

JOURNEYS

Marshfield Elementary Schools
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Literacy Link: End of the Year- Journeys

Closure: The Case for Engaging End-of-Year Activities by: Elizabeth Wessling

Imagine you're five years old, getting ready for the last day of kindergarten summer school, expecting a busy day with lots to do. Your class just learned about the letters "Y" and "Z," but instead of conducting activities about letters or numbers, your teacher passes out popcorn and says, "Class, I have a special treat for you today. We are going to watch *Charlotte's Web*." She pushes play and then proceeds to pack up supplies in the back of the room.

This was reality for my son, Matthew. His teacher planned for his last day to be "fun," but Matthew did not find it fun, though he liked the popcorn, of course. As a parent, I was upset that my son watched a movie when he should have been learning something. As a fellow teacher, I was upset that his teacher wasted an opportunity to engage him in a closure activity.

Though teachers plan how to begin each year and each unit in order to build a connection with students and engage them in learning, unfortunately, very little plan time is devoted to closure.

Why Closure Matters

Closure gives students reflection time to think about what they have learned, how things connect to previous lessons, and what they might learn next. This ends the academic year with a student-centered activity.

It leaves a memory. Like entertainers, we educators need to finish on a strong note and give our audience something to remember. Research conducted by the Neurobiology and Behavior Community Outreach Team at the University of Washington concluded that our brains are organized to think that the first things in a list are important, so we remember them, and the last things in a list remain fresh in our memory, so we remember those, too.

Teachers need to consider the last activity they do with their students and decide whether this is how they want to be remembered. Let's end the year with an engaging, student-centered activity that leaves students feeling proud of how much they have accomplished and hopeful about their future.

It boosts engagement. Students' emotional engagement at school is the non-cognitive measure most directly related to academic achievement. The 2013 Gallup Student Poll, results indicated that 28 percent of students are "not engaged"—i.e., mentally checked out—and 17 percent are "actively disengaged," feeling negatively about school. According to Gallup, a one percentage point increase in a school's average student engagement score boosted reading by six points and math by eight points. Therefore, teachers need to plan for continuous student engagement, down to the final student day. Don't stop planning when a mandated curriculum is "finished" or when final exams have been taken.

A Different Closure Approach

Imagine again that you are a five-year-old attending your last day of kindergarten summer school. After lunch, your teacher places an oversized piece of paper on each desk and announces, "Class, I have a special treat for you. We are going on a gallery walk." She instructs you to think about all of the letters of the alphabet that you have learned over the past three weeks, draw your favorite letter, and draw a picture of something that begins with that letter. The pictures are hung around the room, and each student has a chance to discuss his or her drawing.

Once everyone shares, the class walks around the room in a circle, looking at each person's drawing and signing your name on the bottom edge of the each. When you take your poster home, you are excited to share your creation with your parents.

That's closure.

Closure Activities

- **Think-pair-share:** First, asked students to think individually about a question. Then, help students form teams of two, in which they take turns expressing their thoughts to their partner. Next, pairs report their discussion to classmates—perhaps to other pairs, or the whole class. Try having team members report their partner's answers rather than their own—a technique that promotes listening skills and prevents students' fears of appearing boastful.
- **3-2-1:** On a note card, students write down three units/topics they enjoyed the most during the year; two questions they have about a topic; and one thing they want to learn more about in the future. These ideas can be incorporated into an art project for students to take home.
- **Final Journal Entry:** Have students read through the journals they have kept throughout the course. Then, students can write a final entry about what they learned.
- **Photo Journal:** Students can create a photo journal of the year's academic progress to share with the class.
- **Postcards/Letters/Videos:** Have students write a postcard or letter to students in a younger class describing the topics presented that year. If time allows, have them personally deliver the letters and spend time sharing about learning between grade levels.
- **Recipe Card:** Create a "recipe for success" to give to the next group of students.
- **Doodles:** Students can sketch or draw three concepts they learned over the year and describe their doodles to the class.
- **Gallery Walk:** Students can create a graphic organizer or infographic to represent their learning. Students then post the graphics on the wall for other students to view.
- **What's Inside:** This can be done individually, with a partner or in small groups. Students get a sealed envelope that contains a slip of paper with a topic, vocabulary word, or problem. Students then have to explain, describe, or solve the contents of the envelope.
- **Self-Assessment:** Have students describe their sense of progress towards understanding by answering reflective questions about their work.
- **Create Educational Posters:** This is a good way for you and your students to highlight and capture memorable events that marked the school year. Could use digital tools like Google Drawing, Educreations, etc.
- **Create a Class Website using Google Sites or a Class Bulletin Board:** Create a board or digital site to share what was learned throughout the school year.
- **Alpha Bios:** Students complete a one-page or self-created book that highlights one or several new things learned during the year.
- **Do Some Good.** Adopt a cause that is meaningful to you or your students. Have students write letters to government leaders, organize a fundraiser, or create pamphlets or flyers addressing a particular issue. You can build off world events, tackle an issue you read about during the year, or just ask students what issues matter to them.

Journeys

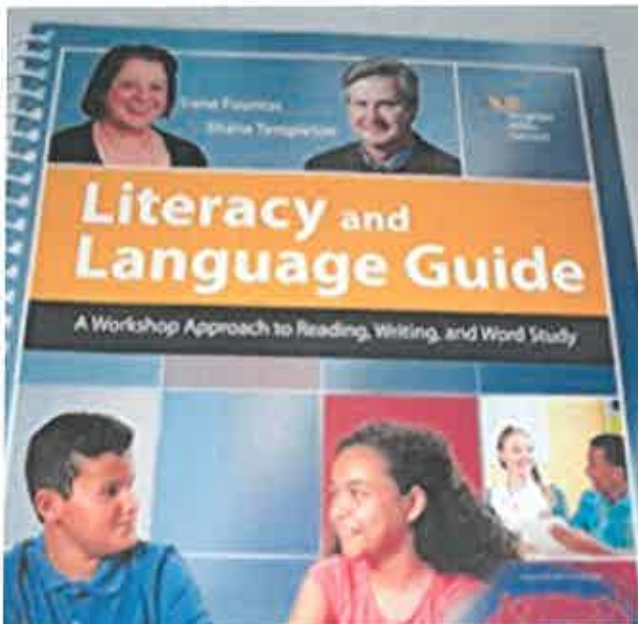
If you haven't utilized the following components of ReadyGEN, try to play around with them the last quarter of school!!!

*****Standards Based Weekly Tests can NOW be assigned and taken ONLINE!!!*****

Steps:

1. Go to HMH One Tab
2. Click on Assessments
3. Click on the Funnel Symbol
4. Click on Grade
5. Then Assign
6. In Settings– click on the “Allow students to pause their assessment” - just in case a distraction occurs during testing:)

Check out the Literacy & Language Guide for lessons following a balanced literacy approach. The only part from the Teacher's Edition that needs to be included in the lessons are Grammar.



****Please let me know if you'd be interested next year in an LLG Book Study or PD session/strand that deals solely with implementing the Literacy and Language Guide.*****

Keeping Students ELA Engaged at the End of the Year

- ◆ Keep the Routine
- ◆ Flexible Grouping & Differentiating
- ◆ Collaborative Projects or Project Based Learning
- ◆ Book Clubs or Literature Circles
- ◆ Book Auction
- ◆ Creating Class Books, Newsletters, Scrapbooks
- ◆ Advice to Future Students: Writing Letter, Comics, or Creating Videos
- ◆ Creating Time Capsules
 - ◆ Hide different passages around the room for them to find as a scavenger hunt, and then analyze in pairs.
 - ◆ Assign groups to read different sections and report to the class through a rap or a game they create.
 - ◆ Make copies of a text and black out sections so they have to figure out what the missing sections say based on context clues.
- ◆ Get chalk and have students write poems or memorable concepts they've learned in a designated (and approved) area outside
- ◆ Graphic Organizers Come Alive!! Use hula hoops (string) to create a Venn Diagram or T-chart and it could be completed with chalk, markers, or other supplies.
- ◆ Content-Area Vocabulary: Go on a scavenger hunt to find content-area vocabulary in the real world. Take students outside or around the building. Look in magazines, newspapers, websites, books.

"We need to provide our students with activities that are innovative and challenging as well as purposeful if we want them to be engaged in learning."
- Julie Thompson in Education Week Teacher


The ABC'S of what I learned this year!

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Name: _____ 2014

I am proud of myself for...



thejoyoflearning.com

Have Kids Write Every Day

During the last quarter of school, have students start or end the day writing in a journal or online journal. Free writing time or utilizing deep writing prompts will increase writing stamina and enjoyment!

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROMPTS

- I wish my teachers knew that ...
- What's the most beautiful person, place, or thing you've ever seen? Share what makes that person, place, or thing so special.
- Which is better, giant muscles or incredible speed? Why?
- What is your most difficult subject in school? Why is it difficult? What can you do to get better at that subject?
- Rewrite "Hansel and Gretel" from the witch's perspective.
- Describe a scary situation that you've experienced.
- What is your first memory? Describe it.
- You wake up tomorrow with a silly superpower that makes you famous. What is that silly power? How does it lead to your becoming an international superstar?
- Are you a good loser? Explain.
- What are examples of things you want versus things you need?
- Last Friday, you were given one wish by a magical panda. You tried so hard to make the wish positive, but after the whacked-out events that unfolded over the weekend, you regret ever meeting that tricky panda. What did you ask for, and what happened?
- I wish my friends ...
- Describe a routine that you often or always do (in the morning, when you get home, Friday nights, before a game, etc.).
- What things do all kids know that adults do not?
- What TV or movie characters do you wish were real? Why?



End of the year interview

Your name _____ Your age _____

What makes a teacher cool? _____

What can kids do over the summer to not forget everything they learned that year? _____

If you could change one thing about school, what would it be? _____

What advice would you give to kids who will be in second grade next year? _____

What do you think teachers do during the summer? _____
