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Academic Note

Although young students are often overlooked, they are actually wonderful writers. Younger writers just need specific lessons that break the process into small steps, which are easy to follow. I taught Kindergarten for 4 ½ years, and during that time I found it so hard to find writing activities on my younger students’ level. I was constantly looking for anything pertaining to writing that could be used in my classroom. So when I was chosen to participate in the Primary Writing Program in Floyd County, I was ecstatic! The Primary Writing Program is where I obtained the strategy that I shared in the Mountain Writing Project. This activity, “Strange Day on the Farm” does a wonderful job at building students’ confidence in writing. I think it is very important to allow students to feel success in writing.

The goal of this lesson, “Strange Day on the Farm” is to create a class book for reading and writing practice. The lesson objective is to create a short story, but it is implemented in small parts, which makes it easier for the students to complete. Since this lesson is broken down into smaller parts it is a wonderful activity to use to develop positive thinking about writing.

This lesson is designed with specific steps for the students to complete. They begin with listing animals, and discussing what they normally do. Then, the students will write sentences showing “strange” things that the animals could be doing on a farm. For example, “The cow was driving the tractor.” With older grades I would encourage them to use prepositions, adjectives, etc. After writing their sentences, the students will brainstorm an event that will cause the animals on the farm to behave strangely. They will illustrate and share their work, even acting it out! The class will then brainstorm a happy ending that causes all the animals to act normal again. We then publish the book and put it in our class library.

This strategy is best used over a course of a few days. Also, it is so important to stress the skills of good writers when doing this lesson. Work with sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling. This is a wonderful time to discuss capital letters; punctuation…with older students it would be a wonderful time to discuss prepositions, adjectives, etc. This is a great activity that introduces the concept of writing a short story to the students, while building a community of writers.

Angela Hilterbrand (KDEC), which is a huge writing guru in Kentucky, was over the Floyd County Writing Program. I attended a primary workshop of hers that met throughout the course of a year. Also another wonderful resource I used for this demonstration was the book “*Phonics They Use*” written by Patricia M. Cunningham. The author encourages a teacher to use lots of easy reading and daily writing in the classroom.” “*Telling, Drawing, Writing Lessons for our Youngest Writers”*, which is actually a book I received from the MtWP, was also a wonderful resource. It mentions how important it is for younger students to participate in creating and publishing books.

I have completed this activity with several groups of students, and each time the lesson was a success. It is such a fun way to invite children to write. Children already love the absurd in life, so this is an easy way to get their imaginations flowing. It is excellent at forming a writing community, while allowing students to see writing in a positive light. And after all, that is the goal…building lifelong writers!