

We All Have A Story to Tell...

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Overview

Throughout history, people have been tortured, discriminated against and mistreated for sometimes very shallow reasons. The color of one's skin, religious beliefs or one's social status has been, sadly, reason for mistreatment and murder. This type of mistreatment has resulted in testimonies-from the Holocaust to slavery and other genocides- that have expressed the pain of the survivors. These testimonies have allowed the world to experience-or attempt to- some of the inhumane acts that sadly have become a part of human nature. Testimonies also offer at least a partial release of the pain, fear, and confusion for the survivor. They are able to express their feelings, eventually make sense of what happened to them and begin healing.

As we know, trauma has many causes and can take any forms. The source of it may vary, but the end result on human existence, in some cases is the same. In today's society, mass killings have taken the shape of street, drug and/or gang shootings. Classism, racism and discrimination have become an almost accepted part of institutional policies. Our present economic system has made survival a number one priority, pushing a child's well-being and education, in some cases, lower on the list of importance.

Unfortunately, many of our students carry the residue of these burdens with them on a daily basis. There households are small microcosms of society as a whole and they are ill-equipped to handle the intensity of adult issues. In addition to the many jobs that

educators already handle, the emotional needs of our students have to be addressed before any real, meaningful learning can take place.

In Philadelphia, as in any urban cities, the trauma is not as severe or widespread as during the Holocaust or slavery, of course. But students in our classrooms are subject to a number of emotional upheavals, heartbreaks and sufferings that interfere with their learning. This unit will attempt to remove some of those obstacles and pave the way for a more enriching educational experience.

Rationale

In urban school districts like Philadelphia, many classrooms are unfortunately too often interrupted by disruptive behaviors. These behaviors usually stem from an emotional need that has not been addressed. They can often range from one student being slighted by another to dealing with abuse or neglect in a dysfunctional household. Whatever the motive, some behaviors occur too frequently for effective instruction to take place. It is estimated that as much as one half of classroom time can be lost due to these unacceptable actions (Dodge, Nizzi, et al., p. 23). Because of the fracturing of the economy and its effect on urban families, these cases will more than likely increase in number over time.

While this is happening inside the classroom, simultaneously, the pressure for students and teachers to perform for high stakes testing seems to grow exponentially. Very quickly, this “lost time” becomes less and less desirable.

Journaling can be one way to address this problem. It can force students to be more accountable for their actions and behaviors in a way that is rewarding, rather than punitive (Dodge, Nizzi, et al., p. 23). It has the potential to address some of these issues in a way that, after the first investment of time requires little in the way of extra effort on the part of the teacher.

In the 1960's, researchers acknowledged that journaling had educational value (Dyment, O'Connell, p. 2). From that time on, journaling has been shown, along with school counseling, to positively affect the emotional and mental health of most students and address some of the baggage that students enter school battling. With the recent decline of school counseling due to budgetary restrictions in many districts, journaling would seemingly move to the forefront as a remedy. It continues, however, to be underutilized in most classrooms (Zyromski, p. 3).

Journaling has been shown to improve group dynamics, encourage emotional healing and it can be used as a problem solving tool (Zyromski, p. 3,4) . It can reduce anxiety (Zyromski, p. 12) and gives students the opportunity to evaluate themselves and their actions (Zyromski, p. 14). Incorporating journaling into the Common Core

Curriculum is a very cost effective potential solution to an increasingly “expensive” problem.

Objectives

This unit is intended for an audience of fifth grade students in a low to mid-income urban Philadelphia neighborhood. Students cycle through 90 minutes of Reading, Math and Social Studies/Science/Writing.

The objectives for the unit will be as follows:

- Students will read examples of journal writings (fiction and non-fiction).
- Students will develop vocabulary from the examples of journal entries.
- Students will analyze journal writings for commonalities in order to determine parameters for their own journal writings.
- Students will review reading skills such as inferencing, summarizing, finding the main idea and citing evidence.
- Students will learn interview skills and gather data.
- Students will write personal narratives describing events in their lives.
- Students will reflect on their own behaviors in order to improve them.

Strategies

This unit will focus on written testimonies and begin with a student’s “outer world”- Anne Frank’s diary entries and “Dear Mr. Henshaw”, a fictional journal of a boy living through a divorce. During this part of the unit, students will learn of the experiences of strangers, of survivors of trauma and distress, and then move to stories from relatives or friends. These stories will be created by the students as journal entries from information they have gathered. The unit will then move gradually inward toward the student’s own events and stories. At that point, students will begin journaling their own daily experiences and reflecting on them in order to identify positive strategies and beneficial behaviors.

Students will perform much of this unit individually or working with a partner. The focus will be journal writing. Each lesson will involve making an entry into their journals in order to begin making journal writing a habit. Students will also be asked to use interviewing skills in order to gather information.

This unit is designed to be used at the beginning of the year and be used as a reading/social studies/behavior modification activity. The allotted time for this unit will be roughly two weeks, preferably the second and third week of school. The journal writing should then continue throughout the year.

Classroom Activities

Lesson Plan #1

Introduction

Objectives:

- Students will be introduced to the purpose of journaling as a way of documenting life events.
- Students will personalize their journals.
- Students will determine, with teacher's assistance, rules for journals (access and privacy especially)

Materials:

1. Journals (these can be purchased by the student, made from paper and construction paper or be journal/composition books given out to students. They are dedicated to work from this unit only.)
2. Stickers, markers, anything that can be used to decorate.
3. If desired, a pre-decorated journal (possibly belonging to the teacher) to help students get ideas.
4. Poster paper if rules will be recorded.

Plans:

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- a. Teacher briefly identifies times in history when people went through hardships, trauma and difficulties. During these times, many used journaling as a way of coping, releasing feelings and reflecting on those feelings in order to help transition through the difficult time.
- b. Teacher lets students know that this unit will be about journaling as a way for students to eventually release difficult emotions, cope with the world around them and determine ways to make better choices for the future based on reflecting on past behaviors and outcomes. First, however, they will learn *how* to journal. Each of these initial lessons will address a different aspect of journaling, so that when students begin writing their own, they can write in a way that will benefit them.
- c. Teacher lets students know that they will begin with personalizing their journals.

2. Model/Guided Practice (5min)

- a. Students are instructed to begin personalizing their journals with their names, nicknames, stickers, pictures- anything that will make it their own. Teacher can give out ideas, show a journal that they have personalized or show other examples.
 - b. Teacher passes out the materials.
4. Independent Practice (Will Vary)
 - a. Students decorate their journals.
5. Wrap up (20 minutes)
 - a. Once most students have completed their personalizing, the teacher brings the class together to develop rules surrounding their journals.
 - b. Rules can be student driven, but should cover privacy-having students understand that all assignments must be done, but for some that are more personal, the student can decide if he or she wants the teacher to read it or wants it to be shared at all. Etiquette referring to students reading each other's journal and how to handle personal information should be covered. In addition, it needs to be decided where the journals will be stored and how often students will have access to them. These rules can be written on poster paper or simply discussed aloud.

Lesson Plan #2

Journal Assignment #1

Objectives:

- Students will read excerpts from “ Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl”
- Students will determine reasons why people journal using these excerpts
- Students will review reading comprehension strategies.
- Students will write in journals in order for it to become a habit.

Materials:

1. Excerpts from “Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl” (Tuesday, June 30th, 1942).
2. Dictionaries or access to the internet.
3. A blackboard, whiteboard or poster paper to record things for the class to see.
4. Students journals

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- a. Teacher will review previous day's assignments and discussions.
- b. Teacher will review the fact that during difficult, and even good times, people throughout history have written in journals.
- c. Teacher introduces the lesson-students will read small parts from several entries of Anne Frank, (a diary of a girl who had a lot to deal with at a young age) define any vocabulary words needed and determine her reasons for writing them.

2. Model/Guided Practice (15)

- a. Teacher asks students if they know reasons why people write in journals. Students should volunteer reasons such as to confide secrets, to record events, to express feelings, to take the place of a friend. If these are not volunteered, then they should be suggested. As reasons are given, a list is made for the class to refer to throughout the lesson.
- b. Students are then given the above excerpt from Anne Frank. The teacher reads the passage and lets the students know that first they will pull out any vocabulary words they are not sure of and define them.
- c. Students are asked to read through the entry first just for words they do not know. As they come across them, they can raise their hand, share them and the teacher will make a list of them and define them (either from knowledge of the word or with a dictionary).
- d. Teacher reads the entry again for understanding. A few comprehension questions should be asked to make sure students know what is happening in the entry.
- e. Teacher asks students what reason they think Anne had for writing this particular entry. Students should respond with, or the teacher should suggest that she wrote it to record a secret or events that were meant to be a secret.
- f. Teacher asks students what evidence from the passage leads them to their conclusion. Students should volunteer lines from the passage as evidence.
- g. Students are then given directions that they will do the same with another entry. They will read it first for words they do not know, make a list of them and define them using dictionaries or the internet. They will then read the entry again to determine the reason for the entry. They will then underline the details that support their choice and write all of their information in their journals.

4. Independent Practice (15 minutes)

- a. Students are instructed to date the first page in their journal. They should list the vocabulary words, but and then should complete the assignment in sentences as their first entry.
- b. Students work with a partner or independently.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- a. Students share out their vocabulary words and definitions. They also share out their reasons for Anne writing the entry and the details that support their answers.
- b. If students do not volunteer it, the reason of recording secrets should be suggested. Students can then volunteer evidence from the passage that supports that conclusion.

Lesson Plan #3

Journal Assignment #2

Objectives:

- Students will read excerpts from “Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl” in order to understand what a journal looks like and what it should contain.
- Students will analyze journal entries for details that use descriptive words.
- Students will write in journals in order for it to become a habit.

Materials:

1. Excerpts from “Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl” (Tuesday, October 20, 1943 and Tuesday, June 15, 1943).
2. Dictionaries or access to the internet.
3. A blackboard, whiteboard or poster paper to record things for the class to see.
4. Students journals

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- a. Teacher will review previous day’s assignments.
- b. Teacher will review the fact that journal entries provide details about the events or feelings that the person is writing about.

2. Model/Guided Practice (Will Vary)

- a. Teacher reads the journal entry aloud in order to pull out a few vocabulary words that may not be known by the students. The words are listed on the board.
- b. Students assist teacher with defining the words using knowledge of the word, dictionaries or the internet.
- c. Teacher reads the entry again and asks students what event is being described.
- d. Teacher then asks students what details tell us more about that event.
- e. Once students have answered, teacher asks how the details help us to understand the event better.
- f. Teacher asks what descriptive words are being used to help us know what is in her mind.
- g. Teacher tells students that every journal entry, even though it is their writing, should have as much detail and use as many descriptive words as possible. Even though they may be the only person who reads the entry, details will help them reference the event.
- h. Teacher lets students know that they will complete the same thing with another entry- Tuesday, June 15, 1943. They will find vocabulary words that they are not sure about, determine what event is being described, then note the details and descriptive words being used to do so.

4. Independent Practice (25 minutes)

- a. Students are instructed to date the next page in their journal and to write their answers in complete sentences as their first entry.
- b. Students work with a partner or independently to complete the above assignment as their first journal entry.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- a. Students share out their work from above.

Lesson Plan #4

Journal Assignment #3

Objectives:

- Students will read excerpts from “Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl” in order to understand what a journal looks like and what it should contain.
- Students will compare two journal entries in order to determine that reflection is also a reason for journal writing.
- Students will cite evidence to support their answer.
- Students will write in journals in order for it to become a habit.

Materials:

1. Excerpts from “Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl” (Saturday, January 30, 1943/ Thursday, June 15, 1944/ Thursday July 6, 1944)
2. Dictionaries or access to the internet.
3. A blackboard, whiteboard or poster paper to record things for the class to see.
4. Students journals

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- a. Teacher will review the previous day’s assignments.
- b. Teacher will remind students that we have been looking at the elements of journal entries so that when they begin to write their own, they will have a better understanding of what they can write and how to write it in a way that will help them.

2. Model/Guided Practice (Will Vary)

- a. Teacher lets students know that they will read two passages and list vocabulary words and define them. Then, they will discuss the passages and write about what they have in common. They will also cite the information that brought them to that conclusion.
- b. Students are reminded to date the next page of their journals, list the vocabulary words with definitions, and write their answers to the assignment in complete sentences as the next journal entry.

4. Independent Practice (15 minutes)

- a. Students are instructed to complete the above assignment as given.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- a. Students share out what they noted for vocabulary words and what they see as the commonality between the two entries. If no one discovered it, the teacher leads them to the fact that Anne reflected on her experiences. Recording a reflection is added to the list of reasons for journaling compiled by the class.
- b. Teacher leads a discussion by the students as to why reflecting on a past behavior or experience can be helpful.

Lesson Plan #5**Journal Assignment #4**

Objectives:

- Students will read excerpts from “Dear Mr. Henshaw”
- Students will review reasons why people journal using these excerpts.
- Students will cite evidence to support their answers.
- Students will write in journals in order for it to become a habit.

Materials:

1. Excerpts from “Dear Mr. Henshaw” (the teacher may choose 3 or 4 entries for this activity that fit the reasons previously discussed by the class to duplicate. If class sets are available, students may search through the story themselves).
2. Students journals

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- a. Teacher will review previous day’s lessons.
- b. Teacher introduces the lesson-students will read entries from the above book in order to find examples of entries that are written for reflection, to record events, to record feelings or to confide secrets. Evidence must also be cited to support answers given.

2. Model/Guided Practice (Will Vary)

- a. Teacher asks students to date the next available space in their journals.
- b. Teacher asks students to create a table that will organize the information that they will collect. Teacher can create the table on the front board or create sheets with the table to attach to each journal.

“Dear Mr. Henshaw”

Reason for Entry	Dates of Examples	Evidence
Feelings		
Secrets		
Events		

Reflections		

4. Independent Practice (15 minutes)

- a. Students work with a partner or independently to find examples of each type of entry in “Dear Mr. Henshaw” along with evidence.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- a. Students share out their answers in a small group and/or as a class.

Lesson Plan #6

Journal Assignment #5

Objectives:

- Students will develop interview questions based on the characteristics of journal entries.
- Students will write in journals in order for it to become a habit.

Materials:

1. Students journals

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- a. Teacher will review previous day’s assignments.
- b. Teacher will let students know that they will continue learning about how to write journal entries today, but in a different way. They will develop interview questions in order to gather information about family and/or friends and create journal entries based on their information.

2. Model/Guided Practice (Will Vary)

- a. Teacher will model creating interview questions by choosing one of the reasons why people journal, then developing questions from that. Questions that involve other reasons for journaling will be incorporated.
- b. Teacher will begin with, “We will begin developing our questions with the first reason for journaling-to record events.” “Often- but not always, these are things that made someone very happy or very upset. We are going to create a journal entry based on someone else’s event. This will better help us in creating our journal entries based on our own events in the future.”
- c. “People are more likely to talk about a happy occasion, so, if you want to know about something great that happened to someone, what types of questions would you ask?”
- c. Students should respond with responses similar to: “What happened? Why do you think it happened? Where were you? What other people were involved?”
- d. Students should be instructed to date the next available space in their journals and use the title Interview Questions. They should then copy these questions leaving a few spaces for the answers when they eventually get them.
- e. Teacher should say “Now that we have some questions to identify a great event in someone’s life, we should get more information from them that involves their feelings or secrets that they may have regarding this event.”
- f. Students are instructed to come up with at least 5 additional questions based on the other reasons that people journal: feelings, secrets and reflections. They can work independently, with a partner or small group to complete this.

4. Independent Practice (15 minutes)

- a. Students are instructed to make sure that they number their questions beginning with those created together and are reminded to leave enough space between each question.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- a. Students share out their questions or teacher goes around to check them. Questions should relate to getting more information and details about the event in question and should not veer off into another topic.
- b. Students are instructed to find a friend, relative or someone otherwise known well by the student, and (with parental permission), interview them using the questions they developed in their journals. Answers are to be written in their journals. Students can be given a day or two (or however many needed) to complete the assignment. The next lesson will occur once that deadline has been reached and all students are ready to continue.

Lesson Plan #7

Journal Assignment #6

Objectives:

- Students will use the information gathered in their journals to create the next journal entry.
- Students will apply summarizing and/or inferencing skills.
- Students will write in journals in order for it to become a habit.

Materials:

1. Student's journals.
2. A poster-sized entry of questions and answers created by the teacher or taken from a student's journal.

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- a. Teacher will review the previous lesson.
- b. Teacher will inform students that they will use the information that they gathered from the previous lesson to create a new journal entry.

2. Model/Guided Practice (Will Vary)

- a. Teacher will display questions and answers that will represent what a student's entry for the previous lesson's assignment may look like.
- b. Teacher will read each question and answer aloud then think aloud about what this event is, the details surrounding the event and how the subject is feeling about it.
- c. Teacher will model creating a summary of the event using the information or a narrative as the next journal entry, depending on the desired goal of the lesson.
- d. A summary of the event is an easier version of this assignment. The summary must include as many of the details and feelings from the interview answers as possible.
- e. The narrative may require inferencing skills. Students will create the entry as if they were that person, with first person perspective, using as many of the details and feelings from their information as possible.

4. Independent Practice (15 minutes)

- a. Students complete one of the above activities independently or with a partner.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- a. Students share out their work and/or teacher checks assignments.
- b. Students may repeat this activity with the same or different questions and/or other interviewees.
- c. *Students, if able, should also repeat this activity documenting an event that represents regret or a behavior that the interviewee is unhappy with. Reflection questions should be emphasized for this assignment. These questions of reflection, if possible, can be added to the list developed in Journal entry #5.*

Lesson Plan #8 **Journal Entry #7**

Objectives:

- Students will create journal entries based on their own lives
- Students will write in journals in order for it to become a habit.

Materials:

1. Students journals.

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- a. Teacher review's previous day's assignment.
- b. Teacher explains to the students that they will now create their first journal entry with information of their own.

2. Model/Guided Practice (5min)

- a. Teacher models using the set of interview questions from Journal #5 to create a journal entry about a happy/pleasant event.
- b. Teacher reads each of the questions aloud then answers each on the board or where students can see. Teacher creates the entry in narrative form about a real experience if possible.
- c. Teacher instructs the students to date the next available space in their journals.
- d. Teacher lets the students know that they will be creating their journal from their own answers to the interview questions based on a pleasant event from their lives.
- e. Teacher instructs the students to write their entries in narrative form.

4. Independent Practice (Will Vary)

- a. Students complete the above assignment in their journals.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- a. Students who wish to may read their entries aloud.

Lesson Plan #9
Journal Entry #8

Objectives:

- Students will create journal entries based on their own lives
- Students will understand that reflection can be used to promote better behavior.
- Students will write in journals in order for it to become a habit.

Materials:

1. Students journals.

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- a. Teacher review's previous day's assignment.
- b. Teacher explains to the students that they will now create their first journal entry with information of their own.

2. Model/Guided Practice (5min)

- a. Teacher models using the set of interview questions from Journal #5 to create a journal entry about a small event in which poor choices were made or bad behavior was displayed.
- b. Teacher reads each of the questions aloud then answers each on the board or where students can see. Teacher creates the entry in narrative form about a real experience if possible.
- c. Teacher reviews the event and thinks out loud what could have been done differently. Teacher asks students what they think could have been done differently. Teacher chooses one or two things then writes them underneath the entry. It can be written as "After reflecting on this behavior, I think I could

have _____ instead of _____. The outcome may have been _____ instead of _____.”

- d. Teacher instructs the students to date the next available space in their journals.
- e. Teacher lets the students know that they will be creating their own journal entry in the same way. They will first think of an event, no matter how small, then answer the questions they developed in Journal number 5 based on that event. They will then create the actual entry in narrative form. Once the narrative is written, they will read though it and try to decide what could have been done differently and how the outcome may have been different.
- f. Teacher reminds the student to include as many details as possible.

4. Independent Practice (Will Vary)

- a. Students complete the above assignment in their journals. Teacher circulates to assure that students are working correctly. Teacher may assist with the reflection part of it if students are willing.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- a. Students who wish to may read their entries aloud, along with their reflections.
- b. Students continue making daily entries after this lesson including as much detail as possible and making sure the areas that were discussed in earlier entries are continued.
- c. Topics for entries can be created by the teacher or be free writes.
- d. Free writes, writing about whatever topic the student wants, should wait until students have solidly made journaling a habit.
- d. Websites that have suggested topics are included in the Appendix.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Dodge, Darlene; Nizzi, Denise; Pitt, Wendy; Rudolph, Kristina. *Improving Student Responsibility Through the Use of Individual Behavior Contracts*. A Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education on Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts, Saint Xavier University, Chicago, Illinois May, 2007

“This study describes a seventeen week program developed with the intent of improving student responsibility and behavior through a positive reward system. The participants included 89 third grade students, in four regular education classrooms, their parents, and prior second grade teachers. Surveys and checklists were used to collect data.”

2. Dymont, Janet E.; O’Connell, Timothy S., *Journal Writing in Experiential Education: Possibilities, Problems and Recommendations*. Charleston, West Virginia: Eric Clearinghouse, 2003.

”The purpose of this Digest is to explore the literature related to journal writing from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, language studies, outdoor education, and experiential education. It begins with a discussion of the history of journal writing, and then explores the possibilities and potential problems of the journal writing process. This Digest concludes with several recommendations for educators who use journals in their teaching.”

3. Zyromski, Brett. *Journal: An Underutilized School Counseling Tool*. South Illinois University at Carbondale.

“The effectiveness of journaling as a therapeutic and teaching tool is well documented. However, specific examples of school counselors utilizing journaling as a therapeutic tool are sparse. Existing school counseling literature was reviewed and journaling as an educational and therapeutic tool was explored and related to the school counseling environment.”

Classroom Resources

1. Cleary, Beverly, and Paul O. Zelinsky. *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. New York: Morrow, 1983.
2. Frank, Anne. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. New York: Bantam, 1993. Print.

Common Core Standards

- **R5.A.1.3.1:** Make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from text.

- R5.A.1.3.2:** Cite evidence from text to support generalizations.
- R5.A.1.5.1:** Summarize the key details and events of a fictional text as a whole.
- R5.A.1.6.1:** Identify the author's intended purpose of text.
- R5.A.1.6.2:** Identify, explain, and/or describe examples of text that support the author's intended purpose.
- R5.A.2.3.2:** Cite evidence from text to support generalizations.

Appendix

Self Esteem Prompts:

1. <http://journalbuddies.com/journaling-resources/self-esteem-confidence-journal-prompts-for-kids/>

Reflective Prompts:

2. <http://blog.writeathome.com/index.php/2012/11/20-self-reflection-writing-prompts/>
(please edit prompts for age appropriateness)

Prompts Relating to a Character or Reading Lesson

3. <http://dce.oca.org/assets/files/resources/170.pdf>

Miscellaneous Prompts (some may need to be adjusted to fit your desired outcome)

4. http://www.sallt.org/training_options/PDFs/Reflection_Prompts_Journal%20Ideas_and_Creative_Reflection_Methods%20_Tip_Sheet.pdf