

The Writing is on the Wall—or it should be!

This year the elementary schools have all agreed on



one goal for their board and school improvement plans. The goal is:

We are committed to ensuring Catholicity is embedded in our daily practice. Our focused goal is to improve writing for all students.

One way to increase student achievement in writing is to make sure that stu-

dents see writing on the walls. Post examples of good writing in your rooms. Create anchor charts to help students with tough words, concepts, and processes. This can be done in all grade levels and for all subject areas!

Unlike the old adage about children, writing must be seen and heard. Establish areas for students to share their writing with peers.

When students hear what they have written said aloud, they can often improve (edit and revise) their own work. Give students sticky notes to write comments on as they listen to each other's writing. This will encourage them to

think more deeply and to write as well as give oral feedback.

Try modeling good writing for your students by writing in front of your students. You can compose on the blackboard, on chart paper or by typing and projecting your work with an LCD projector. In any case, show students what good writing looks like by showing them the process you use to create a good piece of writing. Try narrating some of your thinking (doing a think aloud) so that students can hear some of the decisions that writers make as they create text. This can be a powerful learning tool.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ◆ Have you tried the Writing Fix web site? There are some wonderful resources there that can help you to link your reading, writing and oral language program. (www.writingfix.com)

*Modeling: Not the Runway, so Don't Run Away!*

We have all had the experience of learning a new task. We know that when we learn something new we need to have support and then we need to be given the tools and assistance that will let us become independent. The same is true of writing.

To help students to become independent writers we need to build in the support systems and scaffolds that will allow students to move from being dependent to independent in each of the many areas of writing.

So, to begin we must model what we want students to see as good writing. To do this we can use our blackboards, our chart paper, our computers and LCD projectors or our overheads, but we must find ways to show students models of good writing.

This means that we must write in front of our students. We must also narrate our process so that students can see that it is not just the actual act of writing (physically) that goes into creating writing, it is also a lot of mental

processes.

Modeling writing can involve doing a think aloud to show how you are deciding what you are doing. We can focus on leads or word choice or form or purpose, but we must show students what is involved in the process of writing.

Another way of modeling good writing is to use mentor texts. This involves finding good writing that already exists and sharing with students what makes it good. We want our students to be reading like

writers and writing like readers. We need to be able to point out what makes a particular piece of writing good and to share that with students.

We also need to incorporate time for students to talk so that their oral language skills can be captured on paper. We can model how to do this as well. When we combine reading, writing and oral language we are giving students a powerful set of tools to improve their achievement.

Why not try it and then talk to a peer about how it went?

*The Seven Treasures of Life - adapted from Billy Acrement**

While the following ideas are not the sole path to personal success, incorporating these attributes into one's life won't hurt the process.

1. **Wisdom:** The journey towards wisdom is a lifetime trip. We should share our knowledge of life's strategies that enhance the ability to succeed. Teach good time use. Teach how to incorporate persistence, desire, and discipline into one's daily actions. Teach strong moral values. Give the tools and knowledge to help maneuver through potential setbacks. Show that failure is a temporary state that only becomes permanent when we make such a decision.

2. **Good Works:** An important part of life is to provide service to others. That act can be among the most satisfying activities and actions we can take. Helping others, without seeking compensation, is a character trait we should demonstrate to children as well as teaching them such good works.

3. **Good Mentors:** Life is too short for anyone to try to experience everything as part of the learning process. Using the knowledge, skills, and strengths others can provide through a mentoring / coaching process is used by some of the most successful people on earth. Tiger Woods uses a mentor / coach. Movie stars

have coaches and mentors. Business executives rise through the ranks with the help of mentors. Let your children profit from mentors. It'll increase their progress on the scale of success.

4. **Strength of Spirit:** This trait will provide the will to take another step when most would quit. It's the tenacity to finish what one starts. It's the power to face and overcome the obstacles life places in our path. It's a trait of winners. Do all you can to strengthen your students' spirit.

5. **Goodness and Innocence:** The world can be evil. By seeking to emulate goodness, we make a positive contribution to life. Seek the goodness life offers rather than contributing to the dark side of life. Innocence combats corruption and builds integrity. Help your students understand that in the long term, goodness will triumph over evil and innocence will win the respect of the world. Not always easy characteristics to display but critical ones if a truly well-rounded and righteous lifestyle is what you seek to create.

6. **Respectful of Others:** Those who can truly demonstrate respect for life, in any form, are high on the respectful scale. You see, giving respect to others, adds to your own personal respectability. This trait includes practicing good manners and being considerate of the opinions that are different from yours. So long as the actions of others do not infringe on your rights, place you in physical danger, or impact you negatively in any way, be respectful of them.

7. **Strong Spirituality:** We are spiritual beings temporarily housed in a human body. People who understand this idea make connection with the higher power of God. This is one of the most important pursuits in life. We possess peace and happiness when we are in tune with the "spirit." It's the true source of strength and the key to eternal happiness. What teacher won't want that for their students or for themselves as well?

*Adapted from *Children First* Newsletter by Billy

"Imagination is the missing ingredient in many a failure, the catalyst of many a success."

