

Can the use of a tangible item help students master the pieces of quality writing, as evaluated on district assessments?

Standards:

1.W.1 Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.

1.L.1f Use frequently occurring adjectives.

1.L.2a Capitalize dates and names of people.

1.L.2b Use end punctuation for sentences.

Objectives:

- I can label a sentence as either a fact or an opinion.
- I can write my opinion as a topic sentence.
- I can support my opinion with at least three reasons.
- I can write a complete sentence for each reason.
- I can find at least three nouns and describe each with an adjective.
- I can use transition words between my sentences.
- I can write an ending sentence to remind my reader of my opinion.
- I can check my writing for the correct use of capitals.
- I can check that every sentence has an end mark.

Background:

This is my third year of teaching first grade writing. Each year I have incorporated the analogy of a hamburger. Previously I used the hamburger to teach explanatory/informational writing, but this year I tried using it to teach opinion writing. When I started thinking about my inquiry question I wondered about the use of the hamburger to better differentiate within my writing classroom. Yet, the more I taught with the hamburger this year, the more I realized that the skills I was teaching my students were components of the quality writing I want to see on their district writing assessments.

Lesson (a one-month unit)

Each numbered point is one day's lesson.

1. Introduce fact and opinion and practice differentiating between the two.
2. Review the differentiation between fact and opinion. Introduce a hamburger from McDonald's, drawing a connection between the top bun and the topic sentence, the ingredients and the reasons why, and the bottom bun and the ending sentence.
3. [Note: days 3-8 are written as quick steps on an anchor chart. Each day, another step is revealed to the students.] Introduce the planning phase by folding a piece of paper into four quadrants. In the top left quadrant, write your opinion. Then, in the remaining three quadrants, write your supporting reasons. Since this is the planning phase, all writing is done in phrases, not complete sentences. This will be done in teacher modeling, whole class shared writing, and time for students to work in writing partnerships. In regards to the burger analogy, this stage is where students are preparing the best ingredients for their burger.

4. Introduce ketchup (adjectives). On the planning sheet, underline the nouns. Then, write an adjective to describe each noun. Color the adjective red with a crayon. This will be done in teacher modeling, whole class shared writing, and time for students to work in writing partnerships.
5. Introduce the burger graphic organizer and the burger bulletin board. Provide students with sentence starters for the topic sentence and ending sentence. Demonstrate transferring the ideas from the planning sheet onto the burger graphic organizer. This will be done in teacher modeling, whole class shared writing, and time for students to work in writing partnerships.
6. Introduce transition words (mustard). Explain the difference between the sequence words we might use for a narrative or how-to paragraph and those we would use for an opinion. Add transition words between the ingredients on the burger graphic organizer and color them yellow. They are the mustard on the burger. This will be done in teacher modeling, whole class shared writing, and time for students to work in writing partnerships.
7. Introduce editing for capitals and periods (relish). Review with students the correct use of capitals and end marks. Read through the burger and use a green crayon to circle the capitals and end marks. This will be done in teacher modeling, whole class shared writing, and time for students to work in writing partnerships.
8. Demonstrate how to use the graphic organizer to create a final copy of the teacher modeled paragraph. Provide time for partnerships to work on a final copy. At a later time, have a student write a final copy of the whole class shared writing paragraph.
- 9-12. Provide a new opinion prompt and go through the writing process again. This time, there is only teacher modeling via short mini-lesson reminders of each of the steps (no whole class shared writing), and students are working independently. The teacher will provide support and guidance as needed.
13. Provide handouts that transfer the bulletin board information into a resource for the students' binders.
- 14-20. Final assessment: Provide one last opinion prompt and students go through the process on their own without adult assistance. At this point, the bulletin board will be taken down, but the burger graphic organizer as well as any of the binder resources are available if students choose to use them.

Resources:

- Fact and Opinion: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Fact-or-Opinion-Sort-with-Pictures-1093966>
- Adjective picture cards: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Adjectives-Word-Wall-48199>
- Burger graphic organizer: created by Scott Wilmot (my father)
- Transition Words: <https://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/135/transw.html> [Note: I found transition words in a variety of places, but this looks like a good source, particularly for older grades.]