
Classroom Toolkit Newsletter

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Written by Joseph Chmielewski, M.S., L.P.C.

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Center for Creative Learning, San Antonio, Texas

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***** NEWS NUGGETS *****

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-> News Nuggets <-

The State of Connecticut is taking the federal government to court concerning the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Law.

Imaging the good that we could deliver for children if school districts and teachers across our nation voiced (in unison) their disdain for the effects of this law.

***** SITE PROGRESS *****

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-> Site Progress <-

Site Strategy

Our site's strategy is to provide a time-saving plan and a management framework for teachers. This benefits our site's visitors with a value beyond just searching the Internet for an endless supply of unconnected, free materials.

Finding just the "right" materials for a specific lesson takes more time than it saves.

It saves more time to create your own materials, if you have a strategy for reusable templates and generic components.

We offer our materials freely to show teachers how this strategy for saving time actually works.

In addition, our site demonstrates a practical method for integrating technology into instruction. This is a stated goal of almost all school districts and the federal government. However, it is easier to say that the integration of technology is a priority than it is to provide adequate funding for equipment, materials and professional development.

We show teachers how to integrate technology without adding another hour or two to their workday. In fact, we show teachers how to save time.

Site Progress

- * We have begun cross linking pages
- * We have begun changing and testing key words
 - Our site has finally been scanned by the Google(TM) and MSN(TM) spiders. The Yahoo(TM) spiders have visited 19 of our pages
- * The next pages will be Open Source License, Terms of Use, and other housekeeping

Our First ezine will be delayed because my offer to deliver two presentations for the staff of our local Education Service Center. These presentations were practice for a presentation at the Texas Computer Educator's Association (TCEA) next week.

- * Here is our finalized ezine publication schedule.

The focus of these issues will be:

Volume 1 -- 2006:

Winter Teacher Planning and Project Management

Spring Multiple Intelligences

Summer Higher-Order Thinking

Fall Project-based Learning

Volume 2 -- 2007:

Winter Teaching to the Test: A How-to that doesn't Sabotage Learning

children that writes with the joy, pliancy fire and tenderness of a desert cactus.

So, if we keep spading the dry ground, one day, one of these children may blossom, and the rare flower will be beautiful.

How can noise-adverse teachers expect for children to write like "lovers" (of learning) if the teacher always has a headache? :-)

Let's call this the "pet" theory of writing.

Two types of pets are dogs and cats. Both kinds of animals are suited to be loving companions, but it is necessary to allow them to be what they are.

For example, if we attempt to train a dog to act like a dancing monkey, we will convert a willing, "I-want-to-please-you" pet into a quivering, frustrated, sullen and dejected...pathetic creature.

If we attempt to train a cat to act like a dancing monkey, we will convert an independent, aloof, and self-contained pet into a scratching, biting runaway.

The dog would try to please, whimper, and fail. The cat would flee in disdain and a huff.

Fortunately, we have more puppy-children than kitten-kids, so the negative effects of production-line teaching puts more stress on the kids, rather than the teacher. But, beware the few clawing kiddies that scratch back at the teacher. These children will dish out more stress that they will take.

Beside the "Be quiet" damper upon children's writing, there are some other typical drags on writing. These include;

- * The ideas written must be the right ideas
- * There shouldn't be any mistakes in the writing
- * The content should agree with the teacher's beliefs
- * There is a right way to write
- * Writing should fit the high-stakes test models so that the student can pass the state test

Another "wet blanket" over the flames of creative writing is "formula writing." (We review some books that focus upon this strategy later in this issue.)

Formula writing is the bedfellow of high-stakes testing and holistic scoring of students' writing. Our experience in Texas was that we created a generation of students who couldn't write, or at least that is what their employers said once these students graduated and moved into the working world. (Note: Texas has since dumped that strategy for another "testing initiative.")

And, the myth that children learn more when the classroom is quiet is false.

What teachers need to do is to increase the communication that children practice. This means that students need to talk and write in all subjects, all the time.

This means that student projects, instant conferences, team meetings, project planning sessions, consulting sessions, bargaining sessions...need to be ongoing. (Note: we are talking about the students participating in all of these activities, not just the teacher.)

Timelines, schedules, deadlines, milestones and goal-achievement action plans need to be part of students' daily writing activities.

And, the collecting, organizing, analyzing of data and information need to be "fabricated" into tables, graphs, charts, glossaries and lists.

Tables can be a...

- * Table of Contents
- * Tabular Data
- * Pivot Tables
- * Truth Tables
- * Schedules
- * Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication Tables
- * Periodic Charts of the Elements
- * Conversion Tables
- * Comparison Charts

You get the picture.

Graphs can be any of the software generated ones, plus...

- * Timelines
- * Calendar Graphs
- * Project Plans (Gantt Charts)
- * Trajectories
- * Cumulative Data

Diagrams can be...

- * Flow Charts
- * Organization Charts
- * Mind Maps
- * Fishbones
- * Mobius Strip Charts
- * Johari Windows
- * Two-dimensional, Four Quadrant Meta Charts
- * Three-dimensional Cubes

Student writing should contain all of these communication tools and devices. Of course, some tools and devices are better suited for certain content area subjects. This is the reason that writing should be an all-school-day strategy.

Writing is pervasive, crucial, continuous...and should not be compartmentalized to one corner of the Language Arts curriculum.

Writing is sharable. What's stopping your students from writing a blog?

Writing also is a team sport. Could your students work together to author a WIKI?

not retain its meaning.

ParaMind(TM) returns sentences with meaning, some with grammatical errors, some with nonsense meaning, but with meaning.

A sample of ParaMind's output is included at the end of this newsletter.

Stumped about how to create topics for students' writing assignments? With ParaMind(TM), you can easily create hundreds of topics within five minutes.

With a price of less than \$20, this product meets our criteria of a product that is both affordable and usable. Creative teachers will find use after use for this product.

Here is a link if you want to order ParaMind(TM)

<http://tinyurl.com/8mexr>

A sample printout of a ParaMind(TM) output is included at the end of this newsletter.

->Free resources<-

Google(TM) Earth

"Google Earth combines satellite imagery, maps and the power of Google Search to put the world's geographic information at your fingertips."

What can you do with this free program?

You can:

- * Fly from space to your neighborhood
- * Type in an address and zoom to it
- * Search for schools, parks, restaurants, and hotels
- * Get driving directions and view the route on a map
- * Tilt and rotate the view of the globe to see 3D terrain and buildings
- * Save and share your searches and favorites
- * Add your own annotations

You download and install this free program.

The interface is amazing, especially if you are viewing one place, and you type in the name of another place in the search form. You watch a picture of the globe move as you "travel" to the new location. Impressive!

If you live in US cities, you can probably find an aerial view of your house! Again, impressive!

If you teach history, geography, science, math, health, literature (just about anything)...this resource is for you.

The download file size is 11.5 MB, so be prepared to wait a bit if you are using a dial-up connection. But, the wait will be well worth it.
house

->Teacher Resources<-

The Web English Teacher seems to have a lot of materials that, if used in a creative way, can be quite useful.

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/>

The site is a portal site, and seems to have few materials or resources of its own.

But, the site does have face validity in connection with this newsletter's theme about motivating students' writing.

Here is their writing portal page...

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/writing.html>

->Teacher Discounts<-

If discounts apply to home school teachers, then teachers who work for public and private schools are eligible for the same discounts. In fact, the discounts were created for them.

<http://www.expage.com/page/fo1cdisc>

->Other Discounts<-

For any other hardware and software need, call Rob Wehman of CDW*G.

Give Rob a call at 1-866-339-7397 if you want immediate current prices.

Rob will help you, or put you in contact with someone who can.

Rob's E-mail address is robweh@cdwg.com

-> Short Article <-

When Pay Backfires: Teacher Burnout

Keep the Fire of Desire Burning: Prevent Burnout

The symptoms of burnout are obvious:

- * Boredom
- * Lack of energy or stamina
- * Feeling exhausted at the end of the day
- * Feeling powerless or inadequate
- * Distracted, Lost trains of thought
- * Classroom avoidance, abhorrence
- * Procrastination
- * Falling behind on teacher busywork
- * Forgetting to read/ Can't find administrative memos
- * Arriving late, leaving early
- * Struggling to awaken in the morning
- * Trouble falling asleep, sleeping
- * Decreased patience with students, irritability
- * Avoidance of colleagues, staff conflicts
- * Faking interest with students
- * Fatalism, cynicism about benchmark testing

Here is what you must do:

- * Keep your enthusiasm and energy high
- * Find ways to increase your passion for your job
- * Stay in touch with your feelings about yourself and about your students
- * Energize yourself at least three times during the school day
- * Listen to your students
- * Deal with issues as soon as the issue surfaces
- * Smile more, tell more stories
- * Exercise
- * Relax

Determine if the burnout is the result of school/district issues or personal issues.

At work, you can:

- * Build a professional relationship with a colleague or mentor
- * View school administration from the administration's viewpoint (Avoid "Me" vs. "Them" thinking)
- * Build a healthy life outside of school
- * Analyze of what support systems you need

At home you can:

- * Exercise
- * Eat a healthy diet
- * Find enjoyable free time activities
- * Talk about your issues with your friends

When you understand what you need, it is easier to take action to help yourself. The second part of eliminating burnout is exercising your mental strength.

You must re-establish your personal/ and support system. Get counseling help if this condition lasts more than a week or two.

==**==**==**==**==**==**== BOOK REVIEW ==**==**==**==**==**==**==

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->Quick Flip Ideas for Writing Domains<-

Author: Ryan, Chocetta Doti
 ISBN: 1-56472-491-3
 Format: Flip Chart/Book, Plastic Spiral Bound
 Pub. Date: 1998
 Publisher: Edupress
<http://www.edupress.com>
 Cost: \$3.99
 Available: Direct from publisher or from local teacher supply stores

->Quick Flip Reference for the Six Traits of Writing<-

Author: Hoover, Ginny

ISBN: 1-56472-493-x

Format: Flip Chart/Book, Plastic Spiral Bound

Pub. Date: 2002

Publisher: Edupress

<http://www.edupress.com>

Cost: \$3.99

Available: Direct from publisher or from local teacher supply stores

The Books' Topics:

This pair of books focuses upon improving writing instruction.

The Writing Domains include:

- * Imaginative/ Narrative
- * Practical/ Informative
- * Analytical/ Expository
- * Technical

The Six Traits include:

- * Conventions
- * Sentence Fluency
- * Word Choice
- * Voice
- * Organization
- * Ideas and Content

Missing Keywords:

- * Higher-order Thinking
- * Multiple Intelligences
- * Creativity
- * Self-Expression
- * Communicating and Sharing Ideas

Main Idea:

Like the flip books that were reviewed in last month's newsletter, these "books" are compact, reminder-friendly memory-prompters. The idea behind books of this format is that teachers can refer to them all day long, and remember what to teach.

The difference between these writing flip books and the higher-order thinking questioning and Multiple Intelligences books reviewed last month is that last month's books are useful. Teachers will find very little use for these writing books.

Quotes:

"The four writing domains are categories for defining purposes for writing. In order to be a competent writer, students must have experience in each domain...Additionally, you will find ideas for a new fifth category, the terminological domain, Writing Domains, Introduction.

"The Six Traits Model provides a description for each characteristic of quality writing, defined further by bulleted explanations. The process of achieving those qualities is left to the writer and the instructor. It does

not provide an inflexible pattern that children must follow, which often stifles their creativity.
Six Traits, Introduction.

Issues NOT Addressed by the Book:

- * Higher-order thinking is cultivated by rich questioning
- * It is as easy (and more efficient) to assign writing for higher-level domains as it is to ask for writing about factual recall questions and definitions
- * It is and more efficient to integrate Multiple Intelligence skills into students' writing activities as it is to concentrate only upon process writing
- * Students respond to higher-order writing with better brainstorming, more robust thinking and better problem solving
- * Student outcomes are richer and deeper when higher-order thinking and multiple skills are interwoven into writing assignments

The Book's Shortcomings:

The books' come up short because they place the focus of writing upon arbitrary categories. An analogy for approaches like these is the frog. After we dissect the frog, the frog doesn't jump any more. Once we dissect the child's writing, the child may not bother to write any more.

Comments:

These books are short and easy to use, but seem to be equally short on value.

I am reminded about what one regional Microsoft(TM) representative told me many years ago. She said that elementary students crushed the E-mail server in each school where they were allowed to send their "little messages." The server could not handle the volume of mail traffic. (This is not because the Microsoft(TM) software was substandard, but was the result of students having so many messages to write that the volume was incredible!)

Summary:

As we pointed out in our previous newsletter, improving education on a grand scale is easier said than done. However, improving one teacher's questioning and improving that teacher's assignment of learning activities is easily doable.

Unfortunately, these books are NOT resources for making this "one teacher at a time" improvement happen.

Rating (Four Point scale):

- Useful 2
- Applicable 3
- Relevant 2
- Innovative 1
- Original 1
- Interesting 0

- Overall Rating 1.5

==== REQUESTS =====

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-> Requests <-

What would you like to see in this newsletter?

Send your requests for future articles to:

requests-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

==== FEEDBACK =====

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Site or Newsletter Feedback:

Send feedback and suggestions to:

feedback-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

==== ARTICLE PREVIEW =====

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-> Article Preview <-

Our next newsletter will feature an article about skills and tools for improving students' writing .

Let us know if you have a special topic in mind for a future newsletter.

Send your

articles-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

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Feel free to send this newsletter to a friend.

We won't send a newsletter to anyone unless they request to be placed on our mailing list.

But, if you know someone that you think might benefit from our newsletter, send them to this address:

<http://www.classroomtoolkit.com/join-us.html>

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<http://www.classroomtoolkit.com>

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Written by Joseph Chmielewski, M.S., L.P.C.
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San Antonio, Texas

U.S.A. 78265

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Appendix A:

ParaMind(TM) Sample Output

Seed sentence:

I wonder how I could make my students feel happy.  
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I control how I could make my students feel happy.
I credit how I could make my students feel happy.
I danger how I could make my students feel happy.
I discussion how I could make my students feel happy.
I disease how I could make my students feel happy.
I disgust how I could make my students feel happy.
I distribution how I could make my students feel happy.
I doubt how I could make my students feel happy.
I existence how I could make my students feel happy.
I expansion how I could make my students feel happy.
I experience how I could make my students feel happy.
I fear how I could make my students feel happy.
I feeling how I could make my students feel happy.
I form how I could make my students feel happy.
I hole how I could make my students feel happy.
I humor how I could make my students feel happy.
I idea how I could make my students feel happy.
I impulse how I could make my students feel happy.
I increase how I could make my students feel happy.
I interest how I could make my students feel happy.
I knowledge how I could make my students feel happy.
I learning how I could make my students feel happy.
I ask how I could make my students feel happy.
I comb how I could make my students feel happy.
I delve how I could make my students feel happy.
I ferret how I could make my students feel happy.
I inquire how I could make my students feel happy.
I prospect how I could make my students feel happy.
I quest how I could make my students feel happy.
I scout how I could make my students feel happy.
I search how I could make my students feel happy.
I sleuth how I could make my students feel happy.
I snoop how I could make my students feel happy.
I question how I could make my students feel happy.
I pry how I could make my students feel happy.
I interrogate how I could make my students feel happy.
I demand how I could make my students feel happy.
I review how I could make my students feel happy.
I analyze how I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder wisely I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder brilliantly I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder prudently I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder stupidly I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder logically I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder forgetfully I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder providentially I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder imaginatively I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder manifestly I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder sanely I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder insanely I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder psychotically I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder psychedelically I could make my students feel happy.

I wonder studiously I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder conscientiously I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder conscientiously I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder mentally I could make my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could affect my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could agitate my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could animate my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could activate my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could emote my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could excite my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could incense my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could inspire my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could inflame my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could prompt my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could arouse my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could introduce my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could interest my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could motive my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could provoke my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could cheer my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could encourage my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could start my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could stimulate my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could hearten my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could actuate my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could energize my students feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my ability feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my censorship feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my curriculum feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my educator feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my equality feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my freedom feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my grade feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my indoctrination feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my knowledge feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my plagiarism feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my privacy feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my research feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my scholarship feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my sportsmanship feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my wisdom feel happy.
I wonder how I could make my students feel pleased
I wonder how I could make my students feel glad
I wonder how I could make my students feel comfortable
I wonder how I could make my students feel worried
I wonder how I could make my students feel sorrowful
I wonder how I could make my students feel refreshing
I wonder how I could make my students feel delightful
I wonder how I could make my students feel lovely
I wonder how I could make my students feel enchanting
I wonder how I could make my students feel dreary
I wonder how I could make my students feel content
I wonder how I could make my students feel soothing
I wonder how I could make my students feel jubilant
I wonder how I could make my students feel amusing
I wonder how I could make my students feel witty
I wonder how I could make my students feel bright
I wonder how I could make my students feel jovial
I wonder how I could make my students feel bored