

DOINGWHATWORKS

 VIDEO
5:47 min

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More Than One Way to Write

Eagle View Elementary School, Virginia
April 2012

Topic TEACHING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EFFECTIVE WRITERS

Practice WRITING PROCESS

- Highlights**
- » In order to write for different purposes, students first read texts to determine whether the author is writing to persuade, inform, or entertain.
 - » First-grade students are learning what components are needed to write detailed fairy tales.
 - » Fourth-grade students are learning how to write persuasively to a specific audience.
 - » Sixth-grade students are brainstorming and analyzing text structures to write informational text.

About the Site Eagle View Elementary School
Fairfax, Virginia

Demographics

- » 38% Asian
- » 27% White
- » 15% Hispanic
- » 14% Black

- » 6% Other
- » 21% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- » 30% English Language Learners
- » 13% Special Education

Eagle View Elementary School, in Fairfax, Virginia, integrates writing into the daily curriculum of all subject areas. The teachers emphasize writing's importance in communication and learning. Eagle View teachers:

- » Provide daily writing time through Writer's Workshop;
- » Teach the writing process and writing for a variety of purposes;
- » Develop students' foundational writing skills, such as spelling, handwriting, text structure, and sentence construction; and
- » Build an engaged community of writers.

Full Transcript



Amiee Anthony:  **00:03** Hi, my name is Amiee Anthony. I'm a reading specialist here at Eagle View Elementary in Fairfax, Virginia.

If we're trying to teach a student to write to a particular purpose or we're trying to introduce a genre, what we do is we immerse the students in reading and really understanding that particular genre. We look at the author and the way the author structures that text and the techniques the author uses. We write to persuade, we write to inform, or we write to entertain. First, we want the students to be able to read a text, determine what those different purposes are, and then we want to teach those students to be able to write to those different forms as well.

Three Classrooms Write for Different Purposes

Ms. El-Amin's First-Grade Classroom

Anthony  **00:46** This is Ms. El-Amin's first-grade classroom. She is continuing with her unit on fairy tales. The class has already read a lot of fairy tales and has already explored all of the different reasons and what

makes a fairy tale. The components of good versus evil, the idea of magic or the element of magic and that they're make-believe, and what the author does in order to kind of take the reader to a faraway place. Ms. El-Amin, with her students, goes into a lot of detail about how fairy tales make us feel when we read them. And if a reader was to pick up a book and think that it was a fairy tale, they're going to expect to see certain things. And so she teaches her students that if you are going to call it a fairy tale, you need to make sure that you have certain pieces of fairy tales, certain components of fairy tales, woven into the story that they've written.

Ms. El-Amin (to class)  01:38 Boys and girls, as you were talking to me, it sounded like you had three kinds of ideas about how to make our characters enjoyable. You told me that one thing that we needed to do was to add details, right? You told me another thing we need to do is to make sure that we have good and we have evil. So I'll be sure to make sure we have that. And then Sonia and Maya were talking about another idea. They said, "Make sure the readers feel something." That was really important because if the readers don't really care about our characters, are they going to want to keep reading the rest of the story that we've written? Not really. So it's really important that our authors are going to include that part where we care about them.

Anthony  02:27 Today she's focusing on characters and details, and teaching her students to apply those elements into their own writing.

Ms. Nam's Fourth-Grade Classroom

Anthony  02:36 This is Ms. Nam's fourth-grade classroom. Today she is focusing her students on getting them to really understand the art of persuasive writing. In order to do that, they need to think about who their audience is. Are they writing to an adult? Are they writing to a child? And depending on who their audience is, will depend on what language they use, how they structure their arguments. One of the

things that Ms. Nam does is to first read a text and to model in her words how she would go about taking that text that was geared to an adult and how she would go and change it to writing it with a different audience in mind, like a child.

Student  03:16 If you want more field trips, then you have to use the automatic hand dryer.

Ms. Nam (to class) So we want to add the information about field trips, right, using that money for field trips. How could we word it so a kid is excited about it?

Anthony  03:30 She has the students go and they talk together, and then she works with them to create another passage.

Ms. McHarg's Sixth-Grade Classroom

Anthony  03:39 This is Ms. McHarg's room. She is a sixth-grade teacher here at Eagle View Elementary, and she is working with her students on informational writing. Ms. McHarg is trying to move her students beyond just the explain-and-inform component of informational text. She is working on getting students to analyze text structures and how that can support the information that they're trying to convey in their own informational writing.

Ms. McHarg (to class)  04:05 What we need to do right now is together brainstorm on the two main topics we're going to focus on today. So we have the first topic, which was, "Who were some important people from the American Revolution?" Then we're going to brainstorm a list for this question, which is, "What impact did the European explorers have on the American Indians?" So those are two very different types of questions but both related to our Social Studies unit that we've had. And what we'll do is we'll brainstorm a list, then you're going to go back, as your partner is, and you're going to work on answering some of those questions based on the topics that we brainstorm.

And when we are brainstorming, we'll also pick a couple text structures that would be appropriate to use to answer those questions.

Anthony  **04:40** When writing any text we encourage students to use prewriting strategies. One of the prewriting strategies that she is working with her students on is brainstorming. And knowing that there is more than one way to write informational text, she wants them to just kind of list out things so that they can kind of whittle them down and figure out what the best way to share that information will be.

Ms. McHarg (to class)  **05:03** Your research has to change based on which text structure you chose, and you might even have to change your text structure based on the research that you are finding. So all of that kind of winds together to be able to put together a really powerful informational piece of writing.

Anthony  **05:17** With each year, students have more and more background knowledge. We build on their foundation so that they are able to go and effectively write for whatever reason, for whatever purpose. It's exciting to see how their writing changes as they grow and how they apply the strategies and how much they enjoy the writing process. And I'm really proud of them.