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Journal Writing Activities

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Journal writing is an effective and useful tool for teaching writing to students of all ages and across all subject areas. It also serves as an invaluable and frequent measurement of student progress throughout the school year. Journals provide teachers with an excellent source for evaluating students' writing skills as well as their comprehension of a particular subject area. Through frequent journaling, students become more fluent writers and can become more comfortable with expressing their thoughts. Use the following suggestions to integrate journal writing in your classroom!



Kindergarten through Second Grade

- Have students make their own journal with hole-punched paper and tie with yarn to bind the pages, or purchase a composition book. Students may draw/color a picture of themselves on the cover. Help students write their name and any other necessary information.



- Have students cut out photos from magazines or draw pictures on journal pages addressing the writing prompt—The Fun They Had at a Birthday Party; A Visit to the Doctor/Dentist; A Family Vacation; A Favorite Pet; or A Trip to the Beach. Students may write/dictate sentences to the teacher to tell their story and describe the pictures. 
- Have a *math lesson*. Students may draw/cut out pictures to illustrate dividing a pizza between family members; adding and subtracting objects; defining and drawing geometric shapes and naming objects having those shapes; comparing the number of boys and girls in the class, etc. Students can write/dictate sentences to tell about the pictures. 
- Have a *science lesson*. Students can draw/cut out photos of insects then name and label them; draw and label the water cycle; describe types of weather and seasonal activities; or depict plant life, animals, etc. Students write/dictate sentences to tell about the pictures. 
- Have a *social studies lesson*. Include drawing/cutting out pictures to illustrate their neighborhood, town, community, police/fire departments, bodies of water, places, different cultures, important people and occupations, etc. Students write/dictate sentences to tell about their pictures. 
- Have a *reading lesson*. Draw/cut out photos representing characters, settings, and events of a story; illustrate favorite fairy tales; compare a story book character to someone they know; or illustrate a story of their own. 

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Third Grade and Up

- Have students make/purchase a journal for all subject areas or use a multi-sectioned composition book. 
- Have students write daily entries and use them to evaluate writing skills (i.e., spelling, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, etc.). Students can summarize the day's lesson or classroom activity in any subject, list questions they may have, describe a favorite event or character in the lesson, suggest books or movies that go along with the theme, write opinions about what they enjoyed about the lesson, comment on personal connections, etc. Teacher's editions of textbooks have multitudes of writing prompts for journal writing. 
- Have students compare and contrast characters/things/events across subject areas—Huck Finn/Tom Sawyer; seasons; dogs/cats; Cinderella/step-sisters; Revolutionary War/Civil War; global warming, etc. Refer to the teacher's editions of textbooks for ideas for prompts. Use statements directly from the students about the day's lesson as prompts for writing opinions or debates. For example, "Recycling is too much trouble and doesn't make a difference." or "South Carolina should never have seceded from the Union." 
- Have students write sequential directions—making a favorite sandwich, sundae, or pizza; making a bed; building a snowman; how to get to my best friend's house; directions to the cafeteria, etc. 
- Have students write different types of assignments—poetry; short essays; letters to present-day famous people or famous people in history; what they want to be when they grow up; memorable birthday events; a favorite book, relative, pet, school subject, best friend, etc. 

- Have students solve word problems taken from the day's math lesson and explain their answers in step-by-step detail. Draw illustrations representing the steps. 
- Involve students in choosing topics for journaling in all subject areas by drawing a name from a box. The student selects the topic for the day's journaling from the day's lesson or a previous lesson (within the last few days/week/month). This gives the teacher opportunities to check student retention and possible need for re-teaching or review. 



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