Mini-Lessons for Writing Workshop using 6 Traits of Writing

Grades K-1

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Educational Services

Created for SMMUSD Teachers by

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Table of Contents

Stretching Sounds............................................................................................................................................. 3
Zoom..................................................................................................................................................................... 7
Incredible Endings.............................................................................................................................................. 10
Gr. K-1 Mini-Lesson 1: Stretching Sounds

Unit of Study: Small Moments (pages 39-46 from the Units of Study by Lucy Calkins and Abby Oxenhorn)

6 Traits Emphasis: Conventions: Stretching & Writing Words So Others Can Read Them

Teaching Point: Writers get their words down on paper by saying the words slowly and writing down the sounds they hear.

Writing Process Stage: Drafting or Revising

CA Writing Standards:
Kindergarten 1.0 Writing Strategies: Students write words and brief sentences that are legible.

Organization and Focus 1.1--Use letters and phonetically spelled words to write about experiences, stories, people, objects, or events; 1.2--Write consonant-vowel-consonant words (i.e., demonstrate the alphabetic principle).

Language Conventions 1.2: Spelling--Spell independently by using pre-phonetic knowledge, sounds of the alphabet, and knowledge of letter names.

First Grade Language Conventions 1.8: Spelling--Spell three- and four-letter short-vowel words and grade-level-appropriate sight words correctly.

Teaching Method: Demonstration

Materials needed:
Teacher: Sketch of your own story in oversized booklet, marker
Students: Mini whiteboards (1 per student), dry erase markers (1 per student). If you do not have whiteboards for each student, you can use chalkboards and chalk, or clipboards (or another hard surface) with paper and pens/pencils.

CONNECTION TO PRIOR LEARNING: "Writers say words they don't know slowly, writing all the sounds so that people can read their writing. Writers, we have been writing wonderful Small Moments from our lives and we want people to read them. We need to write words in such a way that people can read our stories. This is part of conventions in the 6 Traits of Writing. Writers say words slowly, stretching the word out, and writing all the sounds we hear. I'll teach you how to do this, and then we can write words that people can read."
TEACHING STEPS: Open an oversized booklet to one page. Show a picture you have sketched that illustrates part of a Small Moment from your life. (Here is an example.) Tell the story of this page.

"I sketched this Small Moment: 'Last night I was at the grocery store. A man dropped a box of crackers in the aisle. I helped him pick them up, and he thanked me. He reminded me of my own grandfather.'"

Demonstrate the strategies you use to write words: Say the word you want to write slowly, bit by bit, exaggerating the sounds. Demonstrate listening and writing the letter for the sound. You may also want to incorporate Alphafriends or Zoophonics at this time, to help support your writers with their letter sounds.

"I want to write man. Watch how I do it. I'm going to listen to the sound at the beginning of man. Man. Mman, /m/. Now I am going to say it slowly again and write a letter that makes the sound I hear. M-a-n. Oh! I hear an /m/ at the beginning." Write the letter m.

Put your finger under the letter and reread the letter you've written. Say the rest of the word, listening to the sounds that you haven't yet recorded. Repeat the process you used above.

"Let me reread what I wrote." Point under the m, and read /m/. "/mmm/ man. Let me say the word slowly again. I want to hear the middle sound. M-a-. Ma. Ma. Oh! I hear /a/ /a/. That's an a." Write the letter a so now the word reads ma.

"Now I want to write down the last sound in man. I'm going to reread what I wrote again." Point under the m, and read /m/, and then under the a and read /a/ " /m/ /a/. I'm going to say the word slowly again. I want to hear the last sound. M-a-nnn. Man. Man. Oh! I hear /n/ /n/. That's an n!" Write the letter n so now the word reads man.

Again, put your finger under the letters and reread what you have written.

"Now I think I wrote the word man. I'll reread it again." With your finger under the print, read it: "Man. Wow! It really helped me to say the word slowly and write the sounds I hear. Now, other people can read my words, too!"
ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT (ENGAGEMENT): Ask students to help you with another word by working on their mini whiteboards.

"Now I want to write another word. I need your help to write the word box," (You will use a word from your own story here) "because the man dropped his box of crackers. See if you can help me write the word box beside my picture. Write box on your whiteboard as we do it together."

Repeat the steps you want your writers to take.

"First we say the word. Watch me say the word box slowly. /B-o-x/. Now you say the word slowly. What sound do you hear at the beginning of box? Listen, and then tell your partner the first sound you hear. /b/ Write the letter that makes the /b/ sound. Put your finger under what you've written and let's read it together. /b/. We wrote b. We want to write box. /b/ /ox/ /ox/. Say the next sound /o/ /x/, write what you hear. Fingers under the letters and let's reread it."

Ask what they wrote on their boards, and use their help to label your sketch.

"Show me what you wrote on your whiteboard so I can label box on my sketch."

Call on a student to tell you what they wrote on their board.

"Thanks. I'll put that on my story." Write box (or the word from your story) next to the picture of the box.

LINK: Name the strategy and trait you used, and remind students to use this strategy in their writing from now on.

"Remember the strategy we just used. Say the word, then sketch the word out by saying it slowly, and then write one sound. Then reread what you've written so far (this is the key!) and again say the rest of the word slowly, listening for the next sound you hear. When you are writing your Small Moments today, use this strategy so that you and others can read your words. This strategy is from our conventions trait."

CONFERRING: You can use the WW & 6 Traits Conferring Checklist while conferring, or your own record keeping system.
**MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING POINT:** As an energizer, and another opportunity to share a teaching point, share with the class a strategy that one of your students used today. This should be a strategy that you discovered during your conferring (other than today’s minilesson teaching point).

**AFTER WORKSHOP SHARE:** Call the children to the rug. Explain how one (or more) of your writers stretched out his/her words. Then, ask students to reread their work to their partners, asking themselves: Did I record all the sounds I can?

“Right now, will each of you reread your work to your partner? Put one person’s piece between you and your partner. And writers, read your story aloud, pointing at the words. Check that each of you put down all the sounds you heard. Talk about your story with your partner, then switch to the other writer’s story.”

**OUTCOME/ASSESSMENT:** If you find that a group of students still needs more support getting down the sounds they hear in their words, pull these students for a strategy group after tomorrow’s minilesson. Knowing your students, and their needs, will help you decide your next steps for this lesson (e.g., more individualized instruction using the same strategy, sound-symbol practice, work with *Alphabetfriends* or *Zoophonics*, etc.).
Gr. K-1 Mini-Lesson 2:  
Zoom!

Unit of Study:  Small Moments (pages 83-91 from the Units of Study by Lucy Calkins and Abby Oxenhorn)  
6 Traits Emphasis:  Ideas: Focusing on the Most Important Part. Is my message clear?  

Teaching Point:  Writers focus on their Small Moments by zooming in on the most important part of a memory.

Writing Process Stage:  Drafting or Revising

CA Writing Standards:  
Kindergarten 1.0 Writing Strategies: Students write words and brief sentences that are legible.  
Organization and Focus 1.1--Use letters and phonetically spelled words to write about experiences, stories, people, objects, or events; 1.2--Write consonant-vowel-consonant words (i.e., demonstrate the alphabetic principle).  
First Grade 1.0 Writing Strategies: Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process (e.g., prewriting, drafting, revising, editing successive versions).  
Organization and Focus 1.1--Select a focus when writing.

Teaching Method:  Demonstration  
Materials needed:  
Teachers:  (Optional) A camera as realia to demonstrate zooming in like a photographer  
Students:  Writing folders with work in progress

CONNECTION TO PRIOR LEARNING:  Tell your students how writers zoom in and focus like photographers. Use your own classroom examples to help with your analogy.

“Today I am going to teach you that writers are like photographers. Photographers can look through their cameras and see that whole wall of our classroom with charts and books and plants and the clock and the rabbit cage, and the chairs. Or they can zoom in and see just one thing, like our rabbit cage, but now they see all the details in the rabbit cage. They even see the pink eyes of our bunny Harold! Writers can also
write about the whole wall, the whole world. But usually writers, like photographers, zoom in on the most important parts of our stories. Zooming in and making sure what we are writing is clear, is part of our ideas writing trait."

**TEACHING STEPS:** Tell your students to watch you tell your story aloud. Tell a list-like, unfocused story. (Here is an example, but use a story from your own life.)

"First I am going to think of a big whole thing in my life." Pause, as if you are just then thinking up your pre-planned story. "Okay, I am remembering when I went to see my dad at work at the Police Station. I walked up to the front desk. Then, the receptionist buzzed me in. I walked into his office. He gave me a tour of the new remodeled station. We went back to his office and ate the sandwiches I brought. Then I said good-bye and I left." With your hands, show that your topic is big, like the whole classroom wall, even though it was actually more focused than the topics children often take on.

Demonstrate how you will zoom in on the most important part of the unfocused story. Tell them the focused story aloud.

"I just listed all the things I did with my dad. But now what I am going to do is zoom in." Your hands should show that you are going to bring attention in from a topic the size of a whole wall to a topic that is more the size of a rabbit cage. "I'll zoom in and write just about the most important part of the memory!" Pause, as if thinking. "Oh I know! My dad brought me back into the holding tank, and tried to trick me. My story will sound like this:"

My dad showed me the new holding tank. He opened one of the jail cells and told me to walk inside to take a look. Then he closed the door and walked away, pretending to lock me inside. "Hey!" I yelled. He came right back and we both started laughing.

"Did you notice what I did? Did you notice how I zoomed in, like a photographer, to one Small Moment I had with my dad to help focus my ideas?"

**ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT (ENGAGEMENT):** Ask your students to reread their most recent story, asking, "Is it focused? Did you zoom in?" After they do this, suggest they tell their partners the most important part of the story.
“Would you all open your folders and recall the story you’ll be working on today? Would you reread that story and ask, ‘Is this big (like the classroom wall or my whole visit to my dad’s work) or zoomed-in and small (like the rabbit cage or my dad and I in the holding tank)?’ If it’s big, would you tell your partner how you could zoom in, if you decided to do that?”

**LINK:** Signal the class to come back together. Remind the students to zoom in on the most important part of the memory when they write today and everyday.

“When you write today and every day, think about being a photographer and about zooming in on the most important part of your memory! This strategy is from our *ideas* trait.”

**CONFERRING:** You can use the *WW & 6 Traits Conferring Checklist* while conferring, or your own record keeping system.

**MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING POINT:** As an energizer, and another opportunity to share a teaching point, share with the class a strategy that one of your students used today. This should be a strategy that you discovered during your conferring (other than today’s minilesson teaching point).

**AFTER WORKSHOP SHARE:** Call the students to the carpet and tell them about how a child zoomed in on the most important part.

“Writers, I have something really special to share with you.” Share with the class how one of your students used the minilesson today, and zoomed in on one memory. You will find this example while conferring with students.

**OUTCOME/ASSESSMENT:** According to Calkins and Oxenhorn, “When you bring your children’s work home and look over what they have done, you’ll probably find yourself making two categories: okay and not-okay work….Don’t allow yourself to feel overwhelmed over the fact that you don’t see progress, because more than anything, these children need to feel themselves getting stronger and to take pleasure and gain confidence in the fact that, step by step, they are learning to write. The small steps ahead *should* be there, and you need to see them and to exalt in them. Your excitement will give your children a precious energy source.” It is important to assess what each student can do, and then help move them to the next step in the writing process, through explicit instruction during conferring and strategy groups.
Gr. K-1 Mini-Lesson 3:
Incredible Endings!

Unit of Study: Small Moments (pages 101-107 from the Units of Study by Lucy Calkins and Abby Oxenhorn)

6 Traits Emphasis:
Ideas: Focusing on the Most Important Part. Is my message clear?
Organization: Strong endings

Teaching Point: Writers write close-in story endings by staying close to the heart of the story.

Writing Process Stage: Drafting or Revising

CA Writing Standards:
Kindergarten 1.0 Writing Strategies: Students write words and brief sentences that are legible.
   Organization and Focus 1.1--Use letters and phonetically spelled words to write about experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.
First Grade 1.0 Writing Strategies: Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process.
   Organization and Focus 1.1--Select a focus when writing.
2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics): Students write compositions that describe and explain familiar objects, events, and experiences. Student writing demonstrates a command of standard American English and the drafting, research, and organizational strategies outlined in Writing Standard 1.0.
   2.1 Write brief narratives (e.g., autobiographical) describing an experience.

Teaching Method: Demonstration

Materials needed:
Teacher: A large chart paper booklet with two shared stories (with endings that are not in the moment), sticky notes
Students: Writing folders with work in progress

CONNECTION TO PRIOR LEARNING: Compliment your students on their Small Moment stories and tell them sometimes their story endings need work. Say, “Often your stories tend to end like this…” and give examples.
“I’ve loved reading your stories, especially now that they stretch the moments out—except writers, I have to tell you one thing. Sometimes your stories are so great,” (Hold your hand up high as if the stories are so tall), “and your endings are a letdown.” (Bring your hands low.) “Your stories go like this:” (Show an example that relates to your own classroom experience.”

Yesterday Angelica’s mom came to talk about the Dia de Los Muertos. She brought in skulls made out of sugar and showed us pictures of her family’s altar.

Then, change your intonation to suggest that, oh dear, everything falls apart.

Then we went home.

“What a letdown! Today we’ll learn how to write endings that are as wonderful as your stories.”

TEACHING STEPS: Tell your students how you see them ending stories. If they jump far away from the Small Moment, suggest they find endings within their moments.

“What you do now is that you write endings that jump away from the Small Moment. So you tell the story about Angelica’s mom coming to our classroom, and end it with, ‘Then we had lunch,’ or ‘Then we went home.’ Do you see how you are jumping away from the small moment and going to a whole different time?”

“It doesn’t have to go that way. You will usually get a better ending if you stay close-in to the moment. This is part of our ideas and organization traits. Let’s try it together. I'll read the story again and your will think how you could end it, still staying close-in to Angelica’s mom’s visit.”

Ask the class to join you in writing a new ending for the story you cited earlier. Think aloud to get them started searching for an ending within the moment. Offer several possible endings and how you got to them.

Yesterday Angelica’s mom came to talk about the Dia de Los Muertos. She brought in skulls made out of sugar and showed us pictures of her family’s altar.

“Hmmm….One way to end a story is to remember back to the very next thing that happened. I’m trying to remember…I think the next thing that happened is that she tore off pieces of "pan de muerto," or bread of the dead, for each of us to try. Nathan bit into a plastic toy skeleton hidden inside the loaf. That means good luck for him! Couldn’t that be an ending?”
Nathan bit into a plastic toy skeleton hidden inside the loaf. That means good luck for him!

“Another way to end the story while staying in the moment is to say what you thought or felt (inside the story) during that moment. What were you thinking about when she was sharing her artifacts and stories? I was thinking about how much I miss my Grandma Millie who passed away. So couldn’t that be an ending? The story would go like this:"

Yesterday Angelica’s mom came to talk about the Dia de Los Muertos. She brought in skulls made out of sugar and showed us pictures of her family’s altar. Nathan bit into a plastic toy skeleton hidden inside the loaf. That means good luck for him. Listening to Angelica’s mom reminded me of how much I miss my Grandma Millie who passed away, and how I want to honor her this Dia de Los Muertos.

“Do you see how one way to write story endings is to end the story while staying in the moment? Another way is to tell what you thought or felt in the moment—to tell a little of the inside story.”

ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT (ENGAGEMENT): Tell the class you need help writing an ending to a story based on a shared experience. (Here is an example, but use your own story.)

“I have been working again on that story about our surprise party for Ms. Edwards. I need you to listen to the story and work with your partner to see if you could improve my ending.”

Read the piece aloud off of a large chart paper booklet.

\[
\text{Ms. Edwards was out of the room. We all hid under our desks. It was so quiet, but everyone kept giggling. We heard the doorknob turn. Ms. Edwards came in and we yelled, “Surprise!” Then we went home.}
\]

Tell your students to turn to their writing partners and talk about whether the story had a good ending. Could they improve on it? Listen in to their responses.

Signal to the class to come back together and ask a student how she would end the story. (This is where it helps to listen in on the turn and talk, so that you know what type of response you are going to get.)

Reread the piece, but this time add the ending that the student suggested.
LINK: Invite and encourage your students to think about writing good endings to their stories.

“So when you write today, and every day, if it’s time to end your story, pause and ask yourself, ‘How can I write a good ending?’ And from now on, let’s say it’s not allowed to end your piece with ‘and then I went home’ or ‘and then I went to sleep.’ Okay? Give me a thumbs up if you are going to work on keeping your ending close-in to your story today. Good. This will help with both your ideas and your organization in your writing.”

CONFERRING: You can use the WW & 6 Traits Conferring Checklist while conferring, or your own record-keeping system.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING POINT: As an energizer, and another opportunity to share a teaching point, share with the class a strategy that one of your students used today. This should be a strategy that you discovered during your conferring (other than today’s minilesson teaching point).

AFTER-WORKSHOP SHARE: Ask students to bring their writing folders to the rug. Read some pieces, emphasizing how the writers ended their stories. Read the endings slowly and dramatically to show how each ending brings the story towards its conclusion. After doing this, tell your writers:

“Choose a story from your folder and reread your ending. See if you think your ending is great or so-so or sort of terrible….How many of you decided your ending was 'sort of terrible,' like mine was at first?”

“Good for you to see that! I'm exactly the same as you. When I reread my writing, I often say, 'Oh no! I could do much better!'

“Smart work. Will you writers revise tomorrow? Here's a sticky note. Put it where you have work you know you need to do.”

This gesture both rewards the students who took a risk in analyzing their own work, and gives them a running start for their revision work tomorrow.

OUTCOME/ASSESSMENT: According to Calkins and Oxenhorn, “Today's minilesson...can add tremendous flair to your children's stories. You'll find it rewarding to help children write effective endings—and their stories will become dramatically better as a result. To help children create endings that rise to the occasion of being endings, read children their own writing as if it's the greatest literature in the world. Leaving a blank space for an ending. Often, if you read a text with proper resonance, the child can pull a beautiful ending out of the air.”