**Group Writing Exercise**

This group writing exercise is an expanded adaption of an idea in Productive Group Work (Frey, Fisher, & Everlove, 2009).

Although the eventual goal is for students to be able to write completely independently (receiving feedback from peers on completed paragraphs, essays, or pieces of creative writing), the process of group writing helps to engage students for whom writing may be difficult. A collaborative learning exercise can be very helpful to such students. Students have the opportunity to observe how their peers work in the writing process and can learn from each other. This helps students who may become stuck by themselves to have a structured process to produce writing with others. It builds skills such as listening to others and offering constructive feedback.

This group writing exercise also avoids the problem of some group members doing all the work while others simply act as freeloaders. Each person has a role and must contribute a piece of writing to the project. This is a more interactive way of group writing than the simple “progressive writing” exercise described in Frey, Fisher, & Everlove (where students pass the paper around and add their sentence or section to what has been written previously).

The exercise works best with 5 group members, each with a specific role:

TOPIC SENTENCE LEADER (TSL)

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE LEADER A (SEL A)

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE LEADER B (SEL B)

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE LEADER C (SEL C)

CONCLUDING SENTENCE LEADER (CSL).

For groups of 4, the two SELs could each be response for 2 pieces of supporting evidence. For groups of 6, one member could assume the role of EDITOR.

The exercise will work best if conducted after students have had prior instruction about the particular text they are called to write about during the exercise and after the teacher has modeled the writing skills they are asked to perform. The teacher should first model the writing process with the whole class and then allow a small group of students to model the exercise for the entire class, while the teacher provides feedback and direction for them.

Prior to this activity, students should have already received instruction on: 1) what a good topic sentence, evidence sentence, and concluding sentence look like, 2) how to cite textual evidence, and 3) how to lead a good discussion.

For the sake of a Professional Development exercise, we selected a short poem for the group to write about, but in the classroom students could write about a longer text that they have already read.

Group Writing Assignment

As a group, write a paragraph explaining what you think the main message the author is trying to convey in this text. (Langston Hughes’ poem “Wealth” is included as an example. This activity can be used with any short text related to the curriculum.) For this exercise, your paragraph should include: a topic sentence, 3 supporting sentences (with direct quotes as evidence), and a concluding sentence. (Groups with six members will have 4 supporting sentences.)

Wealth

From Christ to Ghandi  
Appears this truth-  
St. Francis of Assisi  
Proves it, too:  
Goodness becomes grandeur  
Surpassing might of kings.  
Halos of kindness  
Brighter shine  
Than crowns of gold,  
And brighter  
Than rich diamonds  
Sparkles   
The simple dew  
Of love.

[Langston Hughes](http://www.poemhunter.com/langston-hughes/poems/)

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Brainstorming

Main Idea \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Details

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**DIRECTIONS FOR GROUP WRITING EXERCISE**

As a group, write a paragraph explaining the main message you think the author is trying to convey in this text. For this exercise your paragraph should include: a topic sentence, 3 supporting sentences (with direct quotes as evidence), and a concluding sentence. (Groups with six members will have 4 supporting sentences.) Use the copies of the paragraph-writing template and removable post-it sentence strips provided.

Members choose role cards (provided): TOPIC SENTENCE LEADER (TSL), SUPPORTING EVIDENCE LEADER A (SEL A), SUPPORTING EVIDENCE LEADER B (SEL B), SUPPORTING EVIDENCE LEADER C (SEL C), CONCLUDING SENTENCE LEADER (CSL). (If 6 group members, use the EDITOR role card as well.)

**Rules: Follow the order of tasks below. Only one person may speak at a time.**

1. **Topic Sentence Leader (TSL):**
   1. SAY: “As I read the text out loud, everyone should circle words or phrases you think are related to the main idea, and underline what look like supporting details.”

Read the text, with expression, as other group members follow.

* 1. In “whip-around,” ask each group member for ideas about what main idea we should emphasize in the paragraph we are writing about the text.
  2. Everyone takes notes about the main idea on their sheet.
  3. TSL summarizes out loud for the group the one main idea they think is best for the topic sentence of the paragraph.

1. **Supporting Evidence Leaders (SEL A, SEL B, and SEL C)**

in order (A, B, C): Verbally offer a piece of evidence from the text that supports the main idea.

1. **Beginning with CSL, then TSL, SEL A, SEL B, SEL C:**

Give feedback about whether these are best pieces of evidence or whether there are others that are potentially stronger.

1. **EACH MEMBER THEN WRITES HIS/HER SENTENCE ON THE POST-IT SENTENCE STRIP AND PLACES IN PARAGRAPH TEMPLATE (Topic Sentence, 3 Supporting Sentences, Concluding Sentence)**
2. **Topic Sentence Leader (TSL): READ the entire paragraph out loud as written.**
3. **Each member in turn may then suggest edits.**
4. **Re-Write time (no more than 2 minutes). Any member can re-write his/her sentence in response to the proposed edits and then add his/her new revised sentence into the paragraph.**
5. **CSL does a final read-aloud and obtains group consensus. (May need to repeat steps 5 & 6 to get consensus).**

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| Topic Sentence Leader (TSL)  SAY: “As I read the text out loud, everyone should circle words or phrases you think are related to the main idea, and underline what look like supporting details.”  Read the text, with expression, as other group members follow.  In “whip-around,” ask each group member for ideas about what main idea we should emphasize in the paragraph we are writing about the text.  Summarizes out loud for the group the one main idea TSL recommends for the topic sentence of the paragraph.  At the appropriate time:  Write your sentence and add it to paragraph.  Revise your sentence as needed. | Supporting Evidence Leader A (SEL-A)  At the appropriate time:  Verbally offer a piece of evidence from the text that supports the main idea.  Write your sentence and add it to paragraph.  Revise your sentence as needed. |
| Supporting Evidence Leader B (SEL-B)  At the appropriate time:  Verbally offer a piece of evidence from the text that supports the main idea.  Write your sentence and add it to paragraph.  Revise your sentence as needed. | Supporting Evidence Leader C (SEL-C)  At the appropriate time:  Verbally offer a piece of evidence from the text that supports the main idea.  Write your sentence and add it to paragraph.  Revise your sentence as needed. |

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| Concluding Sentence Leader  (CSL)  At the appropriate time:  Write your sentence and add it to paragraph.  Read entire paragraph out load.  Revise your sentence as needed.  Read final revised version of paragraph out loud. | Editor  (ED)    At the appropriate time:  Suggest edits to first draft.  Complete all revisions needed for final draft. |