of others and of learning.

Objectives of this Curriculum Unit

There are three basic objectives of this curriculum unit. The design of the unit will be in three parts, in order to develop each objective.

1. To provide experiences for students to see themselves as positive human beings (with feelings, beliefs, values, attitudes, desires, needs, and wants).
2. To develop students' ability to compose, choose and combine words in such a way that they convey meanings clearly and effectively.
3. To review and develop skills in grammar, usage, and mechanics.

In this curriculum unit I am particularly concerned with the development of objective one. I believe that students do not learn to write from dwelling on grammar exercises or learning prescriptive rules about English. In order for students to write we must allow our students to write. We must throw away our red marking pencils and put aside our formal language exercises temporarily.

Steps for the Teacher

An effective writing program requires a great deal of preparation for the teacher. Planning requires that you look beyond the content of the subject and provide learning experiences to motivate and involve students in the learning process.

1. The teacher should be cognizant of the social, emotional, and physical development of the middle school student.
2. The teacher should know her class in terms of academic strengths and weaknesses.
3. The teacher should know her class in terms of interests, attitudes and feelings. She should be aware that they tend to change over the course of the year.
4. The teacher must be sensitive to students' needs and flexible in responding to them.
5. The teacher should become a member of the group sharing her experiences, interests, and feelings.
6. The teacher should provide experiences for students to feel free to express themselves with their peers and teacher.
7. The teacher should develop speaking and listening activities for students. They may include classroom discussions, group discussions, interviews, class meetings, and show and tell activities, etc.
8. The teacher should provide a conducive atmosphere for learning. It may include bulletin boards, learning centers, independent and small and/or large group activities, etc.

PART ONE —To provide experiences for students to see themselves as positive human beings.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE WRITING PROGRAM

To begin the writing program you must take each student where he is. A writing program has to start with the students' perception of where he is. Therefore, the early stages have to emphasize the importance of the individual student's uniqueness and the teacher's willingness and even determination to accept it. Every way of perceiving is valid, and no one perception is better than another.

The learning environment should be a place where positive, caring and supportive growth is promoted. Teachers and students must actively participate in developing this environment. They should sit down together and discuss freely topics such as cooperation, trust, fear, acceptance, competition, etc. These discussions will help to create the kind of climate that fosters total pupil growth.

The teachers' role in this program is extremely important. Her attitudes and willingness to accept students where they are and maintain a nonjudgemental attitude is important. One of the highest achievements for the teacher is to aid in the development of character in her students. It is possible for teachers to effect change in the self-concept of students either in a positive or negative way. The teachers' own attitude has much to do with the pupils adopting or not adopting effective motives for learning. The teachers' attitude is of supreme importance in determining how much or how little they will accomplish. The students' learning habits are most effective when they have adopted self-accepted and self-maintained motives. The successful teacher will motivate students by developing activities for students to identify their strengths and capabilities. By helping

students to develop special talents they may already possess and continuously acknowledging students' achievements and successes, ego-strengths will begin to evolve.

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE SELF-CONCEPT

OBJECTIVE #1

1. To help students expand their perception of themselves.
2. To assist the teacher in identifying interests and needs of students.

ACTIVITY #1 To develop a personal questionnaire.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

1. Students may complete this questionnaire independently.
2. The teacher can work along with the class and discuss each question and assist students in completion of the questionnaire.

SAMPLE FORM

1. Name
2. Birth Date
3. Address
4. Do you have a nickname?
How do you feel about it?
5. Name the members of your family
6. Are you the oldest or youngest in your family?
7. Do you have a pet?
8. How do you spend your free time after school and on weekends?
9. What are your favorite hobbies, sports, or crafts if any?
10. What are your favorite T.V. programs?
11. Name something you hate to do.
12. Name something you like to do.
13. How do you feel about school?
14. What do you like about this classroom?
15. What do you dislike about this classroom?
16. What is your favorite subject?
17. What subject do you dislike?
18. Who is your best friend?
19. Why is she or he your best friend?

20. What does friendship mean to you?

21. When you have a problem whom do you usually talk to about it?

OBJECTIVE #2

1. To help students expand their perception of themselves.
2. To help students develop positive aspects about themselves.

ACTIVITY #1 Have students make a collage, "Me, Myself, and I".

MATERIALS Use a wide variety of art media such as chalk, pencil, ink, charcoal, crayon, pastel, watercolor, tempera, or magic markers. Have students bring in a variety of old magazines, brochures, and catalogues.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

1. Have students cut out pictures, words, symbols that show what they are and tell about themselves, i.e., likes, dislikes, desires, and needs.
2. Display them on the bulletin board.
3. Have students explain their collage and tell about themselves to the class.

ACTIVITY #2 Have students sketch, draw, paint a picture of how they see themselves.

MATERIALS Use construction paper or poster board. Use a wide variety of art media such as chalk, pencils, ink, charcoal, crayon, pastel, watercolor, tempera, or magic markers.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

1. Have students sketch, draw, or paint a picture of themselves as they see themselves. Students may decide to draw from memory or use a mirror.
2. Display the pictures on the bulletin board, for special projects, birthdays, or for some recognition of students' performances.

ACTIVITY #3 Have students draw a picture of things they do that make them feel good about themselves. Draw things that make them feel badly about themselves.

MATERIALS Use construction paper, crayons, magic markers, and pencils.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

1. Have students divide paper in half to show both feelings.
2. Form small groups and have students discuss things that make them feel good, and ways they can improve on those things that make them feel badly about themselves.

OBJECTIVE #3

1. To build a sense of group rapport.
2. To help students expand their perception of themselves.

ACTIVITY #1 Have students draw the floor plans of where they live.

MATERIALS Large sheets of construction paper, crayons, magic markers, pencils, ink, watercolor, or tempera paints.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

1. Upon completion of drawing ask them to form into groups of three or four students. Each student will take the members of his or her group on a guided tour of his or her home.

2. The teacher may decide to develop a worksheet listing questions for discussion.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR WORKSHEET

1. Where do you live?
2. Is this a one family house or an apartment house?
3. How many families live in this house or apartment?
4. How many rooms are there in your house or apartment?
5. Describe each room in your house as you draw them. What colors are there in each room? Describe the furniture.
6. What room do you play in?
7. What room do you watch T.V. in?
8. What room do you study in?
9. What room do you sleep in?
10. Do you have any chores?

OBJECTIVE #4

1. To help students establish positive feelings towards themselves and towards their classmates.
2. To develop an environment of trust and support.
To build a sense of group rapport.

ACTIVITY #1 "Something to Brag About".

MATERIALS Have students bring in photographs, medals, certificates, ticket stubs, autographed baseballs, newspaper clippings, trophies, plaques, ribbons, and objects that remind them of their abilities and competencies.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

1. Have students share one or more with the class.
2. Use a camera and take a picture of each student's success and display them on the bulletin board.

ACTIVITY #2 Class Mural

MATERIALS Provide the class with butcher paper, newsprint, or large sheets of construction paper. Use a wide variety of art media such as chalk, pencils, ink, charcoal, crayon, pastels, watercolor, tempera paints, or magic markers.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

1. Divide the paper in half. On one side have students depict the things they do in common and on the other half the things they do on their own.
2. The class may discuss their likes and differences.

ACTIVITY #3 Graffiti Board

MATERIALS Provide the class with butcher paper, newsprint, or large sheets of construction paper. Have pencils, pens, and magic markers available.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

1. Have a designated area where students can write or draw something they want. It's their place to let off steam in a nondestructive manner.

PART TWO —To develop students' ability to compose, choose and combine words in such a way that they convey meanings clearly and effectively.

WRITING IS SELF-EXPRESSION

In order for students to develop good writing skills it is important that the teacher begin with techniques they can comprehend. Students' writing must emanate from common occurrences in the classroom or from experiences that are part of their personal lives. These experiences can be either imaginary or real; however, they must be the students'! They should be specifically related to the students' interests, ideas, feelings, and needs. It should make use of the students' own language, vocabularies, and sentences.

ROLE OF STUDENTS

1. The students must be aware of the significance of writing as it pertains to their own lives and the lives of others.
2. The students must draw from a variety of experiences and interests they have in order to write.
3. The students must express themselves orally before they express themselves in written form.
4. The students must be situated in a satisfying and supportive classroom environment.
5. The students must be aware that as writers they always have an audience.

6. The students must read and hear good literature in order to learn to write well.
7. The students must be aware of the composing process. (writing and rewriting).
8. The students must learn to expand their vocabularies since it is a major element of good writing.
9. The students must be involved in the evaluating process of their own writing.
10. The students must learn to share their writing.

ORAL DISCUSSION AND THE ART OF QUESTIONING

Each writing activity whether group or individual should begin with some oral discussion. It will give the student an opportunity to express their ideas and listen to others. This will give students confidence before writing. It reduces the tension of not knowing what to write and it helps to develop ideas for writing. A teacher can consciously make a difference by knowing how to vitalize the discussion and emphasize the right questions that successfully steer the discussion. The teacher should emphasize the kinds of questions or topics that evoke thought, feeling, or imagination. Such as, What do you think about?, What would you do if?, What do you mean by?. Factual questions such as Who? What? How? and Where?, should be interspersed among the interpretive kind. Speaking and listening occupy a large proportion of the time people spend in communication. Writing is an attempt to record speech, and therefore oral discussion should be a prerequisite to any writing assignment.

BEGINNING WRITING

Students should be aware of individual needs for writing.

OBJECTIVE #1

1. To develop a purpose for writing.

ACTIVITY #1 The teacher and/or students may collect samples of writing.

MATERIALS Obtain a wide variety of samples of writing.

1. Passages from stories, novels, magazine articles, etc.
2. Poems

3. Lyrics of songs
4. Articles from newspapers such as:
 - a. editorials
 - b. current events
 - c. School Forum By: Nicholas Criscuolo
 - d. Parents Ask By: Louise Bates Ames.
 - e. Hints from Heloise
 - f. Ann Landers, or other advice columns g. recipes

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

1. Teacher and/or student will read writing of choice.
2. Discussion will follow. These articles have been written to show individual need for writing.

Suggestions:

1. To show feelings and attitudes.
2. To express joy, happiness, gratitude, curiosity, compassion, anger, sorrow, fear, hostility, anxieties.
3. To express personal interest.
4. To express opinion (editorialize).
5. To give ideas or explanations.
6. To discuss an event or an incident.
7. To give or request information.

OBJECTIVE #2

1. To develop an interest writing inventory with class.

ACTIVITY #1 I would like to write and hear about _____.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

Develop a list of ideas and topics students would like to write and hear about with the class. Discuss with the class and suggest topics such as:

1. Family members and relationships.
2. Experiences that are positive or negative.
3. Images of self.
4. Problems, values, standards, ideas, goals.

ACTIVITY #2 Provide teacher-made activities. Some students must be stimulated to write. They require the assistance of the teacher.

MATERIALS Make up activities such as:

1. Sentences and phrases to begin stories.
2. Headlines from newspapers that can be used as ideas for stories.
3. Provide a collection of pictures of places, food, people, entertainment, special occasions, scenery, sports, etc.
4. On 3x5 Index cards create story beginnings, middles, and ends.
 - a. Beginnings: Give just enough to suggest characters, setting, and maybe plot.
 - b. Middles: that can be developed in both directions to tell a story.
 - c. Ends: What might have happened in the entire story?

DEVELOP A DAILY NEWSPAPER —Together with class discuss items of most importance in the class, the school, the community, and the country that can be topics for the “Daily Newspaper”.

GROUP COMPOSITIONS

Group composition can be an effective means of introducing new techniques and providing models for the class. The students compose cooperative compositions where all join in developing a story for the news. In

developing the composition the teacher should:

1. Have students express their ideas on a topic that is familiar and interesting to them.
2. Through questions and discussion techniques the teacher should stimulate thinking about the topic.
3. The students should be encouraged to consciously express themselves for the written composition.
4. Develop a sense of organization (sequence).
5. Assist students in the evaluation of their expression of ideas.

As the teacher writes the composition for the class she should call attention, incidentally but consistently, to capitalization, punctuation, sentence structure, grammar, etc. However, the teacher should avoid permitting the composition from becoming a formal exercise in mechanics. The writing lesson should be a vital, worthwhile and student-directed enterprise. Cooperative compositions should arise in connection with activities that students have a genuine reason for writing. They should involve the active participation of all students. Such experiences make writing seem to be worthy of one's best efforts. Students build favorable attitudes and attain practical experience. The composition may be done on the board or on a chart by the teacher.

DICTATION

The students should study the model composition written by the group. The teacher should note the content, organization, sentence structure, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. After the teacher has concealed the model, the students write it from dictation. The instruction in dictation exercises is usually aimed towards improvement of mechanics such as capitalization, punctuation, etc., or a matter of form like margins and indentation. The models should exemplify good paragraph development.

FROM GROUP COMPOSITIONS TO INDEPENDENT COMPOSITIONS

When students begin to develop their own compositions it's important that they write about subjects that they are familiar with. My first independent composition assignments of the year are family oriented. There are several reasons why I choose the family; they are:

1. Students are not baffled by not knowing what to say or write about.
2. The teacher is able to learn about students' feelings, beliefs, values, attitudes, desires, needs, and wants.
3. Writing lessons can be extended. Students can bring in family pictures of the people they talk about, the activities they do together, etc. These pictures may serve as topics for compositions.

DAY ONE—Let me introduce you to my family .

PROCEDURES

1. Write the following words on the board:
 1. mother
 2. father
 3. sister
 4. brother
 5. grandmother
 6. grandfather
 7. aunt
 8. uncle
 9. cousin
2. Students love to hear about their teacher's family. Show pictures of your family and tell the class a few things about them.
3. Lead students into a discussion about their families. Ask them to bring in pictures of their families.
4. Have the students write one sentence about each member of their family.

Note: Students are usually very comfortable with this assignment. For the purpose of this unit, I will use "mother" as the theme to be developed.

SAMPLES OF STUDENTS SENTENCES

1. My mother is naggy.
2. My mother is very kind and understanding.
3. I love my mother very much.
4. My mother can cook good.
5. My mother will do my dishes for me.

DAY TWO—Describe your mother .

PROCEDURES PART ONE

1. The teacher will begin the lesson by drawing a caricature of a woman on the board. As you are drawing, describe your mother.

2. Upon completion of the caricature, the teacher can write a brief paragraph describing her mother.

3. Discuss and list with the class how to write a physical description of a person.

Examples :

a. age (usually this is the first response from students)

b. color of hair (include short, long, curly, straight, etc.)

c. color of eyes and skin (glasses)

d. weight (include thin, fat, overweight, underweight, etc.)

e. height (include feet, inches, short, tall)

f. use words like: pretty, beautiful, attractive, gorgeous, etc.

4. Assign students to write a short paragraph describing their mothers.

5. Have students read their descriptions to the class. If a student does not want to read, don't force him. If a student prefers that you read it, do so.

SAMPLES OF STUDENT'S DESCRIPTIONS

My mother is 31 years old. She has brown eyes and black hair. She is short and heavy. My mother is taller than me.

My mother is 32 years old. She has black hair and brown eyes. She is short and not fat. She is nice looking.

My mother is 59 years old. She is fat and short. Her hair is black and white. Her eyes are brown.

PROCEDURES PART TWO

Students learn from their own mistakes. I very seldom mark a student's paper. At the end of procedures part one, I collect the papers and take sentences with errors from the student's papers. I write these sentences on the board, without identifying the students. This then becomes a language lesson for the next day.

DAY THREE

A. Language Skills Lesson

B. Things I do for my mother.

PROCEDURES PART ONE Language Skills Lesson

1. Write on the board student's sentences with errors from the day before.

Examples :

- a. she got black hair and black eyes.
- b. She has dark brown heir.
- c. She have black, hair and some red.

d. She is fat and short and heavy.

e. She is kind of hevey but not to fat.

2. With the class go over each sentence and correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, sentence structure, etc. Note: Refer to part three of this unit to review and develop skills in grammar, usage, and mechanics.

3. Return students' papers from the day before to correct any mistakes they may have.

Note: Allow students to work in small groups to correct their papers. The teacher should circulate through the classroom and assist students.

PROCEDURES PART TWO—Things I do for and with my mother.

1. Discuss and list with the class things we do for our mothers. Such as: household chores, errands, babysitting, cooking, etc.

2. Discuss and list with the class things we do with our mothers. Such as: go shopping, to the movies, out to lunch, to the beach, on a picnic, take a trip, etc.

3. Students love to hear what their teacher does for and with her mother. Write a short paragraph on the board for your students.

4. Assign students to write a paragraph about the things they do for and with their mothers.

5. Have students read their paragraphs to the class.

6. Identify sentences from students' papers that need corrections. These sentences then become your Language Skills Lesson for the next day.

SAMPLES OF STUDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

The only thing I like to do with my mother is to play fight. Sometimes I go to shop with her. Sometimes I share my problems with her, but not everything, of course, because she tells my father. I don't like when she tells my father.

I go with my mother shopping. I don't like to go because I get tired and I have to push the cart.

Me and my mother play jokes on each other. We clean the house and cook together. We go shopping and out to dinner.

DAY FOUR

A. Language Skills Lesson

B. Things I sometimes do to cause my mother to get mad.

PROCEDURES PART ONE—Language Skills Lesson

1. Write on the board students' sentences with errors from the day before.

Examples :

- a. when she go to the store she tells me to go with Her to store.
- b. I do for my mother by take out the garbadge.
- c. When I do things for my mother this is what she do.
- d. sometimes I go whift her to pathmark and do shopping.
- e. I take out the trash clean up around the house and wash clothes.

2. Follow steps two and three from day three. (Procedures Part One Language Skills Lesson)

PROCEDURES PART TWO—The things I sometimes do that cause my mother to get mad.

1. Discuss and list the things we do that cause our mother to get mad at us.

Sample List:

- a. bad report cards
- b. not listening or behaving
- c. getting suspended
- d. fighting with brother and sister

- e. getting home late for supper
2. The teacher can describe the things she did, at her students' age, that caused her mother to get mad with her. Your students will love it:.
3. Discuss and list the ways mothers react when they get mad.
Sample List:
 - a. hits, slaps, slugs, kicks my butt
 - b. screams, yells, shouts
 - c. cusses, swears
 - d. throws things
 - e. threatens
 - f. punishes—takes away privileges
4. Assign students to write a paragraph about the things they sometimes do to cause their mother to get mad.
5. Have students read their paragraphs to the class.
6. Identify sentences from students' papers that need corrections. These sentences then become your Language Skills Lesson for the next day.

SAMPLES OF STUDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

When I tease my little brother, my mother gets mad at me. She locks me in the room. She always slaps me across my face.

My mother gets mad when I don't listen to her. She yells at me and hits me with the belt. Sometimes she punishes me and I can't go outside.

When I get in trouble at school, my mother gets mad at me. She yells and cusses. Sometimes she puts me on punishment.

DAY FIVE

A. Language Skills Lesson

B. What my mother means to me.

PROCEDURES PART ONE—Language Skills Lesson

1. Write on the board students' sentences with errors from the day before.

Examples :

- a. When my mother gets mad to me she sed she going to put my hand in the fire.
 - b. When my mother gets mad at me she screams at me.
 - c. When my mother gets mad at me she hits me with a broom
 - d. My mother yells wen I do somethin wrong.
 - e. She cusses yells screams hit slap and throws things at me.
2. Follow steps two and three from day three. (Procedures Part One—Language Skills Lesson)

PROCEDURES PART TWO—What my mother means to me.

1. To begin a discussion about what mothers mean, I usually read verses from Mother's Day Greeting Cards or poems about mothers that I've found in children's anthologies of poetry.
2. I usually write a short paragraph about what my mother means to me.
3. Assign students to write a paragraph about what their mothers mean to them.
4. Have students read their paragraphs to the class.
5. Identify students' sentences with errors. Write these sentences on the board, without identifying the students. This then becomes the Language skills Lesson for the next day.

SAMPLES OF STUDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

My mother loves me and I love her. She respects me and I respect her. She is something special in my life.

My mother means a lot to me. She give me money everyday for school. She is someone I cooperate with.

My mother means everything to me. I care for her a lot. She takes time for me. I love her, I don't know what I would do without her help or her.

DAY SIX

A. Language Skills Lesson

B. Putting the composition together. *PROCEDURES PART ONE Language Skills Lesson*

1. Write on the board students' sentences with errors from the day before.

Examples :

- a. I love my mother because she is very nice to me and I am nice to her because I love her.
- b. She is somebody I cooprate with.
- c. My mother is apportint to me.
- d. To have someone to take care of you when you need some love and attion.
- e. My mother means to me a lot.

2. Follow steps two and three from day three. (Procedures Part One—Language Skills Lesson)

PROCEDURES PART TWO—Putting the composition together

1. Over a series of five days, students have written a complete composition, paragraph by paragraph. They have written, proofread and rewritten each paragraph. On day six, the students combine all paragraphs into a complete composition. The papers are written neatly in their best writing, with margins and indentations.

2. The culmination of the activity is to exhibit the papers on tha bulletin board. Students are asked to bring in a picture of their mothers for the display.

PART THREE—To review and develop skills in grammar, usage, and mechanics.

The teacher may plan work for the class so that students feel there is a real purpose in writing. Their background of experience has provided them with sufficient facts and ideas to write about. However, the skills of written expression are likely to be only partially learned. Students need actual training in how to write effectively. The training phase of instruction is intended to improve the quality of the composition as well as the mechanics.

WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

Let me repeat myself: students do not learn to write from dwelling on grammar exercises or learning prescriptive rules about English. In order for students to write, we must allow our students to write. Once students begin writing, then we can determine what types of instruction they may need in grammar, usage, and mechanics. The skills are a result of the needs of the students. You must analyze students' papers and lift out mistakes they are making. Share these with the class. Write some of the actual sentences from students' papers without mentioning names and discuss the mistakes. From the students' papers, you will be able to identify the particular needs they may have.

The following procedures are recommended for the teaching of skills .

1. Develop a check-list of skills for the class. This will identify those students who may need instruction in particular skills. The check-list will vary slightly according to the grade level of the student. You might want to refer to the City-Wide Objectives for Language Arts.
2. Develop independent and self-correcting activities. These activities may be in the form of task cards, made from old language work books, texts, or may be teacher-made. They should correspond to the check-list of skills. You might refer to the class text. These types of activities are designed for the particular student in need of particular skills. Why slow the pace of a student who has mastered it?
3. Develop small-group activities. Through the check-list of skills, the teacher will be able to identify clusters of students who may need instruction in the same areas. These activities may include game-like tasks or teacher instruction.
4. To enhance writing skills and styles, the teacher should include instructional lessons for the class. These activities may include a number of literary forms.

Examples of Topics :

- a. Write a paragraph identifying a topic sentence, supportive details, and a conclusion.
 - b. Arrange sentences in sequential order.
 - c. Compose an effective beginning and ending of a story.
 - d. Write a description and/or story based on personal interpretation.
 - e. Use conversational form in writing.
 - f. Write explanations of his/her interpretations or view points on a topic.
 - g. Write clear directions on how to do or make something.
5. Develop charts which depict correct forms of grammar, capitalization, punctuation, etc. These charts should be precise and clear. They should have all the qualities of a good visual aid.

Sample Form Capitalization Chart

1. Names of persons: *J ohn D ay*
2. Initials of names of persons: *K . B . A nderson*
3. Titles of respect: *M rs. Norris*
4. Days of the week: *M onday*
5. Months of the year: *S eptember*
6. The pronoun I: Shall *I* stay here?
7. Names of holidays: *T hanksgiving*
8. Names of particular places or things: *F air H aven M iddle S chool*
9. The first word and each important word in a title: *U p a R oad S lowly*
10. Names of cities: *N ew H aven*
11. Names of states: *C onnecticut*
12. Names of countries: *U nited S tates*
13. The first word in the greeting of a letter: *D ear A nn,*
14. The first word in the closing of a letter: Your friend,

CONCLUSION

Students vary widely in their rate of maturation and capacity to learn, their interests and their ability to verbalize, and write their ideas and emotions. At the middle school level, teachers should expect a wide range in the students' ability to express their ideas in writing

It is important that the teacher accept all students at their level and provide differentiated instruction to benefit them according to their needs. The more capable students should be allowed to work up to their potential, with the proper stimulation and guidance needed to promote optimal growth. Those students who have made the least progress in their ability to write will require closer supervision of the teacher. By careful observation and systematic inventory, the teacher can gauge the degree of independence that the various students can assume, and should provide as many opportunities as possible for each student to write as independently as he or she can.

Classroom Materials *

1. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, Mass. 01867
Aware Grade K-6 Teacher Resource Books
2. Britannica instructional Media, Chicago, Illinois 60611
About Me Intermediate Teachers guide and student books
3. Creative Learning, Warren, Rhode Island 02885
Understanding Your Feelings Intermediate 4 Filmstrips, 2 Cassettes, and Guide *Being Good Being Bad* Intermediate 4 Filmstrips, 4 Cassettes
4. Educational Activities Inc., Freeport, New York 11520
Getting It Together Is Life Itself Jr.Sr. High Sound Filmstrip
5. Eye-Gate Media, Jamaica, New York 11435
Getting to Know Me Intermediate Jr.-High 6 Filmstrips
6. Follett Publishing Co., Crystal Lake, Illinois 60014
Girls and Boys Men and Women Intermediate 4 Filmstrips
7. Globe Book Company, Inc., New York, N. Y. 10010
Getting It Together Jr. Sr. High Psychology Text
8. Listening Library, Old Greenwich, Conn. 06870
Coping Strategies for Growth Jr.-Sr. High 4 Sound Filmstrips
9. Multi-Media Productions, Inc., Stanford, California, 94305
Self-Development Using the Classroom to Solve People Problems Intermediate Cassette and Filmstrips
10. Rancourt & Co., Portland, Maine 04103
Learning About Me Developing the Self-Concept Intermediate Teacher Manual
11. Scholastic, Englewood Cliff, New Jersey 07632
Becoming Yourself Middle School Sound Filmstrip
12. Universal Education and Visual Arts, Universal City, Calif. 91608
Understanding Your Relationships With Others (Two Parts) *Understanding Yourself* (Two Parts) Intermediate Filmstrips and Cassettes.

* These materials may serve as a sounding board for Part One of this curriculum unit. Unfortunately I have found that there are very few student books for recreational reading available at this level.

Reading For Research

Terry, *Reach Touch and Teach* . New York: McGraw Hill Book Company 1970 This book describes the author's attempt to reach students at basic personality levels, touch them as individual human beings and yet teach them in an organized fashion.

Canfield, Jack and Harold C. Wells. *100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom: A Handbook for Teachers and Parents*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976. This book provides you with a repertoire of creative classroom activities for enhancing ego-strengths of children and adults of all walks of life. There are a variety of 105 class-tested techniques for group leaders.

Clark, D. H., and A. Kadis, *Humanistic Teaching*. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, 1972. This book contains valuable "how to" skills, learnings and techniques developed by two psychologists applying insights to the learning process.

Combs, Arthur W. ed. *Perceiving, Behaving, and Becoming*. Yearbook of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Washington, D. C. 1962. This book contains a series of articles by the leading educational theorists in perception, self-concept and self-actualization. Included are statements by Carl R. Rogers, Abraham H. Maslow, and Earl Kelley.

Ginott, Haim G. *Teacher and Child*. New York: Macmillan, 1972. This book offers teachers a model for language of acceptance and compassion: words that convey feelings responses that changes moods, statements that invite good will, answers that bring insight, replies and radiate respect, designed to enhance the quality of the classroom.

Glasser, William. *Schools Without Failure*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969. This book is an approach to reduce school failures based on personal involvement, relevance and thinking. Through the classroom meetings he demonstrates how to reach negatively oriented, failure conscious students and how to help them aim for positive goal-setting, personal achievement and individual responsibility.

Gordon, I. J. *Studying the Child in School* . New York: Wiley, 1966. This book gives a number of practical suggestions as to how teachers can develop a better understanding of the children in their classroom.

Gordon, Thomas. *T.E.T. Teacher Effectiveness Training*. New York: Peter H. Wyden Publisher. 1974. This book tells how teachers can bring the best out in their students.

Herndon, James. *How to Survive in your Native Land*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971. This book shows the picture of what junior high schools in middle class suburbia are really like and how they systematically destroy children's spirits.

Holt John *How Children Fail* New York: Pittman Publishing Co., 1964. This book is an analysis of what teachers and classes do to students to make them fail. Shows how schools make children bored, afraid and confused.

Holt, John. *How Children Learn*. New York: Pittman Publishing Co., 1967. This book is a sequel to *How Children Fail*. It gives examples of how children can teach themselves. Excellent ideas for getting children to talk.

Holt, John. *What Do I Do Monday?* New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1970. This book gives practical ideas for teachers to make their classrooms more interesting and relevant.

Jersild, Arthur T. *When Teachers Face Themselves*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1955. This book is a study of the relation between self-understanding and education. It is centered on the teacher whose “understanding and acceptance of himself is the most important requirement in any effort he makes to help students know themselves and to gain healthy attitudes of self-acceptance.”

Postman, Neil and Weingartner, C. *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1973. This book is a diagnosis of the sickness of schools based as fear, coercion and rote learning. It suggests alternatives to bring more meaning into the classroom.

Purkey, William W. *Self-Concept and School Achievement*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970. This book is an emphasis on the student’s subjective and personal evaluation of himself as a dominant influence on his success or failure in school. He explains how the self-concept develops in social interaction and what happens to it in school. He also suggests ways for teachers to reinforce positive and realistic self-concepts in students.

Raths, Louis, E., Harmin, Merrill., Simon, Sidney B. *Values and Teaching: Working with Values in the Classroom*. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1966. This book outlines a theory of values and a classroom methodology for the clarification of values. It contains many classroom activities that teachers can employ to help students clarify their values.

Ringness Thomas H. *Mental Health in the Schools* . New York: Random House Inc. 1968. This book indicates evidence of the impact of teacher personality and behavior on the conduct and aspirations of students from several grade levels. (pages 65-93).

Rosenthal, Robert and Jacobsen L. *Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teachers Expectations and Pupils Intellectual Development*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968. This book indicates that whatever a teacher expects from a student she will probably get. The need for the teacher to “believe in” the child’s ability to succeed.

Simon, Sidney B., Howe, Leland W., Kirschenbaum, Howard. *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students*. New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1972. This book contains seventy-nine classroom exercises designed to help students clarify their values. Each exercise is clearly written and contains many examples of ways in which it can be used.

Watejen, Walter B., and Robert R. Leeper (eds.). *Learning and Mental Health in the School*. Washington, D. C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. 1966. This book deals with ego strengths, efficient learning, teacher-pupil interaction, and self-actualization.

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