Mirroring our Minds

Daily reflections and journal writing can increase students' reading and language arts skills and improve their self-esteem.

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Mirroring Our Minds

Curriculum Areas: Language Arts

Goals: Research already proved that reflection and journal writing played a key role in stimulating the brain and mind. Other research has proved the importance of journal writing for all grade levels to help students increase reading and writing skills. Therefore this project is designed to stimulate students' minds and increase their reading and writing skills at the same time through reflection and journal writing.

Objectives: Student will respond to a daily reflection in a journal. Students will create a monthly writing piece choosing their own writing style and presenting their final selection to the class.

Sunshine State Standards: Grades 3-5: LA.A.2.2, LA.B.1.2, LA.B.2.2, LA.C.3.2, SS.B.1.2, SS.B.2.2, SS.D.2.2
Grades K-2: LA.B.2.1, LA.A.2.1, LA.C.1.1, LA.B.1.1, LA.C.3.1, SS.B.1.1, SS.B.2.1, SS.D.2.1, FL.A.3.1, FL.B.1.1 **Grades 6-8**: LA.B.1.3, LA.A.2.3, LA.B.2.3, LA.C.1.3, LA.D.2.3, LA.C.3.3, SS.B.2.3, SS.B.1.3, SS.D.2.3

The Disseminator: Patti Ward is a graduate of Barry University, with a Bachelors of Science Cum Laude 1981. She received a Masters of Urban Education from F.I.U. in 1992. She has 25 years teaching experience in Miami- Dade County Schools. She has been selected 4 times for “Who’s Who of American Teachers”, selected as Chapter I teacher of the year, a directing teacher of 5 interns, Mint Mentor, NEST facilitator, a MetLife TNLI Fellow and has been awarded grants from The Education Fund Impact II grant, Citibank Success Fund grants, Cedar’s Medical Center grants, Donorschoose.org and Adopt a Classroom grants.

Course Outline: Students were required to write a daily reflection in their family journals in the morning, during that period of time where the teacher needed to collect homework, take attendance, and listen to announcements. The students formed a routine of entering the classroom, preparing for the day and reflecting in their journal on a topic/idea(s) posted on the board. Students were also encouraged to share their daily reflection with a family member and or their primary caretaker at home and write the families/caretaker/ /parent(s) responses to the daily reelection. These reflections/journal ideas were related to their culture and family experiences and are provided in the attached resource list. With very little effort, this project peaked the interest of the students and their families. I also found that creating my own reflections that related to their reading and language arts textbook was beneficial as well.

Procedure:

Students were given a "daily reflection" which they were required to respond to in a journal. The "daily reflection" that they were required to complete were usually related to their feelings, family, culture and things that they could relate to from their daily lives. Many of the daily reflections I posted were taken from the Reading/Language Arts text and the reflection was related to the "Theme" and/or stories we were focusing on at the time. I usually challenged students to pretend they were a character in the story or give them a "What if …" reflection encouraging higher order, critical thinking skills. As a daily part of our reading procedures, some of the students shared their reflection for the day. Students were required to create poems, stories, and books using their "daily reflections". Their final projects were written about themselves using any writing style they wanted and they presented the project to the class towards the end of each grading period.

The Benefits

Daily reflections and journal writing increased the students' reading and language arts skills, as well as, improved their self-esteem. There were in class lessons, independent activities and home learning assignments. The reflections were related to the Houghton Mifflin reading program and themes as well as based on students' interests, family and feelings. Giving the students freedom of choice gave them the desire to be creative in their writing pieces.

The Students

This project was designed so it can be adapted to almost any grade level and can fit the needs of the group depending on how in-depth the adaptor wants to go. I used this project with second and sixth graders. For the 2007-2008 school year, I worked with 22 sixth grade students. We met daily for Language Arts.

Materials and Resources

All resources are listed in this packet. This project can be kept to a minimal amount of time and cost or can become extremely elaborate depending on the teacher's and the school's resources. Included in this packet are a list of suggested materials, journal ideas, references, and resources. Students used the media center, computer lab, classroom and homes to complete the end of the term writing pieces. My students needed ten flash drives, "Print Shop" and 70 page spirals for our daily reflections.

Overall Value

Daily reflections and journal writing increased students' reading and language arts skills and improved their self-esteem. By adapting this project you will assist in improving students' desire to want to write, which may result in an increase of students' writing skills, and ultimately impact their academic achievement.

Lesson Plans for Journaling

The following is an example of a lesson plan for journaling. However, journal writing can be incorporated right in your daily lesson for reading and language arts. Journal writing can be used as a warm-up prior to teacher instruction. As stated before, journal writing is as simple as posting the reflection on the board and having students write when they walk in the classroom in the morning during the time you need as a teacher to take attendance, collect homework, etc. Students should be given the opportunity to share their reflections, too. The lesson bellows gives you an idea of the ways you can incorporate journaling to relate to the stories that you are using in your class.

Journal Writing[1]

Grade Levels: **5 - 8**

INTRODUCTION

Using the published diaries of Anne Frank, or Zlata Filipovic, introduce students to journal writing, a form of autobiographical writing in which the writer records personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

SUGGESTED TIME ALLOWANCE
40 minutes

OBJECTIVES

Students will

- write personal journal entries to explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- .edit a personal journal entry to sharpen their grammar and spelling skills.
- share their entry with peer editors and edit the work of others to build collaboration skills.

MATERIALS

[1] This lesson plan was acquired from website http://www.teachervision.fen.com/writing/lesson-plan/3514.html

- Personal spiral notebook
- Pens or pencils (pens are preferred to encourage fluency and discourage erasing)
- Writing prompts
- Website: http://www.annefrank.org/content.asp?pid=1&lid=2 – if you choose Anne Frank
- Printouts of the journals for the Teacher Exchange students and/or copies of **Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl** by Anne Frank, and/or **Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo** by Zlata Filipovic

PROCEDURES

Tell the class they are going to be listening to or reading excerpts from one or more diaries. Each diary is the real-life record of a young girl's or boy's thoughts, feelings, and experiences over a particular time period.

  - Anne Frank's diary is the record of the German-Jewish teenager's experiences in the Netherlands from 1942 to 1944 during World War II.
  - Zlata Filipovic's diary is the 11-year-old's record of her changing life in her native country of Sarajevo during a much later war.

- As you read to your students, or as they read to themselves, have them note the personal details that the writer includes in the diary.
- For example, Zlata's first six entries establish her as a typical fifth-grader whose life at this point in her writing may not be too different from your students' own lives. Details for students to note include:

- Zlata's anxiousness to see her schoolmates again
- The different ways the children of Sarajevo spent their summer vacation
- The classes offered at Zlata's school (compared to their own classes)
- Zlata's love of Saturday morning so she can sleep late

- Next, have students discuss the following questions about the writer and her work:
- Why are the writer's details important?
- How do they help the reader?
- What do they tell us about the writer?
- What questions do you have about the writer?
- What do you and the writer have in common?
- Next, tell students they will be writing their own journals as a week-long (or year-long) project. (You might provide class time for journal writing or assign it as homework.) Ask students to think of these journals as a way to freely explore their thoughts and feelings while also creating a source of

ideas for their writing. Also, remind them that their journals should contain the details that may seem unimportant at first, but which add to the reader's appreciation and understanding of the writer. They should also date each journal entry.

- To give students ideas for their first journal entries, present the following writing prompts and tell students they will have 5 to 10 minutes (3 minutes for younger students) to write. Direct them to try to write nonstop and avoid erasing. Most students will be comfortable beginning with short, sustained writing times, building up to longer times as their fluency increases. Some good prompts for beginning journal entries include:
    - What I did last weekend (or hope to do this weekend)
    - My experiences in the school cafeteria this week, for better or worse
    - What really makes me frustrated or mad, and why
    - What really makes me laugh
    - How I spend my spare time
    - My best memory ever
    - Inside my head today
    - A typical day in my life at school
    - You might also have students suggest prompts for journal writing, especially after they find the prompts that have worked well. The websites http://www.kidswriting.about.com and http://www.journals.about.com offer good writing prompts and an opportunity for online publication.

    - You can help motivate students to write in their journals by writing in your own journal and sharing your writing.

ASSESSMENT

- After students have written at least five journal entries, allow them to pick their best entry, revise it, and submit it for peer editing and grading. Allow for further revisions after grading and post the work either on a class website or bulletin board.
- In addition, ask students to devise a class journal-writing rubric – that is, establish the criteria for good journal writing. They can use this rubric to assess one another's work or their own.
- As you read students' journals, it is more meaningful for them if they receive personal rather than corrective comments on their thoughts and ideas.
- Ask for volunteers to read aloud from their journals and have

students give feedback on the writer's use of such devices as sensory details and imagery.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Assign students to research different kinds of autobiographical writing and to share good examples of published diaries, journals, letters, travel logs, oral histories, interviews, and autobiographies.
- Have students work in pairs or small groups to write dialogue journals in which they carry on written conversations about a common interest or a mutual problem they're trying to solve.
- Suggest that students keep a specialized journal that focuses on a particular activity, such as participating in basketball, or a learning log, which is a personal learning tool that focuses on their coursework and their thoughts and feelings about what they are learning.

STANDARDS CORRELATION National Council of Teachers of English

- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.
- Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Journal Writing Worksheets for 365 Days

The link below offers a journal writing worksheet for 365 days. Check this website out for some great writing ideas and lesson plans! The website's name is "School Express" and you can search for writing and journal ideas. There are 365 pages of ideas to use all year round.

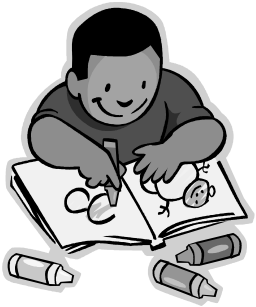
http://www.schoolexpress.com/fws/cat.php?id=2541

Mirroring Our Minds Resources

Below are the items I recommend you order for this project. One may or may not need these items and can adapt this grant to meet your classroom needs. You do not necessarily have to purchase the items I did. I purchased ten flash drives, twenty-two 70 page spiral notebooks and a computer program "Print Shop" but you really don't need this to get started. There are so many free downloads available for fonts and graphics, it really isn't necessary to purchase a computer program. Scrapbook material and or arts and crafts supplies are recommended for the students final writing piece but again it's up to the teacher on how much they want to elaborate. I recommend that a teacher adapting this grant be creative and have fun with the project.

1. **70 page Spirals-** I always purchase the 70 page spirals at the "Back to School Sale" at Target and usually pay $0.10 for each. These spirals are used for the students' daily reflection/ journals.
2. **USB Flash Drives-**You really need to price shop and compare. I obtained some from Office Depot at $5.95 with 1 GB of memory.
3. **"Print Shop"-** As I stated before, please shop around and this is not that necessary due to the fact that there are so many free downloadable fonts, templates, and graphics on the web.

4. Scrapbook Material/Arts and Crafts supplies-I try to shop around and purchase a variety of arts and craft supplies like glue sticks, glitter, stickers, etc. Students should have things to decorate their final piece with.



Mirroring Our Minds Journal Ideas[2]

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Attached are most of the journal ideas I used and more! I posted a journal idea daily from the list and encouraged the students to write about themselves. Students created poems, stories, and books at the end of each tem. We posted these creative writing pieces on a bulletin board with the students' pictures next to them. Their final project will be written about themselves using any writing style they choose and presented to the class. I also used several reflections that I created that went along with the "Houghton Mifflin" themes and stories in the reading series.

Write about your family's journey to America…

Write about your family's favorite story they like to repeat over and over…

Write about who, what, where, when, and why your family came to America…

Write about the things that make your family unique…

Write about a time my family…

Write about a special family member…

Get inspired create a poem about your family…

Write about your family's religions, beliefs and traditions…

Write about your family's home country…

Write about a time when you were brave, or finish this sentence: I am brave because. .

[2] "Mirroring Our Minds Journal Ideas" were acquired from the website http://www.hvcn.org/info/kingpto/journal_prompts.htm

Write about a time when you were helpful.

Write about something or things that you do well.

Write about three things that make you interesting.

Write about a time when you were honest.

Write about a time when you were dishonest.

Write about a time when you were helpful.

Write about something(s) that you do well.

Write about things that make you interesting.

Write about a time when you were honest.

Write about a time when you were dishonest.

Write about your best friends. Who are they? Why do you like them? What do you do together for fun?

What country would you like to visit? Why?

Write about the most exciting thing that ever happened to you.

Write about a time when you were nice to someone in your family.

Write about your home

Write about things you play with

Write about your favorite foods

Write about your school

Write about your family

Write about yourself (describe yourself or write about your interests)

Write about your friends

Write about a vacation

Write about your favorite activity

Write about your favorite candy

Write about your favorite toy

Write about what you do after the school day is over

Write about a favorite friend.

Write about a time when you were mean to someone in your family.

If you could have anything in the world what would it be?

Write about yourself. What color is your hair? What do you look like? Write details.

Write about an embarrassing moment. What happened? Who was there?

Write details about your life. Where were you born? Who do you live with? Where have you lived?

Write about your favorite animal.

Write about your favorite or least favorite foods. Why do you like them or dislike them?

Write about things you like to do. Why do you like them or dislike them?

Write about your favorite or least favorite sports. Why do you like them or dislike them?

Write about the people in your family. Do you have brothers or sisters? What are their names? Do you get along with them?

What makes you feel happy? Why?

What makes you feel sad? Why?

What makes you feel mad? Why?

Do you like music? If so, write about what kind of music you like and why you like it. What are your favorite songs or musical groups?

What are your favorite or least favorite movies? Why?

Write about your hobbies. Why do you like them?

Write about books you like to read. Or write about a book you are reading now. What is the book about? Who are the characters? Who are your favorite characters? Is it an information book or a story?

Write about things you like to write about. Do you like writing stories? What do you like better: writing imagination stories or true stories

Write about your favorite and least favorite things about school. Why do you like them or dislike them?

What holidays does your family celebrate (like Christmas, Kwanzaa, or Hanukkah)? What do you do on those holidays?

What are your favorite or least favorite colors? Why do you like them or dislike them?

Write about the nicest thing you have done for someone.

What is your favorite park? Where is the park and what do you like to do there?

Does your family go to church, synagogue, and temple? Write about it.

How do you celebrate your birthdays? Do you have a cake? Do you have a party? Do you run around and hang from the ceiling fan or light?

Do you have any favorite relatives? Like an uncle or aunt or grandpa? What do you do with them and why do you like them?

Write about the naughtiest thing you ever did. Did you get caught? How were you punished?

What is your favorite or least favorite season of the year? Winter? Spring? Summer? Fall? Why do you like or dislike them?

Do you have any pets? What are their names? What kind of animals are they? Why do you like them?

What do you do on Saturday mornings?

What do you do on Sunday mornings?

Have you been to any other states or countries? Where did you go? Why did you go there? What did you see or do there?

Do you have chores or jobs that you have to do at home? What are they? Why do you have to do them? Do you like doing them?

What do you like to do at home? Do you like to watch T.V.? Play? Read? Write?

Have you ever broken one of your bones? What did you break and how?

Did you ever have to get stitches? Where did you get them? Write about your accident.

What do you want to be when you grow up? Do you want to be a teacher? Fire Fighter? Doctor? Custodian? Why ?

Write about your least or most favorite toy. Why do you like or dislike them? What do you do with them?

Write about the home you live in. Is it a house? Apartment? Trailer? How many rooms are there? What is your favorite room? What do you do there?

Who are your friends? What do you like to do with them to have fun?

Write about your neighborhood. Is it crowded? Is it in the city? Is it out in the country with no one around?

Write about what you think you are good at. Are you good a playing piano? Playing soccer? Why do you think you are good at these things?

Have you ever been camping? If so, write about one of your trips. Where did you go? What did you do? Who was with you?

Have you ever been chased by an animal? Write about the adventure. What kind of animal was it? What did it do? Why was it chasing you?

Do you like games? What is your favorite or least favorite game? Why do you like or dislike them?

Write about what makes you bored.

Write about what makes you have fun.

Have you ever rode on a plane, ship, or train? Where did you go? Did you like the ride?

When I look in a mirror I see…

If I were a character from (a story) I would have …

I challenge myself by ….

I am a doer because I …

I am a dreamer because I ...

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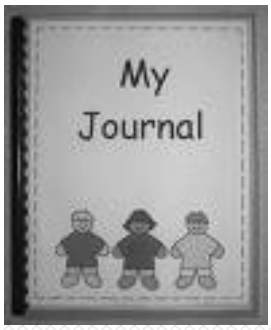

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By

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