



WRITE NOW

RIGHT NOW

April—May
2019
Newsletter

"Everything you get from your students—the rolled eyes, the excitement, the apathy, the big smiles—is feedback on your performance."
- Eric Jensen

"The students who are most engaged are the ones who think they matter to the teacher."
- Dr. Russell Quaglia

We have all done it. After completing 10 pages of a book, we realize we have no idea what we just read, or after listening to a speaker, cannot begin to retell the presenter's main points. During after school staff meetings, we may sit quietly, pen and paper for notetaking in hand. While we look engaged, our minds are miles away—creating plans for the next day's learning, making a shopping list for dinner, or making a mental schedule of the weekend's activities.

It is difficult to be present in the moment. In spite of signs and coffee mugs encouraging us to purposefully live life's moments, we live in an era of constant distractions. Phones buzzing, websites a click away, and a constant barrage of background noise make it hard for many of us to focus on one thing. As experienced teachers, we are trained to continually monitor a classroom of students, tuning in to a multitude of interactions, conversations and learning experiences. Our students, without this training, need help to engage with a lesson while learning in a classroom full of activity.

Teachers yearn for a classroom of engaged students, yet the definition of engagement and how to achieve it with students remains elusive. What are some practices we can put in place to help our students interact with their teachers, the classroom learning, and their peers?

Apps We Like

Goose Chase—This interactive app sends teams of students on a scavenger hunt with questions you design. The teacher can easily (and quickly) load questions on a variety of topics. As a team, the students work together to respond to the requests. The app captures both pictures and videos, allowing teachers to have students take pictures or perform in videos in response to questions. The type of question is only limited by a teacher's imagination. Download a trial version at www.goosechase.com



Student Engagement

Before we look at engagement in the classroom, we need to define both what engagement is and is not.

The Engaged Student Is . . .

- Attentive to what is happening
- Curious about the content
- Interested in learning more
- Actively participating
- Motivated to do their best

The Disengaged Student Is . .

- Inattentive to what is happening
- Off-Task
- Unresponsive to classroom activities and discussions
- Avoiding the task at hand
- Disruptive

Students experience three forms of engagement—Emotional, Cognitive and Behavioral.

Students feel emotionally engaged when . . .

- They believe they will be successful.
- They have a strong sense of belonging.
- They are interested in what they are learning.
- They have a relationship with their teacher.

Students feel cognitively engaged when . . .

- Students have an interest in what they are learning.
- They are thinking about what they are learning.
- They have a connection to a strategy, task, or activity taking place in the classroom.
- They take action on what they are learning and complete the task.

Students feel behaviorally engaged when . . .

- They take ownership of their own behavior and learning.
- They exhibit on-task behavior.
- They actively take part in conversations and activities.
- They ask pertinent questions.
- They put forth their best effort.
- They are engaged emotionally and cognitively.

Connecting Engagement and Writing

Students are engaged when they understand the writing process.

- Writing skills are taught explicitly. The skills needed for every part of the writing process (gathering ideas, organization, each part of a paragraph / essay, etc.) are specifically taught.
- Students are provided ample time to practice a skill before moving on to the next skill.

Students are engaged when they are interested in the topic.

- New skills are taught using students' interests.
- Students are provided opportunities to make choices in their writing, including topics and formats
- Curricular area topics are integrated with writing instruction.

One way to increase student engagement is to follow a “Model/Teach, Practice with Interest, Practice with Content” cycle. Let’s look at a common teacher concern:

My students struggle when asked to generate ideas for essay writing.

- Teach this skill by modeling and using what interests your students.
- Practice this skill using your reading, social studies, and science curriculum

Teach

Model with the question: *What do you like to do in your free time?* Your answer may be *I like to hike in the mountains*. Setting a timer for 2 minutes, have students help you generate as many words or phrases as you can which describe hiking in the mountains. Model adding specific and descriptive words to the list. The following list could be generated for the answer *I like to hike in the words*.

Examples: Tall pine trees, bluebirds chirping, **snow capped mountains, dirt paths, rushing creeks, scurrying squirrels**

Student Engagement, continued . . .

Practice with Interest

Student choose their own interests: Students will now choose a free time activity. Time students for 2 minutes. During this time, students will write as many words or phrases they can to describe their answer. Students share their words or phrases with the class. Listeners try to determine what is being described based on the words or phrases. If descriptive words or phrases are detailed and interesting, the other students should be able to guess correctly.

Students work together to give each other a topic: Pair up students. The first student gives their partner a topic and times them for 2-3 minutes, while the partner lists as many words or phrases describing their topic as they can. Switch roles and repeat.

Practice with Content

Students generate ideas based on a curricular area: Provide students the following prompt: *We have been learning about immigration and people who chose to move to a new country. After reading the book home of the brave, imagine you are in the position of Kek. Write a letter home to your relatives living in the Sudan, giving them your views on immigrating to the United States. Is immigration worth the risk? Provide three reasons to support either choosing to immigrate or remaining in your home country.* Working in groups, students will generate ideas to support both points of view prior to choosing one for their letter.

Students generate ideas based on curriculum-based pictures:

Show pictures of a geographical region. Brainstorm words that describe the region.

You have been studying animal habitats. Students will choose a habitat. Using images either provided by you or located online, students will list descriptive words for that habitat.

Grammar—Not Just a Worksheet

Miriam Webster defines grammar as: *"the study of the classes of words, their inflections, and their functions and relations in the sentence."*

Knowledge of grammar is a component of writing standards for all grade levels. Students are expected to understand the functions of different words in a sentence. Therefore, rather than teaching grammar in isolation, grammar should be taught as the relationship between words in a sentence. While grammar practice can be taught and practiced through the use of worksheets, the following are some ways to make grammar more engaging for our students.

Build a Sentence:

Provide students with cards listing either a noun or a verb. Students will choose a noun and a verb and use these words to create a new sentence.

Stretch a Sentence:

Write basic sentences on chart paper. Examples might include:

The dog barked. The fish swam. The prairie dog dug. The cat climbed.

The baby laughed. The mother yelled.

Provide cards listing the following: adverb, adjective, why, when, where, gerund, Students will draw a card and add whatever is on the card to the sentence. Students may rotate through the chart paper sentences.

Lift the Flap Books

Prepositional phrases are difficult to teach. Bring in a collection of Lift the Flap children's board books which focus on prepositional phrases. (Books by Karen Katz are excellent resources.) Have the students write sentences which require a prepositional phrase as the answer. For example: Where is the cat? He is **in the tree**. Students will write the question on the front and then lift the flap for the answer. Students may either write or draw the answer.

www.amazon.com/s?k=karen+kratz+baby+books&i=stripbooks&crid=3PCJIJQ6912QP&sprefix=karen+kr%2Cstripbooks%2C175&ref=nb_sb_ss_i_1_8

Find adjectives in poetry

Make a copy of the poem "My Neighbor's Dog Is Purple" by Jack Prelutsky, for each student. As you read the poem together, students will highlight each adjective found in the poem. Younger students may want to illustrate the poem with how they visualize the dog.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbhAeWncJHA

Poetry Corner



Spring Is by Bobbi Katz

This delightful poem celebrates the joy of a spring day using figurative language. As you read the poem, students can identify what spring is to the author, along with recognizing the figurative language. Students can then list their own descriptions of what spring is to them.

<http://blog.lrei.org/lis-poetry-archive/spring-is-bobbi-katz/>

Spring by Karla Kuskin

In this poem, the speaker is joyously welcoming the season of spring. As you share the poem through the first time, have students listen for what the author *does* during spring. List these actions. During the second reading of the poem, have students listen for what the author *is* during spring. This is an excellent way to introduce metaphors to young students. Students may write their own metaphors for what they are during spring.

<http://blog.lrei.org/lis-poetry-archive/spring-karla-kuskin/>

In the Time of Silver Rain by Langston Hughes

This poem describes the joy of a silver spring rain. Discuss with students the mood of this poem. How does the author feel about rain? What impact does the adjective *silver* have on the reader?

genius.com/Langston-hughes-in-time-of-silver-rain-annotated

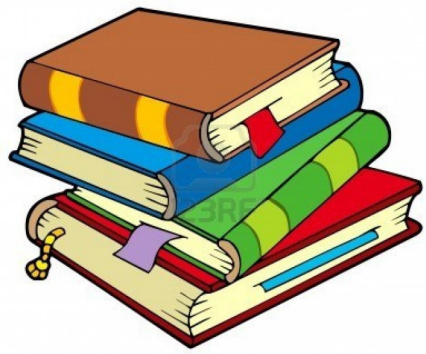
Good-bye My Winter Suit by N. M. Bodecker

This classic spring poem describes what changes happen as winter ends and spring begins. Young students will easily relate to the objects described in the poem. After listening to the poem, students can create their own good-by lists to winter and welcome lists to spring.

yankeehomestead.com/springtime-poems/



Book Nook



Because of the Rabbit by Cynthia Lord

Having been homeschooled all her life, Emma is nervous about entering school for the first time. Her biggest hope is to find a new best friend. Paired with an autistic boy named Jack, Emma wonders if she can be friends with him and still fit in. Because of the Rabbit tells the story of how a rescued rabbit allows Emma to build a bridge to Jack, along with finding her way in a new school. Written by the author of Rules, this sensitive book on friendship may become your next favorite read-aloud.

www.amazon.com/dp/B07CNDM392/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1

Lost and Found by Oliver Jeffers

This thoughtful picture book tells the story of a lost penguin and the boy who wants to help him find his way home. Written by the author of How to Catch A Star, (one of our favorite books) the book is a wonderful story of friendship. This book is an excellent book to use with primary students when teaching the parts of a story.

www.amazon.com/dp/B00I8RB12I/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1

Stuck by Oliver Jeffers

Written by a favorite children's picture book author, Stuck outlines a little boy's problem solving ideas on how to get his kite un-stuck from a tree. This creative story is a perfect book to read when introducing cause and effect to young learners.

www.amazon.com/Stuck-by-Jeffers-Oliver/dp/B00DO8VDZQ/ref=sr_1_2?crid=1OYKBWH6HCHTI&keywords=stuck+by+oliver+jeffers&qid=1554937568&s=digital-text&sprefix=stuck+by%2Cdigital-text%2C173&sr=1-2-catcorr

Dragons Eat Noodles on Tuesdays by Jon Stahl

When asked to write a story, the big blue monster wants to write a story about a little boy who was eaten by a dragon. His friend is not sure this is such a good idea. This entertaining picture book can be used to begin a unit on narrative writing.

www.amazon.com/Dragons-Eat-Noodles-Tuesdays-Stahl/dp/1338125516/ref=sr_1_1?hvadid=327864165082&hvdev=c&hvlocphy=9029027&hvnetw=g&hvpos=1t1&hvqmt=e&hvrnd=12441578278505398196&hvtargid=kwd-635676909057&keywords=dragons+eat+noodles+on+tuesdays&qid=1555503822&s=gateway&sr=8-1

Writing in Response to Math

Today's students are not asked to simply solve math equations correctly. Rather, a good math student must correctly solve a math problem and then present their thinking and solution using good writing techniques. This genre of writing requires a specific skill set. *Write Now—Right Now* is excited to announce a new program: *Writing in Response to Math*. This easy to follow program provides the teacher with step-by-step lesson plans to use with their students as they teach children how to sequentially explain their math thinking. Each program includes samples of grade-appropriate math problems addressing the different strands. By following these simple steps, students are able to clearly explain each step they took while solving a math word problem. Now available for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades.

We love to talk writing! If we can ever be of service or you'd like to chat, please email us at darlene-and-terry@writenow-rightnow.com

Additional ideas and activities can be found in the *Write Now - Right Now Writing Program*.

To view grade level samples, locate additional newsletters and read blog posts, visit:

writenow-rightnow.com

The Write Now—Right Now Writing Program is now being used in 49 states and four Canadian provinces. How can we be of help to you in your classroom?