

*MINNESOTA WRITING PROJECT
DEMONSTRATION LESSON*

Title: Workshop Summary Paragraph: Using “Four-Square” as a student tool to organize thoughts/clarify thinking

Grade appropriate: Developed for Grade 3 (may be used at any level)

Approximate length of time to complete lesson: approx. 45 minutes during a workshop (used often, as writing progresses, in varying settings)

Objective (s) to be covered: Use a four-square graphic organizer to help a third grade writer organize thoughts and clarify thinking to write a simple expository paragraph, a workshop summary paragraph.

Brief summary/outline:

(Is this lesson an intro? middle? end? All or part of a unit?

Does it scaffold a certain learning?)

This lesson would be a midyear mini-lesson designed to utilize the student’s prior learning using the four-square organizer for categorizing and understanding similarities.

After practice with categorizing, students proceed to labeling writing with a summary sentence using previously used format. To engage the student, we use a “feeling” sentence initially to complete a four-square.

As learning proceeds, this sentence is placed in the center of the four-square using reasons instead of examples. The stage has been set for reasoning and persuasion.

At this point the student is ready to draft a paragraph by taking the information off the organizer. Students are reminded to indent and fill the line completely, as this is a new experience in writing for them.

A four square can be constructed in a large group initially, using a sentence in each outer box and a feeling sentence in the last box.

Once this level is comfortable (drafting a five-sentence paragraph), students add more details. A student is now ready to write a wrap-up sentence. This is actually the first step in preparing for the multiple-paragraph essay.

Adding connecting words to provide transition is an especially important learning for students. It is helpful to elicit “transition words” and display as a wall poster or similar print students can access easily and often. “Time Connectors” become essential for students in sequencing their ideas for an audience.

Resources:

1. “Four Square Writing Method for Grades 1-3” written by Judith S. and Evan Jay Gould published by Teaching and Learning Company, Carthage, Illinois. (1999).
2. Sibberson, Franki. Szymusiak, Karen. 2003. “Still Learning to Read”, Portland, Maine; Stenhouse publishers.

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