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Lesson Planning

By Andrew Pudewa & Jill Pike

The goal of Excellence in Writing is to make writing part of what your students are learning, not a course unto itself. With nine structural units, you can easily plan your year of writing using sources from your history, science and literature.

Our teacher's course, *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*, incrementally trains teachers and parents to mentor their children in writing. Instead of providing multiple writing prompts, our program details nine structural units that students can use to write reports and stories related to what they are studying. With these powerful tools, students are empowered to manage any writing prompt and will no longer complain, "I don't know what to write!"

Fortunately, teachers do not need to watch the entire course to get started. All you need to do is watch the first teacher's disc and practice it with your student. There is even a Student Workshop that introduces Units 1 & 2 along with a few dress-ups so you can get started right away. To make lesson planning even easier, *Structure and Style for Students* includes ready-made lessons with the student instruction presented on video. If you would like to do the teaching yourself with sources related to what you are studying, check out our Theme-Based Writing Lessons. With either of these, the lesson planning is all done. You will spend about an hour once a week teaching the lesson, and then students will need thirty minutes a day during the remainder of the week to complete the writing assignment.

What might a year of writing look like?

Generally, you will spend 1–2 months per structural unit. Elementary students will spend more of their time in the early units while more mature students will spend more time in the upper units. All students begin with Unit 1 and progress incrementally through them all. By alternating between fiction and non-fiction, students have the opportunity to practice a variety of skills. Teachers can cycle through the units every year, helping their students deepen their writing. It's so effective! It works so, so well. I can't imagine that people would want to teach writing.

September/October Units 1 & 2: Key-Word Outlines & Summarizing from Notes

Using paragraphs from your history, science, and literature books, your student will learn to create an outline and use that outline to write paragraphs. This is a good unit to introduce some of the easy “dress-ups” such as the who/which clause and the “-ly” adverb. These are presented one at a time and practiced until they are mastered.

October/November Unit 3: Story Sequence

Your student will learn to organize a story in its three sequential parts. Aesop's fables, fairy tales, and historical stories make great sources for this unit. If students have mastered the dress-ups so far, then more can be introduced, such as quality adjectives and strong verbs.

November/December Unit 4: Summarizing a Single Reference

Now it is time to pull out the encyclopedia and learn how to write reports from a single reference. The importance of having a topic sentence at the beginning and a clincher sentence at the end of the paragraph is taught. Students can report on animals, states, famous people, places, or events they are studying in their other subjects. The adverb clause and because clause could be presented if students are ready for them.

January/February Unit 5: Writing from Pictures

Students enjoy this creative writing unit where they learn to take three sequential pictures and write a three-paragraph report on them. Some students might like to draw their own pictures for writing. Sentence patterns to increase sentence complexity can now be introduced if students have mastered the dress-ups. Start with the #1 subject and #2 prepositional openers.

February/March Unit 6: Summarizing Multiple References

Young students may choose a few elementary books on animals while older students begin library research on subjects such as famous people and events. Instead of wrestling with note cards, students are taught how to organize their work using the outline technique that has been taught all along. For style, the #3 “-ly” adverb and #5 adverbial clause sentence openers can be introduced.

March/April Unit 7: Creative Writing

Learning to create an outline from the information in their brain, students discover how to write on a variety of topics related to things they already know. Mature students will learn the Basic Essay model. The tricky #4 “-ing” opener can be introduced along with its grammar rules. The #6 Very Short Sentence pattern is also taught, completing the sentence openers.

April/May Unit 8: Essay

Middle and high school students will learn how to write research essays (term papers) using this unit. After all the preparation of Units 1–7, students usually find this manageable. If they have mastered all their dress-ups and sentence openers, decorations are added.

May/June Unit 9: Critique

Instead of writing painful book reports, students will discover how to critique a story. If students are ready, some of the advanced style techniques of triples and teeter-totters can be presented and practiced.

Next Year

Move through the nine units again using different source materials connected with content areas (history, science, etc.).

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