



The difference between an adventure and an ordeal is attitude.

— Outdoor Adventure Poster

We love to travel. The experience of seeing new places, meeting new people, and immersing in new cultures is an important part of our lives. The process of planning and mapping out a new trip is part of the excitement. Researching places to see, studying maps and routes, and choosing transportation (shall we drive, tow the trailer, or fly), all happen before we leave the house. Anticipating new travel plans is part of the fun!

However, anyone who has traveled knows that the best-laid plans rarely work out exactly the way you hoped. Planes are late, unexpected snow storms close roads, and car trouble can leave you stranded on the side of the road. Traveling companions have unknown annoying habits, young (and old) children get cranky and accommodations look nothing like the pictures you viewed on the internet. The traveling adventure is not living up to expectations! The adventure is turning into an ordeal. We often need to readjust our attitude!

The same may happen in classrooms as we near the end of the semester. Teachers are faced with many demands—large classrooms, multiple student needs, state mandated testing, progress monitoring, reaching difficult students—the list goes on and on. Lessons we spent hours creating fall flat. The teaching adventure becomes an ordeal.

The October Issue of Education Update included advice from some 2017 State and National Teachers of the Year on how to Get Your Mojo Back. The ideas ranged from *Learn Something New* to *Take A Hike*. Click on the website below to read the entire article. Here's to regaining an attitude which embraces teaching as an adventure.

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/education-update/oct17/vol59/num10/10-Ways-to-Get-Your-Mojo-Back.aspx>

Websites We Love!

Bunceee www.edu.bunceee.com

Are you looking for new ways students can demonstrate what they have learned? This interactive website allows students to create slide shows which include text, images, animation and audio. Filled with images students may download, this website allows students to *show what they know* in an engaging new way!

Wonderopolis wonderopolis.org

This website provides students short, engaging videos on an array of topics. Exploring topics ranging from science to math to arts and culture, this website allows students to learn more about curricular topics in a format accessible to all students.

Book Nook

Reading aloud is a favorite part of every school day. The following are new book titles our students love.



Raymie Nightingale by: Kate DiCamillo

Kate DiCamillo is the master of character development and readers will love meeting her new characters Raymie, Louisiana and Beverly. These three unique girls meet at baton twirling lessons as they hope to compete in the Little Miss Central Florida Tire Contest. They form an unlikely friendship as they face loneliness and abandonment together. Similar to Because of Winn Dixie, difficult topics are approached with humor and warmth. A delightful read aloud, and a safe way to discuss with students the truth that everyone has their own challenges and friendship is found in unlikely places. The ending will bring a tear to both your and your students' eyes.

www.amazon.com/Raymie-Nightingale-Kate-DiCamillo

They All Saw a Cat by: Brendan Wenzel

This 2017 Caldecott Honor Book shows the importance of perspective. A cat's simple walk down the road turns into an adventure as the author shows what others see as the cat passes by them. Used as a mentor text for teaching point of view, students are able to easily identify the importance point of view plays on a story. Primary teachers may use the text as a prompt for sentence writing. *What does the fish see when he sees the cat? How does the dog view the cat?*

www.amazon.com/They-All-Saw-Brendan-Wenzel

Mary McScary by: R. L. Stine and illustrated by Marc Brown

The authors of the Goosebump books and the Arthur series collaborate on this new picture book. Mary McScary's favorite activity is to scare everyone and everything she meets. The only person she cannot scare is her cousin, Harry McScary. Mary tries everything to scare him, but is unsuccessful until she comes upon the one thing guaranteed to frighten young boys. This delightful book can be used as a mentor text for narrative writing, as Mary tries to solve her problem in many ways before she is successful!

www.amazon.com/Mary-McScary-R-L-Stine

Building Student Relationships



Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Across the country, schools and teachers are increasing their focus on emotional intelligence and building positive relationships between teachers and their students. One way to get to know your students better and foster stronger relationships is through the use of weekly letters.

The idea was first suggested to us by a past teammate, Mary Montero (www.teachingwithamountainview.com) The concept is simple. On Monday, I give my students a letter from me which focuses on a question or topic. Their task is to respond back to me in letter form by the following Friday. I then answer each child's letter personally and we repeat the process.

At first, the task seemed daunting. Who has time to write 30 letters a week, along with composing a new letter every Monday? However, the weekly letters have proved a valuable experience in the classroom and well-worth every minute spent. The following tips keep the process flowing smoothly and easily.

- ♦ Focus on a specific character trait in each letter. Students can reflect on how they demonstrate **responsibility** at home, a time someone has shown **integrity** to them, or how they express their **creativity**.
- ♦ Include an example from your own life. If you are asking students to write on how they keep their life healthy and balanced, include an example on how you try to make good food choices and exercise daily.
- ♦ Be clear on what you are expecting back from the students. Examples of expectation might be:
 - Respond in letter format.
 - Respond to the prompt.
 - Edit your writing so it contains correct spelling, punctuation and capitalization.
- ♦ Encourage parental help with the letters. Parents often ask how they can help their students with writing at home. This is an excellent time to have parents work with their child composing their letter.

Building Student Relationships, cont.



- ♦ Use the letters as a springboard to a new curricular topic. For example, we are beginning a unit focused on immigration. This week's letter asks students to either write about a time they have moved, or write about a place they would love to live.
- ♦ Mix up the letter's requirements. One week you may ask students to draw a picture of an imaginary constellation or design a thank-you card to a friend. Adding novelty to the assignment helps keep everyone's energy flowing.
- ♦ Include notes to parents in your letters. I put the week's **Learning Focus** at the end of each weekly letter. The letter then becomes an additional parent communication tool, keeping parents up to date on what is going on in the classroom.
- ♦ Encourage students to turn in their letters either in written form or electronically. This gives you options on responding back. Students may also turn in their letters at any time during the week. This keeps me from having to respond to 30 letters all at once.
- ♦ Share the workload with your grade level teammates. We all send out the same letter with slight personal modifications and take turns writing the letter. We also keep the letters to recycle the following year.

Good luck as you begin corresponding with your students. The relationship you will build with your students will be worth it the first time you hear, "Did you read my letter? Did you write me back yet? I can't wait to read how you answered my letter!"

Poetry Corner

Narrative poetry is poetry which tells a story of an event in the form of a poem. A narrative poem will have a beginning, a middle and an end. The poem will contain characters and a plot. The following narrative poems work well during the holiday season.

December Days Are Short by Jack Prelutsky

This poem describes a child's busy December day. The poem is a wonderful text for introducing narrative poetry while also teaching sequence. Using a two - column chart, students may record the time of day on the left hand side and the activity on the right.

Time of Day	Activity
After breakfast	Snowball Fight
Mid-morning	Build a Fortress
Late Morning	Race Sleds
Noon	Eat Lunch
After Lunch	Make a Snow-man
Later Afternoon	Feed Pigeons Slide on ice . . .

http://www.gtps.k12.nj.us/technology/math4/December_Days_Are_Short.doc

Christmas Dog by Shel Silverstein

This poem tells the story of a dog's first night as a watchdog. Unfortunately, it's Christmas Eve and he frightens off a man dressed in red! The poem works as both a narrative poem, explaining the events which take place when Santa appears and a lesson in irony. All students will love the line "bitin' his butt."

<http://emsbyshelsilverstein.blogspot.com/2009/01/shel-silverstein-pg-132-133.html>

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Poetry Corner, continued

Stopping by Woods on A Snowy Evening by Robert Frost

This classic poem tells the story of a man and his horse traveling through a snowy woods. Introduce the poem using the book Stopping by Woods on A Snowy Evening illustrated by Susan Jeffers. The illustrations add to the mystique of the poem and will engage your students in the beauty of the words. After sharing the book with students, students may paint their own version of the poem. All they need is dark construction paper (we use navy blue), white tempera paint and small paint brushes or Q-tips. Students create masterpieces. They especially love adding silver glitter to their snowy woods pictures!

These paintings work well as the cover of a holiday card students can then give away to someone special. To complete the card, students may copy the text of the poem inside.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42891/stopping-by-woods-on-a-snowy-evening>

www.amazon.com/Stopping-Woods-Snowy-Evening-Robert/dp/0525467343/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1511534961&sr=8-1&keywords=stopping+by+woods+on+a+snowy+evening+illustrated+by+susan+jeffers

We wish each of you a wonderful holiday season!

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:

<http://www.writenow-rightnow.com>.

The *Write Now—Right Now Writing Program* is now being used in over 42 states and four Canadian provinces. How can we be of help to you in your classroom?