



The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.

—Vince Lombardi

For many teachers, summer is a time to both relax and to get things accomplished. These free days seem like the perfect time to work on the to-do list which has built up all school year.

Summer to-do's can be broken into three categories—completing tasks, learning new skills, and finishing projects. Tasks are defined as those activities which are never done. Examples are folding laundry, unloading the dishwasher, and mowing the lawn. Tasks are the chores that make life run more easily and smoothly.

Skills are what we need to learn in order to complete a new project. For Terry, this summer's newly acquired skill was learning to chalk paint. Taking a class provided her the information, skills and practice needed to successfully attempt a chalk-painting project.

The new skills were applied to the project of chalk-painting a dresser and rocking chair for a new granddaughter's nursery. Although there were some flubs and do-overs, the project was a success. The time spent learning and practicing the new skills paid off!

As we begin a new school year, we are faced with the same three categories for our students. What tasks, or routines, do we need to establish in order for our classroom to run smoothly? What new skills are essential for students to master in order to successfully complete grade level standards and expectations? Finally, what projects can students successfully attempt with the skills they know? Determining and implementing the answers to these questions helps make the new school year successful!

Websites We Love!

As you look for ways to give your students the skills and background knowledge they need, take a look at these two websites.

Mystery Science <https://mysteryscience.com> This site provides science lessons organized by both topic and grade level. The lessons includes videos, instructions and all needed blackline masters. Your students will be engaged and enthusiastic!

Newsela <https://newsela.com/> This site provides a wide variety of reading passages organized by topic and grade level. Your students will enjoy researching favorite topics in depth.

Book Nook



With the new school year, comes the opportunity to read new books both aloud to our students and with them in reading circles.

Short —Written by Holly Goldberg Sloan, the author of counting by 7s, introduces the reader to the character of Julia. Being “undertall” for her age, Julia has boycotted the word *short*, until she unexpectedly finds herself cast in the local college’s production of Wizard of Oz. Julia learns a new appreciation for the unique characteristics of both those around her and herself. As she makes new friends, she learns to embrace the play director’s words, “Now is the time to find the joy.”

https://www.amazon.com/Short-Holly-Goldberg-Sloan-ebook/dp/B01FEY5EXY/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1503861153&sr=8-1&keywords=short+by+holly+goldberg+sloan

Detective Gordon: A Complicated Case—Written by Ulf Nilsson, this delightful novel is perfect for students ready to read their first novel or as a read aloud for any age level. Detective Gordon is a pudgy toad and the forest’s chief of police. He is assisted by Buffy, his young mouse assistant. Together they set out to discover who is being mean to the other forest creatures. The book provides a stepping stone to a discussion on bullying and the reasons people may be unkind to one another. Without being overly melodramatic, the book delivers its message, “Everyone should be allowed to play.”

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01BV2WKR6/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?encoding=UTF8&btkr=1>

Do Princesses and Super Heroes Hit the Trails? By Carmela La Vigna

In her biography, the author states that her goal is to visit all of the U.S. National Parks. She adds this new book to her collection of “Do Princesses?” books. In this book, the princess is joined by her super-hero companion as they discover the unique characteristics of twelve of the national parks. Written in rhyme, the book shares a special characteristic of each location. Besides being enjoyable to read, this picture book could also serve as a mentor text for lessons on regions.

<https://www.amazon.com/Princesses-Super-Heroes-Hit-Trails/dp/163076244X>

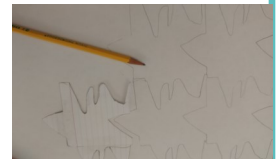
Displaying Student Work

One task that teachers all face is displaying student work. Teachers can spend hours stapling (and un-stapling) student work to the wall. One way to save time is to hang a laminated piece of construction paper with an attached clip on the hallway wall for each student. Instead of taking time to staple student work, students can then clip their work to the paper. Not wanting the wall to be covered with pieces of black paper, we have students first create a piece of tessellation art by following these steps.

1. Show students the following video. <https://youtu.be/WBVzodFi90E>
2. Provide each student with a square piece of paper. We recommend cutting 3x5 cards into squares, as students can use the lines as a guide.
3. Draw a shape on one side of the square and slide it to the other side. Use the lines to place the cut out in the same place. If desired, you can repeat the process on the other side of the square.
4. Trace the shape on piece of white paper.
5. Color your design!



a



5 New Things About Me

We do "getting to know you" activities during the first two days of school, then these community building activities get replaced by the busyness of our days. This activity helps students learn interesting and unique facts about one another that might not come up in daily conversations.

1. Provide each student 5 index cards (or cardstock cut into the size of a playing card.)
2. Students will write a "Betcha didn't know" fact on each card. For example: "Betcha didn't know that I have traveled to all 50 states."
3. Place students in groups of 5.
4. Together, the students' task is to build a house of cards using these index cards. The only requirement is that they must share their fact with their teammates before they can add their card to the house.
5. Repeat the activity by either forming new groups or expanding the groups to six or 8.

Anchoring Our Learning

Large pieces of chart paper, filled with colorful writing, are found in many elementary classrooms. These charts, known as anchor charts, are used by teachers and students to help solidify student learning. While these charts have grown wildly in popularity, it is worthwhile to determine what is the best use for your classroom.

Engage New York has published an informative article on the best practices for using anchor charts in the classroom. (https://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/anchor_charts.pdf) The authors define an anchor chart as: *a posted visible support for just in time learning that includes only the essential information about strategies, procedures, and concepts that students can access at any time. As part of a literacy-rich environment, anchor charts cue students about prior learning, supporting students in remembering specific strategies, procedures and concepts.*

The question for us as teachers is how to make our anchor charts a viable, usable addition to our classroom. Here are some tips we have gathered.

- An anchor chart should make student thinking visible. The anchor chart needs to be specific and well organized. For example, if you want to make an anchor chart on the components of a complete sentence, that is the only information that should be on the chart
- An anchor chart should be created with the students. Although teacher created anchor charts may be helpful, best practice tells us that the information has a lasting effect on students when they help create the chart. Even though teachers will need to have thought through the process prior to beginning the task, the content should be created with the students. You will direct the process, but students must have ownership.
- Students must be able to reference the anchor charts when they need them. Many teachers choose to have students create a personal anchor chart as the class creates one. A special section of a writing notebook or math journal can be dedicated to storing past anchor charts, allowing students to use them as a needed reference.
- Anchor charts should be stored in an accessible place for students. You may want to keep your charts on large binder rings, where students can flip to the page they need. They can also be stored in a small cardboard tube with a label (toilet paper rolls work great!), allowing students to easily find the needed chart.

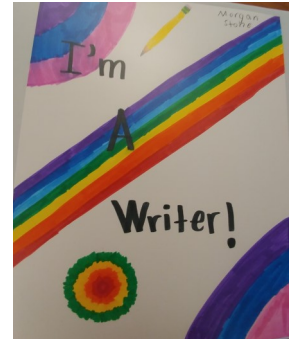
We would love to hear how you use anchor charts in your classroom. How do you create charts with students, help students create their own charts, and store your teacher charts?

Organizing Writing Notebooks

The beginning of every school year requires a vast amount of organization. One of the biggest challenges we all face is organizing writing notebooks. Like all of writing, the way we organize writing notebooks has evolved with time.

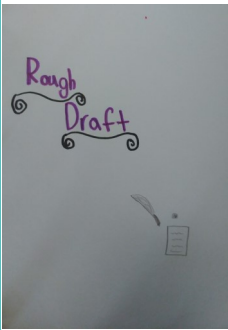
We divide our **Intermediate (Grades 3 -5) Writing Notebooks** into four sections. We three-hole punch cardstock to use as dividers.

The notebook: We use a 1 1/2" 3-ring notebook for writing. Prior to beginning any writing instruction, we make a cover for our notebooks. The students write "I Am A Writer" on cardstock to slip in the front cover.



Section One: Rough Drafts

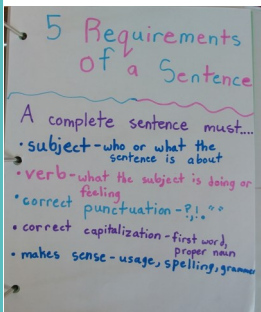
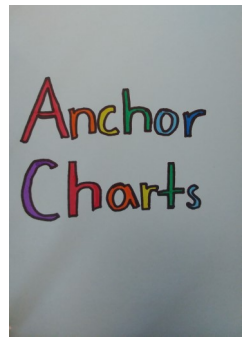
Anything that we work on goes into the rough draft section. This can be lists for brainstorming, practice writing complete sentences, plans, or first drafts of paragraphs.



Section Two: Anchor Charts

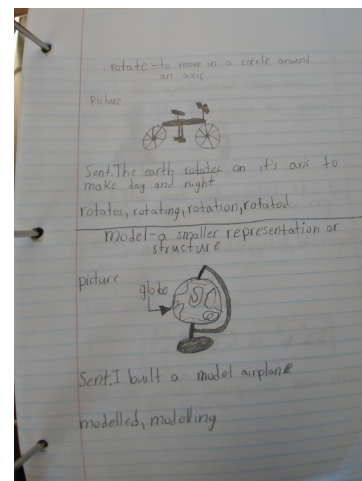
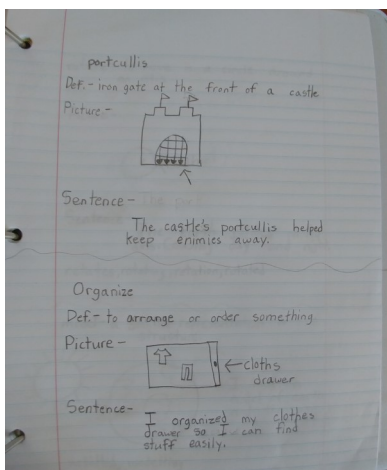
Anchor charts should be used by students whenever they need the information. With this in mind, we keep our writing

anchor charts in a special section in our writing notebook. The students then can make it their responsibility to use their charts to improve and edit their writing.



Section Three: Vocabulary

Expanding students' vocabulary is the goal of all teachers. In order to reach that goal, we have a specific vocabulary section in our writing notebooks. We add content and academic vocabulary to this section. Each vocabulary entry includes the word, its definition, a picture, and a sentence which uses the word in context. We also write the word in its different forms, for example: *organize, organized, organizing, organization*.



Section Four: Poetry

Poetry should be a part of daily learning, not simply a unit. Each week we study a poem, looking at different aspects of poetry. We store our poems in this section of our notebook!

Organizing Writing Notebooks—Primary

Primary students will benefit from an organization system for their writing. Primary teachers often use one of the two following organizational methods.

Composition Notebooks:

Composition notebooks work well as writing notebooks for primary students. First graders will benefit from using the composition books which have the space at the top for an illustration. When using composition notebooks, students will need to be taught to use the pages in order, not skipping around from page to page. When students begin to use their notebooks for planning, be sure to have students write their plan on the back of the previous page, so they can view their plans while writing.

Pocket Folders:

These work well for young writers, especially when they are using primary paper. One way to organize is to use two different colored folders depending on their purpose.

Red Folder: This folder is for brainstorming, plans, sentence stretching, and any other new learning.

Blue Folder: This folder is where students keep drafts that are in progress. For example, if students are working on topic sentences to go with a plan, these would be kept in the blue folder. In this way, students easily keep track of what they are currently involved in writing.

In primary grades, we recommend cleaning out these folder once a quarter.

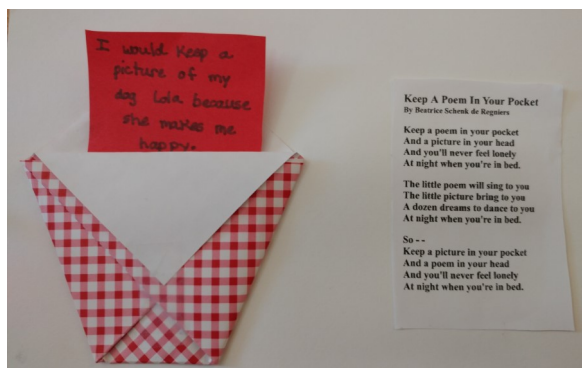
Poetry Corner

"Keep A Poem In Your Pocket" by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers

<http://home.nyc.gov/html/misc/html/poem/poem1b.html>

This classic poem describes a child keeping a poem and a picture in their pocket to help them when they are feeling lonely at night when they are in bed. Pass out copies of the poem to each student and discuss what the author keeps in her pocket and why she keeps these things. Discuss with students what they might keep in their pocket to help them when they are feeling lonely or sad.

Provide each student a printed 12" square piece of paper. Following these directions, fold the paper into a pocket. (You may want students to practice using notebook paper first.) <http://origami.lovetoknow.com/about-origami/how-make-paper-pocket> Students can write what they would keep in their pocket on a separate sheet of paper and slip it inside the pocket. Glue the copy of the poem, the paper pocket, and the explanation of what is in the pocket onto a piece of construction paper to display.



We wish each of you a successful start to a new school year!

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>.

The Write Now—Right Now Writing Program is now being used in 41 states and four Canadian provinces. How can we be of help to you in your classroom?