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A Handbook of Activities for Inclusion of At Risk Middle School Language Arts Students

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A HANDBOOK OF ACTIVITIES FOR INCLUSION OF AT RISK MIDDLE SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

A HANDBOOK OF ACTIVITIES FOR INCLUSION OF AT RISK MIDDLE SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS STUDENTS

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A handbook of language arts activities for at risk middle school students was developed for preservice and experienced teachers to utilize in general education classrooms. A review of current educational research and literature addresses the need for inclusive instructional practices to meet academic needs of students who are at risk for drop out and failure. The literature review supports evidence that educators provide necessary accommodations for a culturally diverse adolescent student population by adapting classroom curriculum and pedagogy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Chapter One

Introduction

Overview of the Project

"The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil" (Ralph Waldo Emerson). The definition of *respect*, according to the American Heritage Dictionary (1992), is "to have regard for; to avoid violation of; to concern." According to Schemm (2002), the role of teachers is to become partners with middle school students, treating them with respect and accepting their input. Since education concerns itself with the teaching and learning of academic skills and knowledge, regard for the individual student rests in the hands of teachers to properly include them in learning.

Middle school students who are at risk for drop out and failure need assistance to discover and develop their academic strengths. Teachers can best communicate learning concepts when taking individual students' needs into consideration when planning projects, lessons, and assessments. Multiple Intelligences theory addresses the diverse academic needs of middle school language arts students; and can be specifically utilized for teaching at risk students.

Cultural disadvantages play an important role in the low academic performance of students in poverty and students of color (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994). Gardner (1993a), in his work with multiple intelligences, explains that all students can learn based on predisposed characteristics. However, cultural influence affects learning by promoting or

frustrating students' abilities. Students from poverty and students of color comprise a major portion of the at risk population in the United States. Issues pertaining to at risk middle school students who function below grade level are addressed in Chapter 2, along with characteristics that make them more likely to drop out of school.

A diverse student population challenges classroom teachers to educate every student. Legislators, faced with public pressure, are requiring educators to offer learning opportunities that meet the needs of *all* students (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994; Tomlinson, 2001).

Adolescents by nature are diverse. They are curious about the world they live in, requiring assorted situations for exploration and extension of knowledge. Young adolescents experience rapid and sporadic physical development. They need varied activities and time to be themselves. Middle schoolers are self-conscious and susceptible to feelings of low self-esteem. Teachers need to give adolescents opportunities for success and recognition. Young adolescents need caring adult role models who like and respect them. To meet the educational needs of at risk middle schoolers, teachers can offer consistency and direction by incorporating hands-on and cooperative learning experiences.

The author has studied complex issues to explore reasons for adolescent underachievement and how to address their failure. Rossi & Montgomery (1994) report that schools contribute to students' academic performance, and it is essential to consider an integrated approach when determining how to reverse at-risk academic patterns.

For the purpose of this project, inclusion is discussed as the means to meet individual middle school students' needs. Inclusion refers to the practice of including at

risk students into general education classrooms. Successful inclusion promotes the feeling of belonging for every student (Tomlinson, 2001). Discussion supporting this premise follows with a review of current related research and literature.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to provide preservice and experienced classroom teachers with a handbook of activities to include at-risk language arts students in the general education curriculum, keeping them focused and engaged. The handbook is intended to reduce at risk behavior in the classroom by providing teachers with tools to meet specific learning needs. The activities included in the handbook will reduce at risk behavior by using collaborative methodology, constructivist pedagogy, and multiple intelligences theory.

Significance of the Project

Research supports inclusion for at risk middle school students (Bennett, Lipman, Racine, & Offord, 1998; Dotson, 2000; Garriott & Useem, 2002; Miles & Velantine, 2002; Ruddell & Shearer, 2002). At risk students are children from all backgrounds who potentially fail academically, or drop out of school, except for intervention (Mastrapieri and Scruggs, 2000). Most general education middle school classrooms have a number of at risk students where diversity is not addressed by the curriculum or the teacher (Goodwin, 1997).

Multicultural education is a response to diversity (Farr and Trumbill, 1997). Teachers need to be aware of cultural differences and the biases faced by individuals in the classroom. Teachers should have an attitude of respect for cultural differences, and

willing to build connections with instructional content, pedagogy, materials, and student's cultural backgrounds.

Limited English proficient pupils can be integrated into the language arts classroom by allowing them to take control of their own learning. Using a series of special frameworks that guide children to read and respond to the text in their own language facilitates growth toward English proficiency.

Learning disabilities affect classroom experiences of at risk students, influencing drop out rates among adolescents (Mastrapieri and Scruggs, 2000). Diverse curriculum units, combining peer support and inclusion practices, are recommended for heightening student involvement in learning (Tomlinson, 2001). Inclusion refers to the practice of including at risk students in the general classroom. A primary goal of inclusion is to meet the needs of *all* students (McKlesky and Waldron, 1996).

Most teachers support inclusion, given more planning time and further training (Mastrapieri and Scruggs, 2000). Developing authentic school curriculum that has meaning and motivational appeal encourages student participation and engagement. Students are more likely to learn if they are interested (Rossi and Montgomery, 1994).

Educators agree that all students can learn. Brain-based learning, learning styles, and Gardner's multiple intelligences theory can be incorporated with good, solid teaching skills to cultivate a quality education for every student (Guild, 1997; Shearer,1999).

Teacher beliefs about inclusion determine how well the program is incorporated into the classroom. Recent evidence reveals that effective inclusive programs have to be restructured to meet the needs of students. Often at risk pupils are placed in the general

classroom with minimal planning and lack of teacher support (McLesky & Waldron, 1996).

A primary goal of inclusion should be to allow teachers in general education classrooms to better meet the needs of **all** students. Adaptations may be necessary to expose at risk students to a rich curriculum. Improved instruction, a more child-centered curriculum, and collaboration with teachers and parents will cultivate successful inclusion. Teachers who promote independent, active learning find inclusion to be a natural outcome of their methods.

Scope of the Project

The project is designed to aid preservice and experienced classroom teachers to include and meet the individual needs of at risk middle school students in the general classroom. A handbook of academic activities to keep middle school at risk students focused and engaged was developed for language arts curriculum, and can be adapted for individual use.

Definition of Terms

Accommodations. Accommodations refer to techniques and materials that do not change the basic curriculum, but do make learning a little easier or help students communicate what they know (Mastrapieri and Scruggs, 2000).

Adaptations. Adaptations refer to any procedure intended to meet an educational situation with respect to individual differences in ability or purpose (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994).

Assessment. Assessment is the process of identifying strengths and needs to assist in educational planning by use of observation, record review, interviews, and tests (Rossi and Montgomery, 1994).

At Risk. At risk is the correlation between existing home situations, personal characteristics, and behavior to low academic achievement or school problems (Frieman, 2001).

Authentic Assessment. Authentic assessment describes the use of meaningful, real-life tasks and problems to evaluate students' progress and skills (Karges-Bone, 1998); and the evaluation of students' learning through a broad array of observable evidence (Bellanca, Chapman, & Swartz, 1997).

Benchmark. A benchmark is used to assess students' level of achievement at a specific point of time (Karges-Bone, 1998).

Brainstorming. Brainstorming is used to open discussion on issues, topics, or themes. Teachers ask students to give their ideas and/or opinions about a specific topic. This continues until all ideas have been exhausted, or until a predetermined time limit is reached. No idea is judged or omitted during this process (Middleton, 1990).

Collaboration. Collaboration is working in partnership on behalf of a student with other educators and/or parents (Mastrapieri and Scruggs, 2000).

Cooperative Learning Groups. Cooperative learning groups are small groups of students organized to disseminate information, analyze ideas, or teach concepts to the rest of the class (Middleton, 1990).

Diversity. Diversity is "otherness," or what makes us different from a group, even when those qualities which make up the difference is present in other individuals (Farr and Trumbill, 1997).

EALR. Essential Academic Learning Requirements

Engagement. Engagement refers to the amount of time a student works "on task" doing classroom assignments (Mastrapieri and Scruggs, 2000).

Inclusion. Inclusion is the term used to describe including at risk children in a regular classroom designed for children who have no disabilities (Frieman, 2001).

Learning disabilities. The term learning disabilities, which originated in the 1960's, describes individuals who perform with average or above average intelligence, but who have specific academic language deficiencies (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000).

Least restrictive environment. To the maximum extent appropriate, at risk students are educated with normal academically-achieving peers (Robertson and Valentine, 2002). Least restrictive environment refers to educational instruction that promotes interaction with at risk students and mainstream students with regards to both groups (Mastrapieri and Scruggs, 2000).

Modifications. Modifications are changes made to the content and performance expectations for students (Mastrapieri and Scruggs, 2000).

Multiple intelligences. Multiple intelligences are what others label "talents or gifts" (Gardner, 1993b).

OSPI. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Pluralism. Pluralism suggests the ideology of "multiple perspectives and empowerment for all groups" (Farr and Trumbill, 1997, p.12).

Transition to the rest of the project

Chapter two reviews literature regarding inclusion of at risk middle school students in general education classrooms. Summaries of research and literature support inclusion; and recommendations are made for classroom instruction and assessment. Chapter Three contains the design of the project, with explanation for implementation. The handbook of activities for preservice and experienced classroom teachers is presented in Chapter Four. Summary, conclusions, and recommendations are documented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

Students at risk have been the subject of discussion and investigation since 1944, when the Educational Policies Commission (EPC) of the National Education Association published a manifesto stating that "every youth in these United States—regardless of sex, economic status, geographic location, or race—should experience a broad and balanced education" (Perkinson, 1987, p. 19). Since that time, certain school populations, such as learning-disabled and behaviorally disordered, have come to the attention of public education.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), passed by Congress in 1975, explicitly states that students with disabilities are to be educated in the general classroom with the least restrictive environment. Policy makers have attempted to meet public demands for preparing students to meet the future. "A major goal is to support schooling that will encourage *all* students to construct, integrate, and apply their knowledge; to think critically and invent solutions to problems; and to respond creatively to unforeseeable issues that will confront them in the complex world of tomorrow" (Goodwin, 1997).

The question concerning how teachers can meet specific requirements to educate at risk students in mainstream classrooms is the topic of discussion for this project. Review of literature and research summarized in Chapter Two is organized to address:

I. At risk middle school students

II. Cultural considerations

III. Learning disabilities

IV. Inclusion of at risk middle school students

A. Classroom instruction

B. Engagement

C. Assessment

V. Summary

At Risk Middle School Students

Rossi (1994) defines "at risk" students as those who are "experiencing difficulties in school" (p. xiii). He further explains that it is now almost standard practice to refer to entire groups of children as being *at risk* due to all of the factors that can perpetuate harmful situations. Rossi writes: "No child is inherently at risk; rather, children are put at risk by external disadvantages. . . .If these conditions were to be eliminated or their effects were to be significantly reduced, the children in question would no longer properly be termed *at risk*"(p. xiii).

Frieman (2001) describes at risk students as those who society believes are inferior. He gives the example of Paul, an African American student, who feels as if people perceive him problematic because of his race. Even though school segregation is illegal, many children of color continue to experience social discrimination. Several children are at risk because of some people's intolerance. Frieman (2001) identifies students from various minority groups in America's classrooms as subjects of discriminatory practices: African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, children from religious groups, and lesbian, gay, or bisexual children. An understanding

teacher is sensitive to every student in the class who is different and models feelings of acceptance.

Mastropieri & Scruggs (2000) describe at risk students as those who "exhibit characteristics, live in an environment, or have experiences that make them more likely to fail in school, drop out, or experience lack of success in future life. . . .they include 'slow learners' not served by IDEA. . . " (p. 11). At risk students can come from various backgrounds representing different cultures and economic situations.

"The label *at risk* confirms what most teachers know: Children do not play on a level playing field. Rossi (1994), Frieman (2001), and Mastropieri & Scruggs (2001) define *at risk* by addressing societal expectations of academically low achieving students. Some children come to school with more things going for them than others" (Frieman, 2001, p. 6).

To be identified *at risk* in the classroom, several conditions have to be met. Mastrapieri & Scruggs (2000) list potential risk factors:

(a) Children with poor academic performance (Knapp & Turnbill, 1991)

(b) Children who are born exposed to alcohol and other narcotic substances (Vincent, Poulsen, Cole, Woodruff, & Griffith, 1991)

(c) Abused and neglected children (Leone, 1991)

(d) Children living in poverty conditions (Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, & Newman, 1993)

(e) Children suffering from depression and suicidal tendencies (Guetzloe, 1991)

(f) Students who are pregnant and/or parents (Mussigrosso, Scavarda, Simpson-Brown & Thalacker, 1991)

(g) Homeless children and children who are constantly moving from home to home (Heflin & Rudy, 1991;

Lombardi, Odell, & Novotny, 1990)

(h) Children with excessive absenteeism (Knapp & Turnbull, 1991)

(i) Students who have been suspended two times within a year (Lonbardi, Odell) Novotny, 1990)

(j) Students who drop out of school (MacMillan, 1991)

(k) Children who are slow learners (Watson & Rangel, 1989)

(l) Students who have experienced traumatic events, such as the death of someone close to them (Germinario, Cervalli, & Ogden, 1992)

(m) Children whose parents are alcoholics or drugs abusers (Lombardi, Odell, & Novotny, 1990)

(n) Students who are older than their grade level peers because of retention (Lombardi,

Odell, & Novotny, 1990)

(o) Children may be from urban, suburban, or rural settings (Helge, 1991)

(p) Children who are angry or socially alienated. (p. 162)

At risk middle schoolers are found in most general education classrooms. They experience academic failure, and ultimately drop out of school. Difficulties faced by these individuals should prompt educators to determine intervention methods early in their learning career (Mastrapieri & Scruggs, 2000).

According to U. S. government statistics (U. S. Department of Education, 1994), dropout rates are higher for blacks and Hispanics than for whites. However, when

compared to whites in the same socioeconomic strata, dropout rates are lower in some cases. Rates for Native Americans are quite high, almost fifty percent in reservation schools. Per current data, males and females have similar dropout rates. The drop out rate for students with disabilities is twenty percent higher than the general population. Two-thirds of the drop out rate include "mainstream" white students who seemingly do not meet the criteria for at risk intervention.

Two main aspects of students who drop out of school have to do with where they live (dropout rates are greater in cities than in suburbs and rural areas; more prevalent in the West and the South) and their prior school experiences (U. S. Department of Education, 1994). Research verifies that at risk school performance can be identified as early as age five, when the child begins school. According to Bennett's study (1998), risk factors include aggression, destruction of property, displays of temper, and other forms of antisocial behavior. Bennett describes predictive psychological assessments that can accurately rate at risk prevalence. Educators can target students for intervention and discover resources for the classroom teacher.

Researchers have concluded that dropping out is more of a process than an event. Most students contemplate dropping out for several years and give reasons such as low grades, poor social skills, having to work and pregnancy. The *at risk* label must be used with caution. It doesn't mean that the student is "limited" or has a "fatal flaw." Knowing the meaning of *at risk* will help the classroom teacher prepare alternative methods of instruction to adequately reach all students. Some factors that determine how an at risk student will experience school situations include age, "developmental level, personality, and individual resilience" (Frieman, 2001, p. 6).

During middle school years, students struggle for independence. Attitudes toward school and perceptions of academic achievement shift, as adolescents become more conscious of pleasing peers than adults (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994). Educators agree that adolescents value the opportunity to express themselves and direct their own activities. As a group, adolescents are diverse in their physical, social, emotional, and conceptual development (Sorenson, Buckmaster, Francis, & Knauf, 1996). Therefore they require different learning experiences.

Elkind (1984) explains that society recognizes adolescence as a sub-culture that is supported by parents, educators, government, church, and industry. He theorizes that young people are hurried into adolescence, and not enough time is allowed for adolescents to fully integrate a definition of "self."

> Adolescence is conceived as a distinct stage of life in those societies so complicated and differentiated that each individual's social role and function takes years to define and to learn. When years of special preparation for adult life are required, these years become a distinguishable period with its own customs, rules and relationships. (p. 20)

Elkind (1984) further contends that adolescents require small group working environments in order to construct a healthy self-identity. Schools have labeled young people, forcing them to accept a definition of who they are in relationship to their peers.

Feeling good about a subject is necessary for effortless learning, according to Gross (1999). He states that feelings are important in learning, and it is possible to change feelings. Most students, by the time they reach middle school, have acquired some fears about learning. They can include:

(1) I don't understand what I'm learning.

(2) I'm not a person who can learn this subject.

(3) I don't know how to learn this effectively.

(4) I won't remember what I'm learning.

(5) I feel ashamed that I don't know something.

(6) There's too much too learn. (p. 42)

Fears about learning can be conquered when students are in a singular state of mind and feeling, where learning is effortless and enjoyable.

Gross (1999) asserts that the myths of learning be understood (such as "learning is a boring, unenjoyable activity," p. 47) in order for teachers to arrive at the truth about learning. Some truths of learning are that it is absorbing and compelling; it depends upon the goals one has for life; it is an active process; teachers can be important resources; it can be flexible; you can decide how much you want to learn after you start examining information. Gross labels this type of learning "peak learning."

> By emphasizing how a child *feels,* at the expense of what the child *does*—mastery, persistence, overcoming frustration and boredom, and meeting challenge—parents and teachers are making this generation of children more vulnerable to depression. (Seligman, 1995, p. 27)

Seligman (1995) advocates students taking active roles in their worlds to shape their own lives, rather than becoming passive recipients of what happens. This leads to optimism and increases students' opportunities for learning. Seligman (1995) also states that "mastery forms the base of the pyramid of optimism" (p. 285). Teachers need to allow

students to problem solve in the classroom by slowing down, taking perspective, goal setting, setting paths, and reflecting on what they are learning.

"Flow" is the term used by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) to describe the merging of happiness and learning. Flow can occur when perceived challenges match perceived skills, involving a sense of control in a learning situation. Flow happens in situations in which one has clearly defined goals and feedback; and flow experiences arise from intrinsic motivation, not from concerns with external rewards or goals.

> 'Autotelic' is a word composed of two Greek roots: *auto* (self), and *telos* (goal).
>
> An autotelic activity is one we do for its own sake because to experience it is the main goal. (p. 115)

Cultural Considerations

Students of poverty and students of color make up the majority of at risk children in the United States. Studies published in the 1960's suggest that "culturally disadvantaged" youths are unable to perform as well academically (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994). Current research does not conclusively support these findings, even though culture *does* play a significant role in the low academic performance of poor students and students of color.

According to Rossi & Montgomery (1994), almost one quarter of children of color and those living in poverty will constitute more than half of all public school students. Historically, African-Americans, American Indians, Mexican-Americans, and other ethnic groups have not received quality schooling. Often they have been treated with hostility or indifference by school boards. "Schools for these children often suffered from insufficient funding and intolerance to indigenous cultures" (Rossi & Montgomery,

1994). Average test performance has increased and drop out rates have decreased over the years; but, with the exception of Asian students, a gap continues to remain between students of color and white students. Drop out rates for Latinos still remain high.

Public school classrooms are becoming more diverse. Farr and Trumbill (1997) report that the population in the United States is expected to be 42 million by the year 2010. Distribution of minority growth accounts for a large part of school wide expansion. Hispanics will multiply to 47 percent, African-Americans to 22 percent, Asians and other people of color are expected to expand to 18 percent. White population growth is only expected to account for 13 percent of the increase.

By the year 2020, about 40 percent of our nation's school-age population will be students of color (Irvine and Armento, 2002). However, with this increase in diversity, teachers of color are decreasing. The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education reports (1995) that "80 percent of preservice teachers are white females who are unfamiliar with the cultural experiences of diverse students" (p. 3). There is a dire need for "culturally responsive pedagogy" (p. 3), meaning that teachers should provide appropriate classroom instruction by incorporation of students' cultural elements.

"Culturally responsive teaching" is child-centered (Irvine and Armento, 2002). Teachers must be aware of students' previous knowledge, language, and experiences. ". . .the task. . .is to bridge the gap between prior knowledge and academic learning tasks" (p. 213). Setting high expectations, incorporating students into all aspects of teaching, and utilizing other best teaching practices provide a positive cultural learning environment.

Goodwin (1997) writes that teachers should modify classrooms to allow diverse students equitable participation in learning opportunities. Traditions and customs of

different cultures form connections with students from all backgrounds. A community of acceptance offers students the opportunity to relate with their own identities. As a result they learn to complete academic tasks with confidence. Every student should be given the means to create exceptional schoolwork. Inviting all students into the learning environment is a benefit to reaching higher goals.

Teacher expectations and beliefs about students affect intellectual ability, according to Campbell and Campbell (1999). Harvard researchers, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), conducted a study by telling teachers in a San Francisco school that certain students had been tested and identified as "bloomers" (children who would make significant gains in academic achievement).

During the year, the "bloomers" realized greater academic success than fellow pupils. However, the "bloomers" were originally chosen at random without testing; and teachers treated "bloomers" as high achieving students. Rosenthal and Jacobson conclude that what teachers expect from or believe about their students affects how the students perform in their classrooms. This is known as "the Pygmalion effect" or "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Campbell and Campbell, 1999, p. 2). Teachers construct beliefs about student intelligence that is positive or negative.

Complex issues studied explore characteristics of underachieving adolescents and how to reverse at risk patterns. Research relates that broken homes and/or cultural poverty are not necessarily the reasons students are at risk. Schools contribute to student performance as well, according to Rossi & Montgomery (1994). The wisest approach to students' problems is an integrated method to include parents and social services.

Rossi & Montgomery (1994) relate findings from a research study in a Midwestern, predominantly white, middle school having to do with "cause and effect." The study reveals that adolescents who display at risk behavior are more likely to be at risk in the classroom. How the teacher responds can actually put the entire class at risk, taking time away from instruction.

Some teachers respond positively to diversity, while others see it as a threat (Farr and Trumbill, 1997). Teachers can be uncomfortable with students who are different from them. However, teachers must make a conscious effort not to corrupt the learning of non-white students. Teachers need to be open to appropriate strategies of instruction to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

Most general education classrooms include students with various levels of skills and different cultural backgrounds (Sheppard, 2001). Research studies reveal that students who are learning English as a second language (ESL) are especially troubling for classroom teachers. Improved teaching strategies can help teachers meet the diverse needs of second language learners.

Multicultural education is a response to diversity. Farr and Trumbill (1997) explain that *cultural pluralism* promotes equity with a diverse teaching staff and multicultural curriculum. Further, educating students to be aware of social equity and the unique characteristics of different groups encourages them in democratic social skills.

Many adolescent students in general are unmotivated, disengaged, and underachieving. They display differences formed by "experiences, ability, interest, mode of learning, expectations about themselves as learners, culture, language, and gender"

(Tomlinson, 2001). At risk middle school students become discouraged and bored, believing themselves as failures or stupid.

Classroom teachers are challenged to teach all children. They can become frustrated and disillusioned as they struggle to meet academic needs of diverse abilities. The challenge becomes one of instituting teaching practices that stimulate student learning, yet provide diversity for students who are at greatest risk (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994).

In his writing about multiple intelligences, Gardner explains that all students are able to learn based on in-born potential and predisposition. However, cultural influence can affect learning qualities that confine or promote abilities (1993a, xiii). Gardner believes that intelligence encompasses outside sources such as educational materials, peers, and teachers.

Armstrong (1994) indicates that particular cultures use individual intelligences according to their own definitive values. American educators are observing greater cultural diversity. Therefore it is necessary to design curriculum that is more "process-sensitive" instead of "content-sensitive." Multiple intelligence theory allows teachers to provide culturally sensitive curriculum that exposes students to the many "ways of knowing" about different cultures (Armstrong, 1994, p. 161).

Another aspect of multiculturalism, supported by research, is the large number of nonwhite teachers "who are certified to teach but are not teaching" (Delpit, 1995, p. 115). Efforts must be made to recruit and retain teachers of color. White teachers do not always perceive themselves as being prejudiced, even when they practice it. Research proposes that white teachers often display inconsistent behaviors when dealing with students of

color. Teaching styles, expectations, and evaluations differ between cultures; and this is demonstrated by the way white teachers approach classroom instruction.

Cultural expectations are significant in gender learning differences. Learning and behaving in school, according to *Student Gender Differences* (2002), differs between boys and girls because of sex-stereotyped cultural roles. ". . .girls are encouraged to be passive, caring, to take no risks, and to defer to male voices in the public discussion" (*Student Gender Differences*, 2002, p. 1). Males often take part in discourse, while females tend to write better papers. Studies indicate that females who display assertive, independent behavior are devalued when compared to the same male behavior.

A study by Pajares and Valiante (2001) concludes that academic gender discrepancies depend upon the subject matter. How boys and girls perceive educational topics determines motivation and achievement. In the writing arena, research findings suggest that girls are more adaptable and report stronger writing skills in general than boys. Gender differences are a matter of perception, not actual ability. Girls are more confidant in their writing; but when boys believe they can write better, they do. Stereotypical gender role beliefs cause more gender variables than actual academic variables.

Stereotypes result in chosen careers as well as "perceived value of tasks and activities" (Pajares and Valiante, 2001, p. 368). Writing is viewed by most students as a "female domain" (Pajares and Valiante, 2001, p. 377). Boys *want* to succeed in their writing, in spite of feminine orientation beliefs about writing. Pajares and Valiante(2001) recommend that teachers attempt to alter the students' sexist views of writing to see it as valuable and relevant to both males and females.

National research studies reveal that middle school girls experience a significant decline in self-esteem and academic achievement by the age of 12 (Rothenberg, 1995). Many girls feel inferior because of decreasing self-concept and body image rejection. The result is academic decline. Teachers need to be aware of adolescent girls' special needs in the classroom by developing gender-fair curriculum; dealing with age-appropriate issues of power, gender, race, and politics; valuing girls' contributions in and out of the classroom; and creating an environment where girls can express themselves by making mistakes and demonstrating an interest in learning.

The American Association of University Women Educational Foundation's roundtable discussion of November 1997 released a report stating:

> structural and organizational features associated with good schools for girls and boys. . . .include:
>
> - smaller school size
> - a constrained curriculum where almost all students take the same, mostly academic, courses
> - authentic instruction that involves students in higher-order thinking, and teaching that is more often constructivist than didactic, where students are encouraged and expected to become actively engaged in their own learning
> - a pattern of authentic instruction that is pervasive in the school rather than isolated in the classes of teachers who happen to teach this way

- a common willingness on the part of teachers to accept personal responsibility for all their students' learning, including a belief that all students can learn what they are taught (Patten, 1999, p. 2-3)

Prior to the roundtable discussion in 1997, the American Association of University Women published *Girls in the Middle: Working to Succeed in School* (1996) declaring that adolescent girls utilize common behavior strategies when adjusting to middle school challenges. They try out identity-making behaviors, and are often misunderstood as they modify their conduct to fit into changing circumstances.

Gurian (2001) addresses the issue of gender bias by redefining it as *gender difference*. It is Gurian's opinion, based on current research, that boys are more biased against in American classrooms than girls. Boys, historically, have comprised the largest group of students who fail in schools; and since 1999 statistics indicate that boys are more likely to be left out of the educational process. Typical classroom instruction is not geared for the male brain as well as for the female brain; and schools consist mostly of female teachers who have not been trained in strategies to help boys learn.

One of the most difficult tasks we face as human beings, is trying to communicate across our individual differences, trying to make sure that what we say to someone is interpreted the way we intend. This becomes even more difficult when we attempt to communicate across social differences, gender, race, or class lines, or any situation of unequal power (Delpit, 1995, p. 135).

Learning Disabilities

Middle school students with learning disabilities are among the most susceptible for "long term academic and social problems, and for lifelong debilitating side-effects of

their classroom experiences" (Garnett, 1994). General classroom conditions affect many students, but they are most harmful for students with learning disabilities.

The term *learning disabilities* was originated by Samuel Kirk (1962) in the 1960's to refer to students who appeared to have normal intelligence, but who performed low academically. Mastrapieri & Scruggs (2000) clarify the federal definition of *specific learning disability*:

> [a] means or disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (p.78)

Learning disabilities are not the result of economic disadvantages; and there *must* be a discrepancy between ability and academic achievement for identification as a learning disability. Middle school students with learning disabilities generally have difficulty organizing learning materials, especially in response to new situations (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000).

Hearne and Stone state that primary concern for students with learning disabilities are curriculum and "dull, irrational, or cruel teachers." Often, teachers assume that students with learning disabilities are not interested in school. However, the case may be

that, because these students are intellectually capable, they are bored with the way education is presented in the classroom. Students' days are structured with activities that are geared toward their weaknesses rather than their strengths. Talents are generally undervalued, or often omitted in the current curriculum.

Current research indicates that to prevent high dropout rates among those with learning disabilities, continued interventions throughout their school years is necessary. Consensus is that those with learning disabilities seem bored because of irrelevant curriculum (Mastrapieri & Scruggs, 2000).

The field of learning disabilities is in upheaval between the traditional, eclectic approach and constructivism. Constructivism roots are taking hold and challenging traditional pedagogy; but schools still operate in a paradigm that is deficit driven. Hearne and Stone (1995) note:

> Many of the concepts underlying the constructivist reform of educational practice today have a long and distinguished history. Current instructional approaches with constructivist roots include whole language, cognitive strategies instruction, cognitively guided instruction, scaffolded instruction, literacy-based instruction, directed discovery, and many more. (p. 233)

Inclusion of At Risk Middle School Students

Education faces a difficult challenge to educate every student in our country. Laws for compulsory education were passed as early as the second half of the nineteenth century, and by the twentieth century all states mandated compulsory education for all young people. Following World War II conflicting trends attempted to meet the demands

for a quality education. A variety of approaches were attempted in order to achieve "educational equity, excellence, and relevance" (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994).

With the publication of *A Nation At Risk* in 1983, attention was directed toward poor academic performance in American public schools. This document warned that America's students are at risk to develop lower skills than students in other countries (Rossi, 1994). A plea for higher standards led to the passage of The Education Reform Act of 1984, which provided funding for restructuring and reforming public schools.

National education goals were outlined by President Bill Clinton in 1991, and furthered by President George W. Bush's *AMERICA 2000: An Education Strategy*. *America 2000* targets raising America's educational standards. Focus is on Language Arts, Reading, and Writing. Diverse curriculum units, with peer support and inclusion practices, are recommended for heightening student involvement in learning (Tomlinson, 2001).

The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 attempted to rehabilitate Title I by advancing skills for at risk children and developing teachers to meet the task. In 1997 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) introduced strategies to support higher standards for bilingual education. The laws were a reflection of a society that demanded greater expectations for all school children. The National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board set educational priorities for educational research to help teachers find ways to educate diverse learners. Priorities include ways to promote high academic achievement by means of problem solving, student engagement, and creativity (Rossi, 1994).

Inclusion refers to the practice of including students with disabilities, especially at risk students, in the general classroom. A primary goal of inclusion should be for general classroom teachers to meet the needs of *all* students, not just those at risk (McLeskey & Waldron, 1996). Advocates of inclusion insist that improved teaching methods, student-centered curriculum, and collaboration with other teachers can benefit the entire classroom. Adaptations may be necessary to include at risk students in learning experiences.

Robertson and Valentine (2002) write that inclusion is not the same as mainstreaming. Inclusion establishes the fact that the student has a right to be in the regular classroom, and that services and supports are provided as needed. Diversity, the main theme of inclusion, is the hallmark of middle school students. Middle schoolers range from "child-like to adult-like, from socially awkward to socially adept, from emotionally insecure to brimming with confidence, and from concrete to abstract in thinking—sometimes seemingly all in the same student on the same day" (p. 2).

Educators are challenged by at risk students. Programs to foster inclusion into regular classroom environments continue to be battled and debated. Ruddell and Shearer (2002) ask questions about middle school language arts students in their study of seventh graders. They conclude that teachers should promote independent, active learners by allowing students to choose content areas of personal interest. Readers who are able to select vocabulary words from their own social context are more likely to learn the words and incorporate them into their language practice.

Successful inclusion promotes the feeling of belonging for every student. Tomlinson (2001) writes about a teacher who successfully facilitated inclusion into her

classroom. Reggio Emilia approached inclusion by using four essential methods: collaborative learning; building a positive learning environment; lessons that are project-based; and assessing learning that takes in a variety of ways. Teachers are instrumental for successful inclusion. Teacher beliefs and values regarding inclusive education can be assessed before implementation of an inclusive program.

The traditional role of the teacher in an inclusive classroom is re-defined (Robertson and Valentine, 2002). With appropriate training, teachers can feel more confident to handle the flexibility and responsiveness required for inclusion. Collaboration in planning and problem solving, along with continuous professional development, can guide the classroom teacher.

Most teachers generally support inclusion if the appropriate resources are available, there is time for planning, and more personnel are available (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). Teachers who receive additional coursework in special education are most likely to have positive attitudes about inclusion.

Classroom Instruction

Most students learn at different rates and perform better in some areas than others. However, adolescents who find schoolwork difficult can have gaps in their education (Olivier and Bowler, 1996). Observation, testing, and reviewing the student's work can determine how to locate where a student needs intervention. Instruction needs to begin at the "weakest point in the chain of skills" (p. 170).

Johnson (1997) affirms that the teacher's expectation of students is an important factor in classroom instruction. Several studies indicate that teachers who expect students to succeed do; while students who are regarded as "problems" by teachers fail.

Reinforcing the fact that failure is part of learning can benefit students' progress. Instilling confidence in learning increases self-esteem and encourages students to attempt new activities as they face a variety of learning situations.

According to Elkind (1984), "teachers are important role models for students" (p. 153). They must remain excited about their teaching and committed to young people, or their effectiveness is diminished. Healthy self-identification and differentiation takes place when there is a strong student-teacher relationship, and small groups can foster that relationship.

Teachers must ask themselves "How can I become a better teacher to meet the needs of all my students?" (Mastrapieri and Struggs, 2000, p.28). Relevant instruction to individual pupils increases educational effectiveness for students who are at risk. Mastrapieri & Scruggs (2000) recommend the following approaches to inclusive instruction:

1. Prioritize objectives.
2. Adapt instruction, materials, or the environment.
3. Use systematic instruction variables featuring instruction (structure, clarity, redundancy, enthusiasm, appropriate pace, maximized engagement, questioning, and feedback).
4. Implement systematic evaluation procedures. (p. 29)

Learning occurs when the subject matter is relevant to the learner; when the learner is motivated and enjoys the process, feels competent, and is interested. Jensen (1995) contends that the brain does whatever it needs to do in order to survive. He states,

"Learning may be nothing more than the time needed for an organism to sort out its built-in systems in order to accomplish these goals" (p.6).

Based on at risk youth research, it can be assumed that learning is an ongoing process; and progress is based on the quality of educational resources, classroom environment, and how students are motivated to succeed academically (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994). Research reminds us that teachers must pay attention to every single student and respond by modifying reading programs, or other subject matter, based on individual student profiles (Tomlinson, 2001). Team teaching and smaller academic units have replaced traditional school organizational models (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994).

Boys are more at risk for academic failure in the general classroom. Their brains develop differently than girls, and they are unlikely to be accommodated by female teachers (Gurian, 2001). Males are not as adept at verbal skills as girls, but handle spatial tasks better. The female brain can process several tasks at once, and has the advantage of responding to complex situations quicker than males. Teachers need to understand that boys are more at risk for missing learning and processing opportunities because they cannot handle information presented simultaneously.

Boys generally do not handle emotions as well as girls. Girls process emotions, while boys tend to withdraw and process more slowly. Boys are more likely to become bored in the classroom, because learning stimulants are not presented properly to meet their learning style. Therefore boys will "act out" and disrupt the class.

Boys and girls equally benefit from learning teams; but boys are more goal oriented. Gurian (2001) concludes that boys are more active learners than girls. However, girls will benefit from physical stimulation as well. Girls choose more difficult courses in

middle school and academically score higher grades than boys. Ninety percent of learning and behavioral disabilities are boys. Boys are more likely to commit suicide than girls are.

Developing "authentic" school curriculum involving skills and content with meaning and motivational appeal encourages student participation. In their study of dropouts, the U. S. Department of Education (1994) found that students learn intrinsically when materials connect to the world outside of school, can be mastered, and allow for personal choice.

Remedial programs that emphasize higher order thinking skills and inclusion are considered replacements for traditional teaching models (Rossi and Montgomery, 1994). Martin (1995) writes: "Remediation is the process of using individualized instruction to. . .improve specific skills. . .consists of first identifying the precise needs and deficits of the student" (p. 92). The needs of the student should dictate the curriculum. Student-teacher ratio can be kept lower by working in small groups. Deficit skills need to be consistently practiced until the adolescent acquires proficiency. Structure, organization, and attentive supervision are required for successful remediation.

Policymakers recommend learning environments that meet the needs of all students. Providing a safe, orderly setting and designing educational programs to fit unique needs of specific students is essential. Curriculum changes involve real-world experiences that attract student interests as well as integration of academic subjects with vocational skills (Rossi and Montgomery, 1994). Students are more likely to learn if they are interested. Tomlinson (2001) concurs with Rossi and Montgomery by asserting that it is necessary to connect students' life experiences to each lesson.

Mastrapieri and Scruggs (2000) described a study conducted by Larrivee (1995) where 118 elementary classrooms were observed using assessment measurements for students with learning disabilities. Larrivee's concluded that teachers' methods made a difference in how well students made academic progress. Certain variables were found in classrooms where students performed high academically. Larivee came up with four categories for success with at risk students: "classroom management and discipline; feedback during instruction; instructional appropriateness; supportive environment" (p. 185). Adapting classrooms for special learning needs requires teachers to be "culturally sensitive" and "pluralistic" in their approach (p. 167).

Mastrapieri and Scruggs (2000) offer further suggestions for teachers as they handle at risk students in the general classroom:

> [1] develop trust; [2] plan predictable, secure, and stable environments; [3] build in mutual respect between teachers and students; [4] accept students' feelings; [5] establish home—school partnerships; [6] allow student decision making; [7] coordinate activities with family and school. (p. 166)

Martin (1995) advises three types of effective strategies for classroom inclusion in agreement with Mastrapieri and Scruggs (2000): 1) *supportive strategies*—students feel part of a family; 2) *intrinsic strategies*—student input is valued in a positive, encouraging environment; and 3) *remedial strategies*—teachers realize students are not perfect and underachievement can be reversed.

Individual differences need to be addressed not only on ability level (Costa & Kallick, 2000). Character traits play a role in "bringing intelligent behavior to life." A student's temperament gives shape to the curriculum, giving meaning to life-long,

continuous opportunities for learning. The educational theory, "habits of mind", is the result of this philosophy. Costa and Kallick recount a study by Bateson (1972) and Dilts(1994) that focuses on four levels of outcomes for educational concepts:

> (1) activities (What do I want to accomplish in this lesson?); (2) content (What concepts or understandings do I want my students to know as result of this activity?); (3) processes (What processes do I want my students to practice and develop?; (4) habits of mind (What habits of mind do we want students to develop and employ?). (p. 55)

Most educators are assured that all students can learn. They simply learn differently (Emig, 1997). By incorporating Gardner's multiple intelligences theory into the classroom, learning may well increase. When students are taught to their strengths, they feel more optimistic when faced with unfamiliar tasks. They are more willing to take part in class activities, because associations are formed between the information taught and the students' views of it.

Campbell (1997) states that many teachers use multiple intelligences in the classroom to "integrate curriculum, to organize classroom learning stations, or to teach students self-directed learning skills through project-based curriculum . . . others establish apprenticeship programs with community experts to teach students real-world skills" (p. 15). Multiple intelligences theory gives educators a pattern to follow when constructing curriculum.

A growing body of research and discussion presents the fact that educators' views about intelligence need to be revised (Hearne and Stone, 1995). Hearne and Stone (1995) insist that the most important influence of Gardner's work is the freedom to pursue

intelligences in the classroom. If schools continue to operate on essentially linguistic modalities, students are limited as to what they can learn. Language arts curriculum, particularly, can focus on four areas to improve student learning: conceptual writing, divergent thinking, computer aptitude, and musical ability.

Gardner's multiple intelligence theory focuses on "human intellectual potentials" (1993a, p. 278) where each individual is born with certain innate intelligences. Heredity and training can be attributed to certain factors that lead some individuals to develop particular skills more than others. However, it is Gardner's belief that students should be encouraged to improve other intelligences. Inborn intelligences can account for why some adolescents do better with paper and pencil, and others perform better in other situations. Gardner explains that other intelligences can be developed by "observation and experimentation" (1993a, p. 278). Gardner (1993a) identifies at least nine intelligences: include linguistic, logico-mathematical, musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, bodily- kinesthetic, naturalist, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and existential.

"Learning styles" are not the same as "multiple intelligences." Johnson (1997) and Checkley (1997) suggest that there are many different theories about how middle school students learn, and that no one knows for sure. However, each student approaches learning from a diverse viewpoint. Some students like to see what's going on for themselves. Other pupils want to experience the task kinesthetically. Even the most intelligent learner can forget what the teacher has just spoken. Three basic learning styles, according to Johnson, are "*auditory* (hearing), *visual* (seeing), and *kinesthetic* " (p. 136).

Martin (1995) concurs that distinctive approaches to learning are at the core of how each student receives and processes data. It is the teacher's responsibility to identify how students learn and teach to those unique styles.

One of the main differences between learning styles and multiple intelligences is that learning styles change with experience as a student develops (Silver, Strong, and Perini, 1997). Most individuals perform with a combination of learning styles, adapting to meet different situations. Gardner's intelligences can be recognized through life experiences. Multiple intelligences focus on learning content in relationship to the learner. Learning styles focus on the process of learning.

Armstrong (1994) claims that learning styles are intelligences put to work, or intelligences operating within the learning setting. By the time a child enters school, learning styles have already been established. Armstrong explains that most students display strengths in several areas, so teachers should avoid labeling. One of the ways to discern a student's intelligence is by observing the way he/she misbehaves in class and how free time is spent. Keeping a journal for each student is an effective way to monitor and record students' activities and behavior.

Multiple intelligence theory can be used to aid teachers in expanding strategies beyond linguistic instruction. According to Armstrong (1994), good teachers have always made use of diverse methods to awaken students' minds. In a multiple intelligence classroom, the teacher is always shifting methodology and combining intelligences in creative ways.

"When schools adopt multiple intelligences theory, teachers intentionally seek strengths in every student. . . .Because students are not perceived as defective, they have

no excuses for not achieving well" (Campbell and Campbell, 1999, p. 10). Teachers look for alternative approaches in order to personalize learning by observing students from several perspectives. Students' intellectual strengths and academic possibilities guide teachers to diversify instruction in academic content areas.

Gardner cautions educators about misuse of multiple intelligences theory. Teachers should not blindly accept an established multiple intelligences-based norm for students; but use thoughtful trial and error, along with exploration, to determine how students learn best (Latham, 1997). Refinement of students' talents can acknowledge their differences.

Jensen (1995) perceives multiple intelligences working as the brain "multi-processes." To stimulate the brain for learning, it is necessary that teachers provide complex, multi-sensory immersion environments and instructional options, such as learning centers. To promote "whole brain thinking," teachers need to alternate between the "big picture" and details. Variety in classroom instruction from whole-class processes to small learning groups meets the diverse comprehension needs of students.

Guild (1997) suggests common overlaps in brain-based education, learning styles, and multiple intelligences:

- Each of the theories is learning and learner-centered.
- The teacher is a reflective practitioner and decision-maker.
- The student is also a reflective practitioner.
- The whole person is educated.
- The curriculum has substance, depth, and quality.

- Each of these theories promotes diversity. (p. 31)

Guild cautions that none of the learning theories is a panacea to educational problems, and she acknowledges that there is no substitute for "good, solid teaching skills."

Recent research reveals that forty percent of children learn by doing, and twelve percent learn by listening (Johnson, 1997). Most schools rely heavily on auditory presentations, which is why most auditory learners adapt readily to the classroom. Visual learners must adapt by incorporating pictures, and doodling during their class; but by junior high school they begin to encounter serious learning problems. Kinesthetic learners have the most difficult time in school environments that are predominantly verbal. The kinesthetic child will "have difficulty paying attention, . . . lack the motivation to complete assignments, and . . . find it difficult to resist the temptation to misbehave" (p. 206). Unless resolutions are found, the kinesthetic child is at risk for failure in school.

The goal of quality education for every student is to promote enthusiasm and motivation so the student can do his/her best and take pleasure in learning something new every day (Shearer, 1999). The first step is to recognize the distinctiveness of the individual learner. Helping students use their minds well is another step toward successful learning experiences (Checkley, 1997). The traditional role of the classroom teacher has changed to that of facilitator, where thinking skills are developed with peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and use of the computer (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994).

Rossi & Montgomery suggest that students bring "cultural capital" into the classroom, and that texts can reflect positive images of diverse cultures. Cooperative

learning promotes good relations among students of diverse backgrounds. Tomlinson (2001) refers to this type of classroom as "differentiated" where

> teachers proactively modify curriculum, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the needs of individual students and/or small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in the classroom (p. 103).

Brain research reveals that engaged students need to be challenged on their own levels. When curriculum is out of a student's grasp, the result is stressful and can obstruct learning. The brain responds to what it "does" rather than what it "absorbs" (Tomlinson, 2001). Best practice suggests that students learn most when they are actively engaged in the choice of activities. Alternative approaches to instruction can open educational doors "beyond 'covering the text' or 'creating activities that students will like'" (Tomlinson, p. 177). Modification of instruction, when needed, builds trust with students and incorporates further openings for student engagement.

Reducing class size is a recommendation of Elkind (1984), who advocates that classrooms be reduced "to eighteen or fewer students" (p. 207). He believes the benefits of a smaller class size are numerous. The teacher has less paperwork, which means that he/she has more time to devote to individual students; and smaller teacher-student ratio promotes "a greater sense of self-worth" of students because they know teachers and each other better (p. 207).

Tomlinson (2001) insists that, for students to learn, experiences must be challenging. Lessons must be varied according to the ability of the learner, with

numerous opportunities for exploration. Gardner (1993a) attests that a student may be engaged in one content area, but not as attentive in another subject.

Classroom environment can reflect different ways of learning and incorporate intelligences within a variety of educational settings (Gardener, 1993a). Tomlinson (2001) identifies a safe classroom environment as a unique natural development where students feel accepted regardless of different opinions, physical disabilities, or speaking a language other than English. Students and teachers share classroom responsibilities.

School becomes irrelevant and boring when there is no incentive to achieve beyond low performance expectations. Gardner (1993a) advocates problem solving skills to acquire knowledge. Establishing boundaries within the classroom is essential. Students may complain, which is natural, and push against limits; but they desire to know where they stand in relation to the teacher, the task, and their abilities (Johnson, 1997).

Research suggests collaborative teaching for responsible, continuous student achievement. This can be organized in several ways: a) one teacher and one support when teaching a unit where one teacher has more subject knowledge; b) parallel teaching design, where the teacher divides the class into groups and teaches them simultaneously; c) station teaching where content is divided and students rotate; d) alternative teaching design where one teacher is doing remedial teaching, and one teacher is instructing an alternate activity; and e) team teaching, where teachers work together on the same material for the entire class (Gartner & Lipsky, 1997).

Mastropieri & Scruggs (2000) summarize collaborative teaching as cooperation among students, parents, classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, special education

teachers, administrators, school psychologists, social workers, and other specialists. For best results, successful communication must be sustained on all levels.

Engagement

Engaged students are those who remain on task in the classroom. The following characteristics demonstrate engaged students with strong work ethics: they follow directions, complete assignments on time, are responsible for establishing goals and meeting them, pay attention to the needs of classmates, work cooperatively, and they are self-disciplined (Costa and Kallick, 2000; Strong, Silver, and Robinson, 1995).

Middle school pupils identify their self-worth by successfully accomplishing goals. They see themselves as responsible members of a community (Strong, Silver, and Robinson, 1995).

Ryan and Patrick (2001) studied seventh grade students who were moving into eighth grade. The purpose of the study was to discover how students perceived new social environments in relation to motivation and engagement. Gender, race, and prior academic achievement have less to do with motivation and engagement than how students did in previous classrooms. The study concludes that teacher support of peer interaction during academic tasks facilitates student engagement, mutual respect among classmates, and raises performance goals. As a result, the classroom provides a positive, motivating environment for at risk middle schoolers.

Based on constructivist educational theory, engaged learners are active, social, and creative (Perkins, 1999). Active learning engagement results in fewer school dropouts and more understanding of knowledge. A constructivist view of knowledge is to

make it more meaningful by allowing students to investigate problems and utilize various methods of inquiry.

Montgomery & Rossi (1994) report that student disengagement begins early in school. School drop out can be predicted based on the amount of involvement the student has in school activities, academically and otherwise. For adolescents, poor attendance and class disruption are indicative of disengagement. Engagement determines the amount of academic success experienced by a student. Disengagement results in low academic achievement.

A report prepared by Schemm (2002) advises that adolescents should be provided opportunities to actively participate in decisions regarding academic, behavioral, and classroom issues. Middle school students are able to think abstractly with appreciation of time, expectations, and teacher contacts. Self-regulation can be guided by allowing adolescents a sense of ownership and control over the learning process and their own behavior. The role of the teacher is to become a partner with middle school students, treating them with respect and accepting their input.

Costa and Kallick (2000) state that schools should challenge students to establish a work ethic making use of their skills. Students need to know what skills and behaviors are expected, and then should be allowed to practice through appropriate activities. A positive vision created by students to help them establish relevant goals is essential for keeping middle schoolers involved in their education.

It is the contention of Costa and Kallick (2000) that teachers demonstrate the same work ethic they expect from students. Showing excitement for teaching can

become contagious inside the classroom, encouraging students to passionately participate in learning.

The characteristics of engaged students, according to Strong, Silver, and Robinson (1995) are attraction to schoolwork, persistence in spite of obstacles, and accomplishment of work. They propose connecting issues to the curriculum that adolescents are wrestling with. Four necessary classroom goals of student engagement are: "the need for mastery, the need for understanding, the need for self-expression, and the need for involvement with other" (p. 9).

Absenteeism is the focus of a study by Guttmacher, Weitzman, Kapadia, and Weinberg (2002) that found students who missed more school displayed greater at risk behaviors than other students.

Assessment

The word *assessment* "is derived from a Latin verb *assidere*, which means 'to sit beside'" (Goodwin, 1997). Perhaps this would be an appropriate method to use in order to discover what students have learned—becoming close to them, sitting alongside in order to understand what they know. Recognizing and recording patterns in students' behavior enables teachers to "sit beside" students with a clear purpose in mind. In this manner, teachers can get an accurate picture of what the students have learned.

Goodwin (1997) supports authentic assessment where assessments are meaningful and culturally relevant. Assessment language must match the language of the student being assessed, and education must be appropriately matched to the assessment. Authentic assessments characteristically involve examination of learning and responsive student engagement. The goal of authentic assessment is to determine how students make

sense of what has been learned within their own experiences. Students need to be academically challenged by having the teacher hold them accountable for assignments, attendance, and assessments.

Assessments have gone beyond typical standardized tests in order to recognize student progress (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994). Mastrapieri & Scruggs provide a list of test accommodations to obtain relevant information and assess learned skills:

- Altering the timing or scheduling of the test
- Extending time limits
- Spreading the test over several shorter time sessions
- Administering the test over several days (Erickson, Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Elliott, 1998)
- Changing the setting
- Changing to a smaller room
- Moving to a distraction-free room (Elliott, Kratochwill, & Schulte, 1998b)
- Testing individually (Massachusetts Department of Education, 198)
- Altering the presentation of the test
- Simplifying the language
- Providing prompts and feedback (including reinforcement)
- Allowing teachers to read the test and turn the test pages
- Allowing audiotaped, large print, or Braille versions
- Changing the response formats
- Allowing verbal vs. written responses

- Allowing circling vs. filling in the bubbles (McLoughlin & Lewis, 1994, p. 377)

Multicultural shifts must be made in assessment, according to Farr and Trumbill (1997). The idea is to gather information about students' progress, not measure it. Assessment is discussed by Mesa-Bains (1997) as not just evaluating what you know, but *by what you say* about what you know. She asserts that some cultures are reluctant to display individual achievement. It can be considered "bad manners." Therefore it is important for teachers to learn the cultural customs of students to best assess them.

> Reinventing assessment to support equity can only be achieved through reinventing schooling; reinventing schooling can only be achieved by reinventing assessment to support equity. What must come first is the will to do both. (Farr and Trumbull, 1997, p. 352)

Equity refers to students being able to achieve sufficient levels of productivity with opportunities to "demonstrate what they actually know in a given subject area" (p. 254).

Summary

Respect for individual differences is paramount for inclusion of at risk middle school language arts students into the general education classroom. Teachers who allow middle school students to become actively involved learners facilitate the engagement and motivation of at risk students. Constructivist pedagogy and the utilization of Gardner's multiple intelligences theory can promote productive learning opportunities in middle school language arts classrooms with authentic assessments of diverse learners.

Chapter Three

Design of Project

Introduction

The purpose of the project is to provide preservice and experienced classroom teachers with a handbook of activities in their efforts to include at risk language arts students in the general education curriculum, keeping them focused and engaged on schoolwork. Middle school teachers who do not have a special education background struggle to meet individual needs of pupils who are low academic achievers. Engaging at risk students in the general classroom environment is addressed in the previous literature review. Activities to promote engagement of at risk middle school students follow in Chapter 4.

Methods

Research and related literature was procured from Internet web sites, library sources, government publications, and personal collections. The author systematically reviewed literature to format Chapter Two categories and subheadings.

Chapter Two topics and subheadings are:

I. At risk middle school students

II. Cultural considerations

III. Learning disabilities

IV. Inclusion of at risk middle school students

A. Classroom instruction

B. Engagement

C. Assessment

Review of Literature

The research reviewed (over forty-five items) supports at risk middle school students' needs for appropriate activities to encourage engagement in the general classroom. The review of literature also provides methodology and criteria to form lesson plans and other pertinent activities covered in the handbook. In order to raise the level of academic achievement level of at risk students, the author created and designed specific activities for classroom teachers to successfully intervene in the progress of at risk middle school language arts students.

Personal Experience

The author has had thirty years' experience as a classroom teacher, private tutor, and educational curriculum writer. The author has three years of experience as a classroom teacher in the lower Yakima Valley working with Native American and Hispanic students. From early classroom teaching experiences with first graders through high school, the author observed children who had academic difficulties, and as a result the author realized the lack of preparation most instructors have to deal with at risk students.

Additional coursework in special education assisted the author in helping low achievers meet academic standards. The author began a search for appropriate intervention methods to successfully remediate at risk students to grade level. Consulting with classroom teachers, offering parental support, and encouraging students led to reliable acquisition of remedial skills.

The author became especially interested in middle school boys who had difficulties "fitting into" the educational system. Over time, remedial tutoring proved to be a successful intervention for middle school boys at risk.

The subsequent handbook is the outcome of a personal journey to discover: 1) who were considered to be *at risk*; 2) how could at risk students be evaluated; and 3) what could be done to successfully include at risk students in mainstream education.

The author's familiarity and experience with learning disabilities and cultural differences were helpful in organizing curriculum for this project. A middle school target audience was chosen because the author has primarily been tutoring middle school boys for the past eight years. The purpose was to create age appropriate inclusive language arts activities for preservice and experienced teachers.

Synthesis

The handbook of activities is intended for use by the preservice and experienced classroom teachers to improve the academic engagement and achievement of at risk middle school students. It is the hope of the author that preservice and experienced classroom teachers will find the handbook of activities helpful for inclusion of at risk middle school students in the language arts classroom. The author intends to use the handbook in her own teaching of students who have been left behind by the general educational system.

Overview of Project

Chapter Four will discuss the handbook and how it is to be utilized by the classroom teacher. A series of language arts activities is provided with directions for implementation. Activities are constructed with explanations, objectives, methods,

materials needed, and applicable teacher prompts. Curriculum sections are coded for easy reference to topics covered in the handbook: teaching strategies; activities for reading and writing; and assessments.

Chapter Four

The Project

Introduction

> . . .proposed learning experiences can be checked by the criterion of effect. Will the experiences suggested likely be satisfying to the particular student for which they are planned?. . .checked in terms of readiness. Do they require actions that the students are not yet ready or able to perform? Do they run counter to certain prejudices or mind sets of the students?. . .checked for economy of operation. Does the experience provide for the attainment of several objectives or does it care for only one or two? (Tyler, 1949, pp. 81-82)

This handbook is designed for use by experienced and preservice middle school language arts teachers who are attempting to include at risk students in the general classroom curriculum. The activities included in the handbook can be integrated into the language arts curriculum; and are flexible enough to be modified for select groups of middle school students depending upon their needs, interests, and abilities.

The activities and exercises are not intended to be a complete lesson. The classroom teacher can incorporate activities into lesson plans to meet diverse learning abilities and multiple intelligences. The repertoire of activities is designed to give teachers a framework for remedial intervention, if necessary, for at risk middle school students. The activities were created to facilitate engagement for reluctant readers and writers using Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory.

Reading and writing activities are outlined activities to meet Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALR) developed by the Washington State Commission on Student Learning (approved July 17, 1998). A table is provided for Reading and Writing Activities to facilitate teachers' location of seventh-grade benchmarks in Reading and Writing.

Explanation of the Project

Classroom teachers, by implementing specific activities in the handbook, can encourage and engage middle school at risk learners.The handbook contains the following:

A. A sample of classroom activities

B. Teacher guidelines and strategies for instructing at risk adolescents

C. EALR frameworks, classroom accommodations, and multiple intelligences profile

D. Authentic assessment documents, collaborative working checklists, and classroom adaptations for diverse learners

The handbook features collaborative teaching methods and authentic assessment ideas. It is written and designed according to constructivist theory, which asserts that knowledge is (1) richer when created by the learner; (2) more meaningful for the learner when it is related to prior knowledge; (3) shaped by both the social and non-social experiences of the learner; and (4) in a variety of ways collaboratively established within the culture of the learner

Multiple intelligences are addressed in the handbook; and an easy reference guide can be found in the tables at the beginning of the Reading and Writing Activities

sections.. Multiple intelligences theory addresses diversity in the classroom. Rossi (1994) claims:

> Attention to diversity requires that differences that adhere to individuals and groups be factored into the design and delivery of teaching and learning transactions. . . .Attention to diversity in schools is often reflected in the individualization or at least the customizing of education relative to individuals' idiosyncratic characteristics. (p. 66)

Shearer (1999c) warns that **no** child should be labeled. "**All** students have **all** intelligences and it is inaccurate to describe a student strictly in terms of a single intelligence" (p.20). Students should be taught the nine intelligences. They will be less likely to be discouraged about their previous low academic performance if they understand that their failures were not the result of their lack of intelligence.

Students should have opportunities to self-report and track their learning. Recognizing a variety of models and avenues for academic accomplishment encourages at risk middle schoolers to be self-regulated, goal-directed learners. It is important for teachers not to take excessive control in the classroom. Middle schoolers must have variety and choice to become self-motivated.

Instruction

When instructing students in the writing process, several techniques are recommended. "The Writing Process" originated more than twenty years ago in the San Francisco as the Bay Area Writing Project. Nancy Atwell (1987), Lucy Calkins (1985), and D. H. Graves (1983) have refined it. Modeled after professional writers, The Writing Project suggests that students create many drafts

without having to polish each one to the publication stage. One writing project is selected by the student to be read by others.

Each step in the writing process must be taught explicitly and modeled for clarification. The role of the teacher as facilitator is to answer questions, teach skills as needed, and provide encouragement. The students must regularly choose a piece of their writing to take all the way through the editing and publishing stages.

A checklist for encouraging adolescent writers is included for teachers' use when planning lessons or incorporating activities (see Appendix). The author recommends that the classroom teacher ask several questions when planning to integrate activities from the handbook. Included in the appendix are checklists for working effectively with small groups and authentic assessment/grading guidelines.

Research studies give direction for teaching students with limited English skills (Garcia, 2002). Effective classroom instruction is characterized when:

1. Students are instructed primarily in small groups.
2. Academic-related discourse is encouraged among students throughout the day.
3. Teachers tend to initiate instruction by eliciting student responses at relatively lower cognitive and linguistic levels.
4. Teachers allow students to control discourse
5. Teachers encourage students to invite participation from peers. (p. 342)

The classroom teacher has to be reflective, flexible, and willing to make accommodations to meet the needs of all students. Strategies include providing lectures that are simplified, appealing, and multisensory; adapting textbooks and assignments; and evaluating the appropriateness of supplementary materials.

Assessment

Rubrics make assessment easier for the teacher to "objectify" how students are evaluated for reading and writing projects. A rubric is a criteria-based grid using specifically defined guidelines to assess learning evidence. Everything students submit for assessment should have a clearly defined way for them to succeed. Allow students to think about what constitutes quality, and invite their input when formulating rubrics.

Technology

Incorporating technology into classroom activities enhances instructional design. Many Internet sites are accessible for students and teachers. Learning Webs, Inc. (a Florida-based nonprofit corporation) is dedicated to helping teachers enter the new technological era with Internet-assisted lessons. Textbook-free curriculum allows teachers to create individualized and personalized lessons; and curriculum can be sent to any student via e-mail or listed on a Web page.

Student progress can be stored, retrieved, and detailed using technology. On-task learning can be increased as students learn at their own pace and have more control over their own learning. Inequities can be reduced by providing students access to the best educational resources available via technology. Limited-proficient English speakers and students with learning disabilities can access language support through Internet sources.

It is the author's contention that technology not be used simply as a supplement to the educational experience; but be an integral part of students' learning activities.

Aligning Reading Activities to EALR
Based on OSPI Frameworks

Activity	Links to EALR	Preferred Tools for Assessing & Recording							Multiple Intelligences Addressed								
		O	S	J	R	F	C	P	N	M	L	E	P	K	V	I	S
RA 1	2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2			X		X	X				X	X	X			X	
RA 2	4.1, 4.2	X	X	X					X		X	X			X	X	X
RA 3	1.1, 1.3, 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2			X	X	X					X	X	X		X	X	
RA 4	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.3	X	X					X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
RA 5	1.1,1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.3	X						X	X	X	X		X	X			X
RA 6	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.3, 4.3	X		X	X			X	X	X	X		X		X		X
RA 7	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.3, 4.3	X	X					X		X	X	X	X		X	X	

RA 8	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.3, 4.3	X		X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
RA 9	1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.3	X		X			X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
RA 10	1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.3	X	X				X		X	X			X	X	X	X	
RA 11	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.3		X		X		X				X	X		X	X	X	
RA 12	1.1, 1.5, 2.1, 2.3, 3.3, 4.3		X	X			X		X			X		X	X	X	X
RA 13	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.3, 4.3			X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
RA 14	1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.2, 3.3	X		X	X			X	X		X			X		X	X

KEY TO READING ACTIVITIES TABLE

RA = Reading Activity

EALR = Essential Academic Learning Requirements

O = Frequent focused observations

S = Samples of work (e. g., portfolio)

J = Students' journals/learning logs/student self-reflections

R = Scored pieces using specific criteria (e. g., rubric)

F = Conference feedback (oral or written)

C = Checklist

P = Peer feedback

Multiple Intelligences Key

N = Naturalistic	**M = Musical**	**L = Logical**
E = Existential	**P = Interpersonal**	**K = Kinesthetic**
V = Verbal/Linguistic	**I = Intrapersonal**	**S = Visual/Spatial**

Reading Activities

Teachers are responsible for allowing pupils the opportunity to interact with reading material in more than a literal manner. Pushing beyond the literal text, to make reading personal and three-dimensional, requires instructors to take individual differences into account when preparing lessons and assessments. Keene and Zimmerman (1997) recommend creating a context for students to "discuss, ponder, argue, restate, reflect, persuade, relate, write about. . . .and infer" (p. 152).

Keene and Zimmerman (1997) suggest that literature response areas can be set up in the classroom to meet students' individual multiple intelligences. Space can be provided for small areas with different materials available for students to express images evoked during their reading. A simple form can be provided in each area that students can complete when they finish in a literature response area. Some ideas are: (1) Theater Corner, where students can work in groups to dramatize images or scenes from the text; (2) Book Talk Zone, consisting of chairs clustered around a small table for discussion groups as well as snacks and drinks; (3) Artist's Studio, stocked with art supplies, an easel, and bare wall space to hang finished art projects; and (4) Writer's Den, equipped with all types of writing supplies, staplers, hole punchers, etc.

Motivation and engagement in the reading curriculum is promoted by what happens in the classroom. Integrated instruction, with connections between disciplines, supports literacy engagement. Guthrie & Wigfield (1997) discuss design and development of an integrated science and reading language arts curriculum. Trade books were used exclusively as reading texts for one full year. "The teacher implemented hands-on observational curriculum supported by multiple texts and video resources" (p.

141). Students who are introduced to integrated instruction exhibit strong intrinsic motivation because learning is self-initiated.

According to McCracken and Appleby (1992), language arts teachers need to ask how girls respond to male-authored literary works they read in class.

> Do they take the point of view of the male narrators and heroes, or do they try to peek into the female characters' minds, where they exist in the traditional school curriculum in works such as *1984, Of Mice and Men,* or *Julius Caesar*? What about the boys? Is there anything in the novels they are reading to challenge their gender stereotypes or to give them insights to girls' or women's experiences? (p. 5)

Exploring language, rather than merely practicing it, helps students improve their language skills. In this framework students become "ethnographers" by collecting samples of the language around them and analyzing its function in context.

Selecting young adult novels for use in addressing gender issues should be considered by organizing curriculum with themes representing issues that cross gender boundaries. Focus can be on issues of death, friendship, child/parent relationships, or sibling rivalry.

Too little time is spent on actual reading tasks, according to Millard (1994), in the middle school years. Teachers utilize independent reading at the expense of structured group activities, which are essential for a wide variety of reading tasks. Students need an opportunity to discuss texts with each other.

Activity RA 1: Reading and Me

(Johns, 1986)

Learner Outcomes: Students will self-assess learning attitudes and develop strategies to monitor reading progress, seek feedback to improve reading, and to understand others' reading attitudes.

Materials: "Reading and Me" form

Procedure:

1. Meet with students one on one, using the following form.

Reading and Me Name_____

(Johns, 1986) Date_____

Teacher_____

Directions: The 10 statements below will be read to you. After each statement is read, circle either yes or no, depending on what you believe.

Yes	No	1. I can read as fast as good readers.
Yes	No	2. I like to read.
Yes	No	3. I like to read long stories.
Yes	No	4. The books I read in school are too hard.
Yes	No	5. I need more help in reading.
Yes	No	6. I worry quite a bit about my reading in school.
Yes	No	7. I read at home.
Yes	No	8. I would rather read than watch television or play on computer.
Yes	No	9. I am not a very good reader.
Yes	No	10. I like my parents to read to me.

Reading Activity RA 2: How You Learned to Read

(Millard, 1994)

Learner Outcomes: Students will explore reading attitudes in journals and evaluate reading experiences.

Materials: Pens, paper, questions to answer (see below)

Procedure:

1. The following questions may be printed on paper, written on an overhead, , or read to the class.
2. **Teacher Prompt:** Write the story of how you learned to read. It will help you find out about the kinds of books you enjoy reading and the sort of reading you do. Here are some things you could include. Write about as many of them as you like.

- Who taught you to read? Did you find it easy or hard? Can you remember any of your first books?
- What things do you like about reading? What things don't you enjoy? What books did teachers read to you?
- Do you have favorite books that you've read more than once? What are they about? Why do you like them? Do you share books with anyone else?
- Do you buy any comics or magazines? Which ones? Write about your favorite characters or features.
- Do you like reading information books? What do you read about in particular?
- Where and when do you enjoy reading? Do you like reading to other people or reading out loud?
- Where do you get your books and how do you choose them?

- What do other people say about your reading? (parents, teachers, friends)

3. Ask students to use the questions as prompts for writing in their journals.

Reading Activity RA 3: What Do I Think About Reading?

(Tompkins, 2000)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to read silently from a book and assess personal interests by responding to the books they are reading.

Materials: fiction books, reading records (see below), pens, paper

Procedure:

1. Allow time for individualized reading. Walk around the classroom and discuss with students what they are reading. Recommend new books that would expand students' horizons. Talk with each student about his/her reading interests, perceptions of reading ability and ways of improving.
2. Go over the following reading records with individual students. Check to see that each form is accurately and appropriately filled out for students to put in their reading portfolios.
3. Ask students to put form in reading portfolios for reference and assessment.

Reading Record 1

Name_____

I read because_____

I have read _____fiction books this year

I have read _____non-fiction books this year

I have read _____poetry books this year

Out of these I prefer____Poetry _____Fiction_____Non-fiction

My favorite author is_____

I read at home

Every night _____

Once or twice a week _____

Occasionally _____

I prefer reading

With someone_____

On my own_____

Reading Record 2

My book is called_____

By_____

It is:

Exciting

Funny

Happy

Mysterious

Sad

Has an attractive or interesting:

Author

Blurb

Cover

Illustrations

Title

Has a good:

Beginning

Middle

End

Is about:_____

Has a bit I particularly liked about_____

Has a character I really liked called_____

Has lots of details about_____

Reading Activity RA 4: Whole Class Reading Session

(Millard, 1994)

Learner Outcomes: Students will read a text, locate, interpret, and synthesize information.

Materials: Assigned book that entire class is reading, photocopied page from book, markers, pens, large sheets of butcher paper, magazines

Procedure:

1. Distribute photocopied page from the opening of assigned book.
2. Ask students to underline evidence that shows what kind of story it is (names of characters, details of setting, descriptions of characters, or groups of similar words).
3. Divide class into small groups for discussion and comparison of information.
4. Students may draw (or cut pictures from magazines) on a large sheet of butcher paper to show scenes from their story.

Reading Activity RA 5: Beginnings and Endings

(Millard, 1994)

Learner Outcomes: Students will read various texts, comprehend authors' meanings, and explore ideas about how stories are written.

Materials: Typed beginnings and endings from a variety of books

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into small groups.
2. Distribute typed beginnings and endings to small groups.
3. Ask students to match beginnings and endings.
4. Ask students to explain to the rest of the class their reasons for pairing particular examples. Allow for dramatic, musical or artistic presentations.

Reading Activity RA 6: Book Cover Inspection

(Shanker & Edwall, 1998)

Learner Outcomes: Students will analyze and synthesize information from book jackets and organize data for presentation.

Materials: Photocopied book covers from various books.

Procedure:

1. Divide class into small groups.
2. Distribute photocopied book covers to groups. Ask students to note different kinds of covers. Do they use cartoons? Fantasy images? Realistic pictures? Photographs?
3. Ask students to scan the "blurbs" on the bookcovers for clues to the kind of story the covers lead readers to expect.
4. Ask students to answer the following questions:
    a. What evidence have you found that tells you what kind of book you have been given?
    b. What will the story be about?
    c. Will it be serious or funny?
    d. What age of reader do you think it was meant for?
    e. Was the story aimed at boys, girls, or both?
    f. Which story might you choose to read and why?
5. Ask students to write information they gather about the book covers and share with the rest of the class. Students can develop simple categories to help them discuss the book:

Adventure stories	Ghost stories	School stories
Fantasy	Stories which were true to life	
Detective fiction	Humor	Narrative poems

6. Utilizing computer skills, students can research appropriate descriptive music to accompany presentations.

Reading Activity RA 7: Poem Categorization

(Millard, 1994)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to analyze poetry and categorize distinctive features, listing important details, and evaluating authors' purposes.

Materials: Variety of poems, large sheets of paper, felt-tipped markers

Procedure:

1. Explain to the class how writers create particular effects to raise readers' expectations.
2. Divide students into small groups and read a variety of poems.
3. Ask each group to brainstorm about the poems they have read by forming distinctive features and categories.

   Examples: have verses are like songs

   have rhymes use unusual words

   sometimes don't rhyme have a chorus

   show feelings are catchy

   make you laugh have deep thoughts

   have surprises paint a picture

   may tell a story are written in lines

4. Write categories on a large flip chart, and compare findings.

Adaptations:

A. Further Internet research can be done comparing poems by the same authors.

B. Students can write their own poetry using one or more poems as an example for language, meter, rhyme, etc.

C. Students can journal individually about how a particular poem makes them feel, and how its distinctive features relate those feelings to the reader.

Reading Activity RA 8: Polar Opposites

(Yopp & Yopp, 1996)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to analyze fictional characters and develop a rubric for comparison.

Materials: Polar opposites forms prepared by teacher

Procedure:

1. This activity can help students analyze characters in selected reading. Ask students to rate one or more characters in a variety of dimensions along a multi-point scale. Students can draw examples from their texts to justify responses. Students can state why they believe that a certain character is passive, for example, citing examples from the selection.
2. Students may develop their own polar opposite guides, or the teacher may have them prepared for use. Each pair of opposites makes up its own continuum on the scale.
3. After reading a selection, students are asked to rate the character(s) by placing a mark on each continuum.

   Example

Polar Opposites

The traveler was

thoughtful	____	__X__	____	____	____	impulsive
timid	____	____	____	__X__	____	courageous
disappointed	____	____	__X__	____	____	content
realistic	__X__	____	____	____	____	unrealistic
a follower	____	____	____	____	__X__	a leader

4. Students must justify their responses in discussion or writing.
5. Any rating is acceptable, as long as the student is able to support the response with information from the text.

Adaptations:

A. Students may choose to dramatize characters, pantomime, use conversation, or dance.

B. Students can use computer technology to organize and print rubric.

Reading Activity WA 9: Word Wheels

(Jensen, 1995)

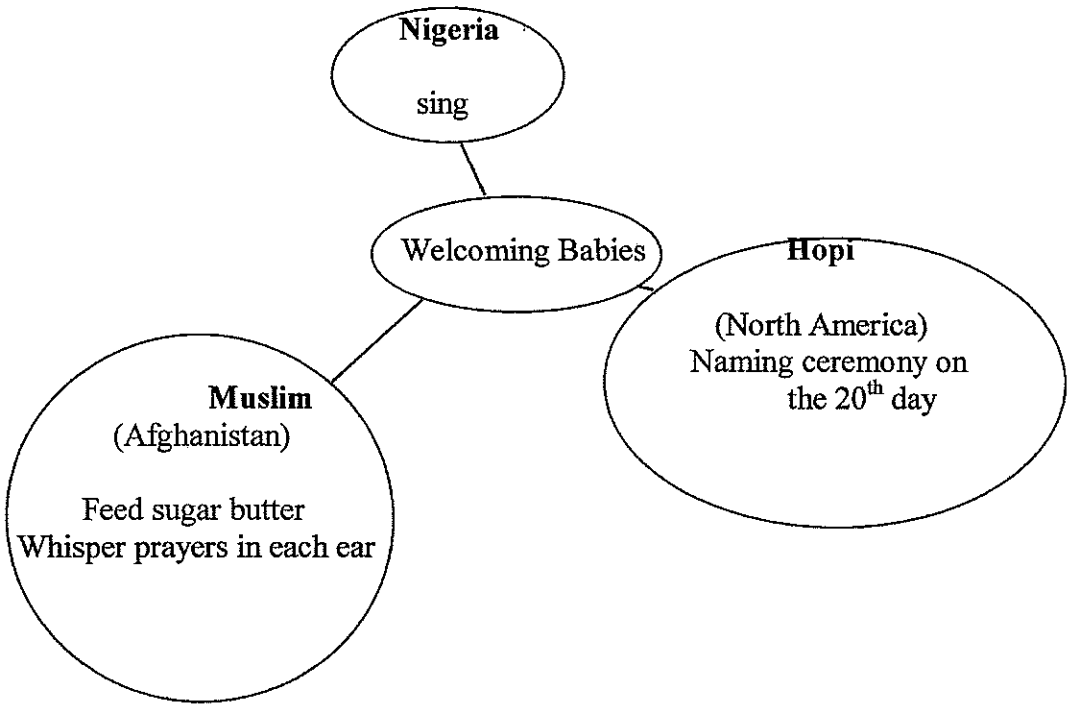
Learner Outcomes: Students will gather information about common human experiences after reading books from diverse cultures. Students will be able to organize a word wheel and reflect on common human experiences with their peers.

Materials: Books that represent various experiences that people around the world can share; paper; felt-tipped markers

Procedure:

1. Students may work individually or in groups after they have read books about various cultural experiences to organize a word wheel.
2. Students can include additional spokes from their own personal experiences.
3. The center of the wheel can be the topic. Each spoke represents a related (or same) experience from another country or culture.

Example



Reading Activity WA 10: Double-Entry Reading Journal

(Yopp & Yopp, 1996; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997)

Learner Outcomes: Students will reflect on what they have read and share reading experiences with others.

Materials: 8 1/2-by 11-inch lined paper folded in half lengthwise; pens/pencils; books that students have read

Procedure:

1. On the left-hand side of the folded piece of paper, ask students to write about meaningful passages from books they are reading (may write interesting information or direct quotes from books) and list the page number(s).
2. Directly across from the passage, on the right side of the paper, ask students to react to what they chose.
3. What to do with their journals may be left to the discretion of students.

Adaptation: The teacher may create an open-ended table like the example below.

Samples	
Facts from the text	Reader's response to the facts
Quote from the text	Reader's response—may include examples of reader's use of a specific strategy
Strategy being studied	Reader's thoughts about how use of that strategy enhanced comprehension of the text
One reader's opinion	Another reader's response to that opinion and his or her own opinion

Reading Activity RA 11: Partner Journals

(Yopp & Yopp, 1996; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to interpret, analyze, and respond to reading by conducting peer evaluations.

Materials: Paper, pens/pencils, reading books

Procedure:

1. Students can respond or dialogue with another person (often a peer) about what they are reading by reacting to a chapter, or whatever prompt the teacher may want to make.
2. Partners respond to writing immediately, or over a period of less than two days.
3. Partners may remain anonymous (students may have secret identification numbers) or they may be known.
4. Parents can respond in partner journals after reading the same books as their children. Partner journals may be exchanged on a regular basis as a means of sharing reading experiences.

Adaptations:

A. Parents may respond in partner journals after reading the same books as their children.

B. A student, or groups of students, can be assigned a *stance* from which to observe another student or teacher as they read a text. For example, they can assume the *stance* of a literary critic, a researcher gathering information for a book, a character from a book, or the author. Students can share their impressions in a partner journal.

Reading Activity RA 12: Character Journals

(Yopp & Yopp, 1996; Bellanca, Chapman, & Swartz, 1997)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to identify with fictional characters by linking them to personal experiences and/or current issues through expressive journalizing.

Materials: Paper, pens/pencils, reading books

Procedure:

1. Students can step into the shoes of a book character by recording their feelings about the story as if they were the character. They can write from their own perspectives by putting personal comments in parentheses (to distinguish them from the voice of the main character). By thinking about the character's perspectives along with their own, students gain insight into their personal values and beliefs.
2. Journals may be shared with peers if students wish.

Adaptations: Students may identify with characters by choosing an optional activity: drama, poetry, music, multimedia, etc.

A sample rubric for writing a song:

THE RUBRIC: WRITING A SONG

Standard: Composes and performs a song about a story.

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4
Originality	Substitutes a few words in a familiar song	Duplicates the tune of a song, but uses own words	Revises familiar tune; uses own words	Completely original; does not replicate a familiar song
Rhythm and rhyme	Song has little rhythm and/or rhyme	Song has some rhythm and/or rhyme	Duplicate the rhythm and/or rhyme of a familiar song	Compositio n has unique rhythm and rhyme
Conveys Tone and Feelings of Story	Tells of an incident in the story	Tells of a character in the story as well	Somewhat conveys the story's tone and characteriza -tion	Interprets the story;tone and feelings conveyed
Prepares and Performs a Song	Prepares song, but doesn't perform it	Sings song, but forgets words two or more times	Sings song, but forgets words once	Prepares and performs original song without faltering

Comments:

_____

Final Grade: _____

Reading Activity RA 13: Book Charts

(Yopp & Yopp, 1996)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to organize and categorize information from books that they have read for subsequent literary projects.

Materials: Butcher paper, felt-tipped markers, various books read by students

Procedure:

1. Several categories can be identified on a book chart: comparing and contrasting; analyzing plots; looking for common themes; and examining authors' strategies for writing. Students can prepare book charts as an entire class project or in small groups over a period of time.
2. When a book is completely read, students may write information about the book on a chart. The data can be used as a guide for students when they do writing projects.

Example

Book Chart

Title	Author	Character	Lesson
The War With Grandpa	*Robert K. Smith*	*Peter*	*War isn't fun. War doesn't solve problems.*
The Hundred Dresses	*Eleanor Estes*	*Maddie*	*Don't just stand by when others are doing cruel things.*
Eyes of the Dragon	*Margaret Leaf*	*The magistrate*	*It is important to keep your word.*

3. Categories for book charts might include author, title, reason the protagonist is alone, challenges faced outcome, setting, etc.

Reading Activity RA 14: Bookmaking

(Yopp & Yopp, 1996)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to respond to literature by creating student-made books to share with classmates, parents, etc.

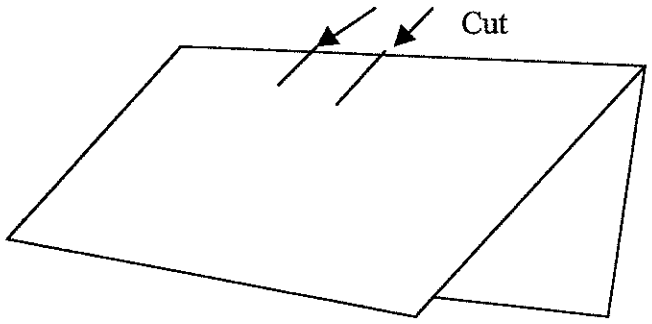
Materials: Construction paper, typing paper, 9 by 12-inch tag board, magazine pictures, felt-tipped markers, scissors, glue, scotch tape, and other art supplies.

Procedure:

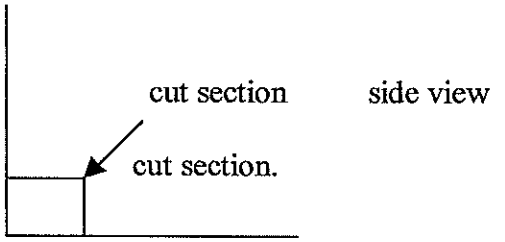
1. Books by students can take on many forms. They may be reader responses to books students have read; books totally created by students; books copied from what students have read; or books written in a similar manner to what students have read.
2. However students and teacher decide to put books together, student-created books need to be displayed in the classroom.
3. Directions follow for putting together a variety of student-created books.

Pop-up Books

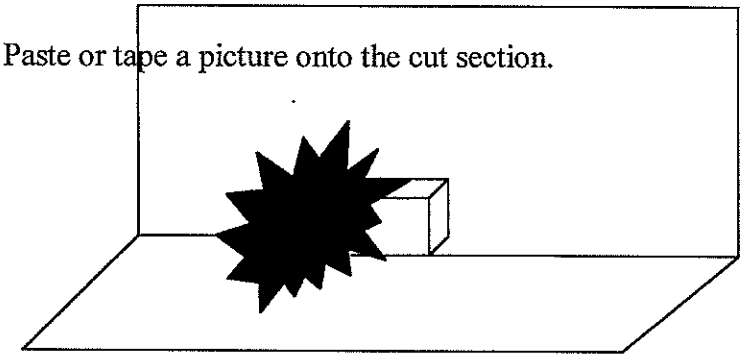
1. Fold a piece of construction paper in half. Make two cuts of equal length about one inch apart into the creased edge of the paper.



2. Open the paper so the two halves form a right angle. Pull the cut section through and fold it inward.



3. Paste or tape a picture onto the cut section.



4. Students can make backgrounds and narrative before making pop-up books.

4. Several pop-up figures can be placed on each page, or pages may be added as desired.

5. Fold each paper back in half, stack the pages in order, and bind in whatever manner students wish.

Accordion Books

1. Accordion book making is an activity appropriate for problem solving in cooperative groups.

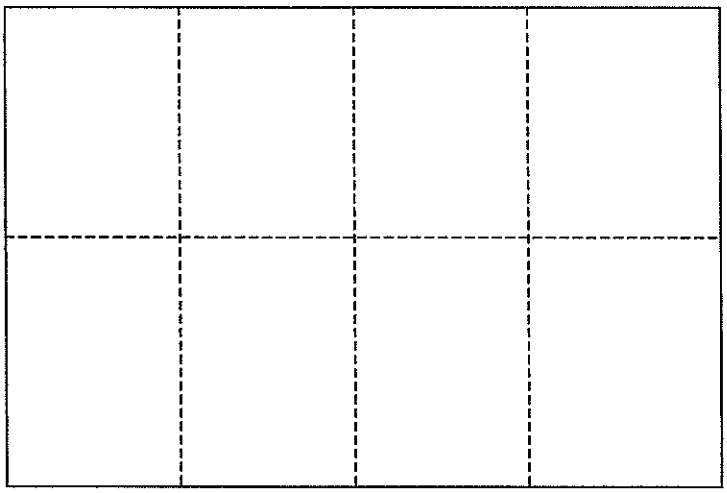
2. Ask students to divide the reading selection into meaningful sections and sequence.

3. Once sections are determined, each student can illustrate and write a brief narrative for one of the sections. This will be put onto a 9- by 12- inch piece of tag board, lined up end to end, and taped or tied together.

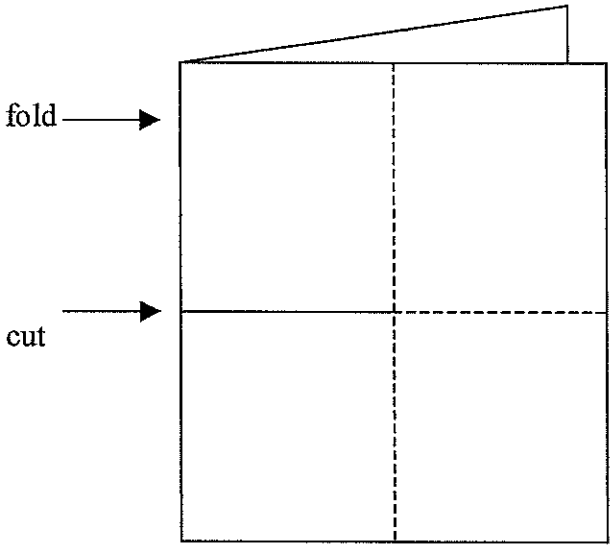
4. Books can stand freely, accordion-style, or folded for storage.

Fold-up Books

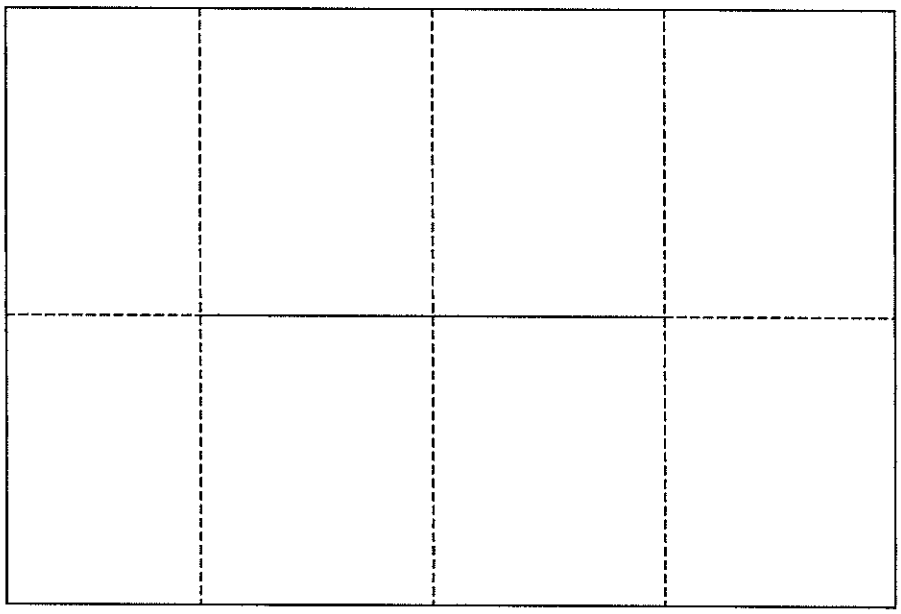
1. Students can create a traditional book that opens by folding and cutting a single sheet of paper. The size of the book will depend upon the size of the paper used.
2. **Directions:**
   a. Fold a rectangular piece of paper into eighths, as shown, pressing firmly on the creases. Open the paper, then refold the opposite direction on the same folds, again creasing firmly.



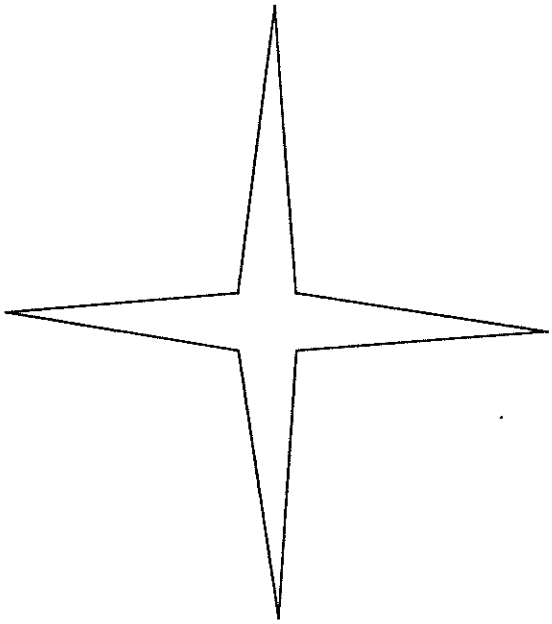
b. Fold the paper in half and cut on the centerline as shown.



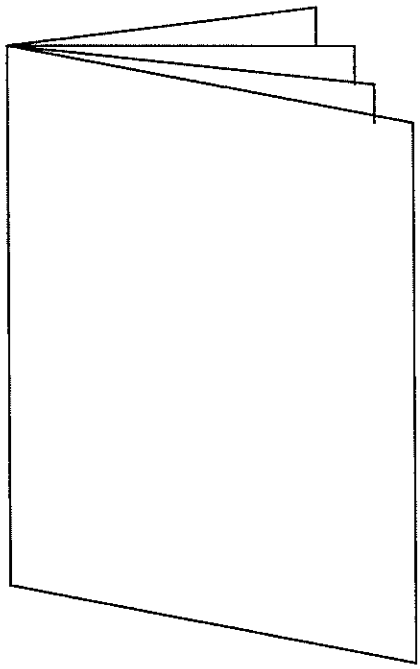
c. Open the paper. Lift points *a* and *c*, pulling them upwards and away from each other so that points *b* and *d* come together. This will be difficult if folds are not well creased.



d. Paper should look like this from the top:



e. Bring all flaps together to form the book. Crease all folds.



f. Students may summarize or write their story and illustrate each page (or cut pictures out of magazines to go along with story).

Adaptations:

A. Music and/or lyrics may be added to the bookmaking activity.

B. Students may use natural materials if they wish.

C. Students may use computer technology for word processing and clip art.

Reading Activity RA 15: Accordion Fold Out

(Farr & Trumbill, 1997)

Learner Outcomes: Students will read, interpret and evaluate a literary text, concentrating on identifying the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

Materials: Blank paper, pens/paper, reading books

Procedure:

Teacher prompt: You will read a story. After you read the selection, you will show your understanding of the content and the author's writing through the following activities.

1. Construct and illustrate a four-part fold-out which is to include:
   a. The title and author
   b. Beginning
   c. Middle
   d. End of the story

   Example:

BEGINNING
MIDDLE
END

2. Write a brief description of the beginning, middle, and end in complete sentences. Attach written work to four-part fold-out.
3. Make a diorama featuring the beginning, middle, or end of the story.
4. Write a brief report about the story that tells about what it makes you think of, or anything that relates to your reading.

Reading Activity RA 16: The K-W-L Technique

(Shanker & Ekwall, 1998)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to comprehend reading through a process utilizing metacognition, or understanding *how* to monitor one's thinking. Students will learn to use their prior knowledge, locate key concepts in the reading, and remember information.

Materials: Chart paper, board, or overhead; key concepts selected by the teacher about upcoming reading

Procedure:

1. Select a key concept from an upcoming reading selection.
2. Ask the class to brainstorm (can be in small groups) and list ideas they already know (step K) about the key concept. Ideas are recorded on a chart or board.
3. Ask students to categorize their ideas.
4. Encourage students to think of questions that they wish to know from the upcoming reading selection (step W). Questions are recorded.
5. Ask the class to read the selection.
6. After reading, the class discusses and records ideas they learned (step L).

K	W	L
What I Know about spiders	What I Want to know about spiders	What I Learned about spiders
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____

Aligning Writing Activities to EALR
Based on OSPI Frameworks

Activity	Links to EALR	Preferred Tools for Assessing and Recording							Multiple Intelligences Addressed								
		O	S	J	R	F	C	P	N	M	L	E	P	K	V	I	S
WA 1	1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2	X				X		X	[illegible]	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
WA 2	2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1	X	X		X				X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
WA 3	1.1, 1.3, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5	X	X					X	X			X			X	X	
WA 4	2.2, 3.1, 3.2	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X				X	
WA 5	1.1, 3.1[illegible]	X	X						X					X			X
WA 6	1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3	X	X					X	X				X	X	X		X
WA 7	1.1, 2.2, 3.1		X			X					X	X	X	X	X	[illegible]	X
WA 8	1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.2		X			X		X			X	X			X	X	X
WA 9	1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.3, 1.4		X		X	X	X		X	X				X			X
WA 10	1.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.1			X			X	X	X			X			X	X	
WA 11	2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3				X	X	X				X				X	X	
WA 12	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 4.2	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		
WA 13	3.4				X			X			X	X		X	X		X

WA 14	1.1, 1.3, 3.4, 4.2					X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X		X
WA 15	1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2	X			X						X	X			X	X	
WA 16	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5	X	X					X		X		X	X	X	X		
WA 17	1.2, 2.2	X						X	X	X			X	X	X		
WA 18	1.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5	X	X			X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X

KEY TO WRITING ACTIVITIES TABLE

WA = Writing Activity

EALR = Essential Academic Learning Requirements

O = Frequent focused observations

S = Samples of work (e. g., portfolio)

J = Students' journals/learning logs/student self-reflections

R = Scored pieces using specific criteria (e.g., rubric)

F = Conference feedback (oral or written)

C = Checklist

P = Peer feedback

Multiple Intelligences Key

N = Naturalistic	**M = Musical**	**L = Logical**
E = Existential	**P = Interpersonal**	**K = Kinesthetic**
V = Verbal/Linguistic	**I = Intrapersonal**	**S = Visual/Spatial**

WRITING ACTIVITIES

A composition/writing class should incorporate recent gender research, according to McCracken and Appleby (1992). Writing projects that engage students' sense of care and concern, initiating a connection to their lives, are opportunities for teachers to sustain students' interests in writing. As they engage in dialogue with texts, students' experience occasions that call for journalizing. Middle schoolers can ask and answer questions, embellish what they have read, and offer reflective responses in their journals.

McCracken and Appleby (1992) recommend same-gender and mixed gender writing groups so students have a chance to collaborate by writing together. By offering students the opportunity to read a variety of essays, besides expository types, teachers allow students to become acquainted with other voices similar to theirs.

Perry (1999) describes "writing in flow," or being in a state of enjoyment while writing. She suggests the following requirements (which can be made into a rubric for students' self-assessments):

1. your activity has clear goals and gives you some sort of feedback;
2. you have the sense that your personal skills are well suited to the challenges of the activity, giving you a sense of potential control;
3. you are intensely focused on what you're doing;
4. you lose awareness of yourself, perhaps feeling part of something larger;
5. your sense of time is altered, with time seeming to slow, stop or become irrelevant; and
6. the experience becomes self-rewarding. (p. 9)

It is Perry's (1999) contention that to be fully absorbed in writing students must have a reason to write. For students who experience "writer's block," there is usually a good reason. Students may be blocked because writing skills are not adequate, or they have poor attitudes towards writing. "When you care, you're more likely to get engaged in the ways that lead to flow. If you can't find a way to connect, to care, about a particular subject, it's going to remain a struggle" (p. 198).

When correcting students' writing assignments, do not correct all the mistakes on a page (King, 1985). It is best not to tell students about all of their mistakes so students will not be inhibited in their writing. Point out one or two errors at a time to be corrected. Students can be encouraged in the writing process with convincing comments about sentences, humor, or character building. Techniques, such as reading students' best sentences aloud, facilitate writing. Sentences will improve steadily.

Misspelled words can be selected, written on index cards, and used for vocabulary drill by students. Vocabulary words can be incorporated into students' written work through daily sentence dictation. Once students have acquired some sentence facility, set about to improve the quality of their sentences.

Most students begin sentences with *I*. A list of possible beginning words to choose from is helpful. The list can include the following:

Pronouns

We Our My He She His Her You're Their They

Adverbs

Suddenly Once Slowly First Finally Always Soon Never Away Only

Prepositions

In On Over Under Out Beyond From To Into Up By

To improve sentence structure, teach compound, complex, and run-on sentences. Another good exercise is to have students write a series of questions and answers.

Activity WA 1: It's Important to Me

(LaMeres, 1990)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to define who they are by relating to an inanimate object and writing a personal narrative.

Materials: objects chosen by students; paper; pens/pencils; computers

Procedure:

1. **Student Prompt:** An artifact is any object made by human work. Archeologists have long been interested in artifacts because they give clues about the people who owned them, how they lived, and what they valued. Artifacts help to establish the identity of a people. There are objects in your homes that can give others clues about your identity—about who you are and what is important to you. Think about what artifacts are important to you. Perhaps a special photograph, a poem, a certificate, a ring, etc.
2. Ask students to bring something to class that helps define who they are. Have students bring items to class within a designated time period.
3. When students bring items to class, allow them to explain why they are important to them. Teacher should model so students know what is expected.
4. The object activity can be used for prewriting a personal narrative.

RUBRIC FOR A NARRATIVE WRITING PRODUCT

Student_____Date_____

A Well-Written Narrative Product _____Points _____Letter Grade

This narrative product tells a story in a meaningful, interesting way. The writer's spelling, grammar, and use of punctuation are correct and add to the readability of the narrative. There are fewer than two simple grammar or spelling errors in the narrative. The characters are well developed in this narrative. The reader understands who they are and what they are about. The dialogue that these characters exchange is clear and written in a way that makes the story easy to follow. The story has a clearly defined beginning, middle, and ending. The conflict or conflicts are understandable and realistic. The reader can easily identify the issues or problems facing these characters. In this narrative, the setting is well developed. The reader can "see" how the setting contributes to the characters and to the conflict. The plot moves logically and realistically, in an organized and timely manner. There is an explicit theme to this story. The reader knows easily what the writer really means.

An Acceptable Narrative Product _____Points _____Letter Grade

This narrative product has all the essential parts of a story: a beginning, middle, and ending. The story is told, but the writer might find ways to make it more lively or interesting. There are three to five minor errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation, but these can be easily corrected. There are no

serious internal problems. The characters in this story make sense but could be more fully developed, with details about their motivation or appearance. The dialogue is in place, and it does the job of communicating what the characters have to say. The conflict might be stronger. How do the characters deal with their problems? Could the writer be clearer about the nature of the conflict? The setting is in place, and it adequately describes the time, location, and background of the story. This story has a theme.

An Unacceptable Narrative Product _____Points _____Letter Grade

This narrative product tells a story, but it may not hold the reader's interest. The writer's spelling, grammar, and use of punctuation need more refinement. There are more than five simple errors, and there is one or more critical errors (example: a sentence fragment) or a consistent internal problem (example: a problem with subject-verb agreement). This makes the story harder to follow. The characters are developed but perhaps not clearly. It may be hard to pick out the main character or to understand the motivations of the character. This story probably does not have a clearly developed beginning, middle, and ending; and the sequence of events may be confusing at times. The conflict in this narrative may be hard to see, or there may be too many conflicts competing for the reader's attention. The setting is adequate, but the writer might be able to make better use of setting to move the story along or to develop characterization. The plot is this story "jumps around" or is not

logical. This story probably does not contain a theme that the reader can recognize or identify with.

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

Activity WA 2: Power Poster

(LaMeres, 1990)

Learner Outcomes: Students will demonstrate ability to elaborate vocabulary words and experiment with figurative language and sound patterns. Students will express themselves in writing by constructing a poem.

Materials: Dictionaries, 11" x 14" piece of paper for each student, blue colored markers, overhead or board.

Procedure:

1. **Student Prompt:** How would you feel if someone dumped trash in your bedroom? (Allow time for responses.) Many of us allow that to happen to us every day in our brains. Some of the following words may be recognized.
2. **Write** on board or overhead: stupid, lazy, clumsy, ugly, slow.
3. **Ask:** Can you think of any other words that are sometimes said to us; or, worse yet, that we sometimes say to ourselves? (Allow time for response.)
4. **Explain** that today the class will work on a "Power Poster" to learn how to clean out the trash that is accumulated in brains.
5. Have students form small groups. Provide dictionaries to each group. Students may use dictionaries to find five positive words for each letter of their first and last name. For example, my name is Deana. I would find five positive D words for the first letter of my name: *daring, delightful,*

driven, definite, durable. Next, I would find five positive words for the second letter of my last name, etc. (See example)

6. Students can help each other by reading words from the dictionary.
7. **Distribute** blue-colored marking pens to each student and a piece of 11" x 14" plain paper. Show an example of the poster and ask students to choose one of the five positive words for each letter of their name.
8. Display posters in the classroom.
9. Students may use the power poster as a prewriting activity for writing a poem about themselves.

Example:

D aring

E ager

A rtistic

N onsensical

A typical

Y outhful

O overcoming

R esourceful

K indhearted

Activity WA 3: Thoughts About Me Writing Prompts

(Atwell, 1987)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to express themselves in writing using detailed descriptions.

Materials: Pen and paper.

Procedure:

1. **Write** the following questions on the board:
   - ❖ If you had one wish, what would it be? Be as specific as possible and explain the reasons for your wish.
   - ❖ What would your perfect day be like? (Details, details, details!)
   - ❖ For what do you want to be remembered?
   - ❖ What causes you stress, and how do you deal with it?
   - ❖ Where would you most like to live and why?
   - ❖ What is the perfect age to be and why?
   - ❖ What rock star would you like to meet and why?
   - ❖ What movie star would you like to meet and why?
   - ❖ If you were the ruler of a small country, what three laws would you make and why?
2. Have students choose three questions to answer on paper. Allow students sufficient writing time and explain that they are free to write whatever they wish.

Adaptations:

A. Students may share what they wrote with the class.

B. Students may use technology to elaborate, check spelling/grammar, use graphs, etc. to produce a finished writing project.

Activity WA 4: Thought Completion

(Middleton, 1990)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to express thoughts with the use of prompts to describe personal experiences in writing.

Materials: "Thought Completion" form, pens/pencils, paper

Procedure:

1. **Distribute** "Thought Completion" forms and allow students time to complete them in class.
2. Students can form **groups** and quickly share one or two thought completions with peers. Students have the right to pass during this time.
3. "Thought Completion" forms can be put into writing portfolios.

THOUGHT COMPLETION

Complete each of the following sentences with the first idea that comes to mind. There are no "wrong" responses since these are *your* thoughts and feelings.

1. I like myself best when _____

_____

2. When I entered middle school, I felt _____

_____

3. With the opposite sex, I feel _____

_____

4. When I feel angry, I _____

_____

5. When I feel pain, I _____

_____

6. When I feel lonely, I _____

_____

7. When I don't understand something, I _____

_____

Activity WA 5: Adding "Snap" to Autobiographies

(Graves, 1983)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to experiment with photography equipment as a means of prewriting or elaborating on autobiographies.

Materials: Amateur photographer, 35 mm cameras, flashes, tripods, various lenses, construction paper, notebook paper, glue, flash batteries, markers.

Procedure:

This activity can be used as a springboard for writing autobiographies, or an addition to already written autobiographies. Allow students the opportunity to get to know the operation of cameras by providing an amateur photographer to demonstrate and/or be available to help when needed. Students can photograph themselves individually, together, with possessions, etc.

Activity WA 6: Lemon Writing

(Millard, 1994)

Learner Outcomes: Students will create and explain ideas by collaboratively choosing appropriate, precise descriptive language.

Materials: Prepared and blank transparencies, six lemons (one for each group), brown paper grocery bag.

Procedure:

Day One

1. **Begin** class with a five-minute free write on the question: "What would you write about if you were writing your autobiography?" Students can share what they wrote, or they can use the "Thought Completion" form from Activity WA 4.
2. Ask students to form six groups and give a lemon to each group.
3. Ask students to individually answer the following questions:
   - What are lemons used for?
   - What songs or stories can you think of that have been written about lemons, or have used lemons in the title?
   - Describe your group's lemon, without using "yellow" or "sour."
   - What does your lemon smell like?
   - What does you lemon feel like?
   - If you were a lemon, where would you have been born?
   - If you were a lemon, what experiences might you have had before arriving in this classroom?

- If you were a lemon, how might those experiences shape how you see yourself?
- If you were a lemon, how did your experiences shape your characteristics, or vice versa?

4. Ask students to share their answers with each other in their own group. Discuss possible answers. Cluster answers in a way that makes sense in categories: fact, sensory, and imaginative answers.
5. Ask students to carefully note the lemon's characteristics and make up a name for their lemon.
6. Have each group put their lemon in a large brown paper bag. Collect the bags.
7. Ask each group to choose a representative to identify and retrieve its own lemon.
8. Ask students how they knew which lemon belonged to their group. Allow students to explore how lemons are different and alike, etc.
9. **Discuss** the following questions: How are your brothers and sisters like you, but different as well? How are people in your school like you, but different as well? How are people in your town like you, but different as well? How are people in the United States like you, but different as well? How are people in other countries like you, but different as well?

Day Two

1. Ask students to describe their lemons from memory.
2. Regroup and review notes from the previous day. Ask students to retrieve their lemons and work together to write a biography for their lemon. They should be prepared to share with the class, either in writing or in action.

3. The groups will share or act out an event (or events) from their lemons' biography.

4. Introduce autobiographical writing and/or journal writing.

Activity WA 7: Life Box

(Hazleton, 1992)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to produce a prewriting project to express themselves figuratively.

Materials: Items collected by students to put into boxes, any boxes (cereal boxes, shoe boxes, grocery boxes), magazines, maps, books, pens, paper, labels.

Procedure:

Students may collect four or five items (any amount of items that will fit into the box they use for display) that represent themselves or events in their lives. Suggest that students creatively put items into a box of their choice. They can decorate the box, glue pictures to represent items, or exhibit items in any way they choose. Students are to label items and be prepared to explain each item to the class.

Activity WA 8: Describing a Character

(Calkins, 1985)

Learner Outcomes: Students will demonstrate the ability to write descriptive character analyses.

Materials: "Describing a Character" sheet, pens, paper for comic strips

Procedure:

1. **Student Prompt:** Talk about how every person is unique. Nobody looks like anyone else. One of the challenges of describing a person in writing is trying to pin down just what it is that gives you a sense of him or her.
2. **Read** the description of Mr. Bounderby from Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* and look for details that describe the man's appearance and character.

   He was a rich man: banker, merchant, manufacturer, and what not. A big, loud man, with a stare, and metallic laugh. A man made of coarse material, which seemed to have been stretched to make so much of him. A man with a great puffed head and forehead, swelled veins in his temples, and such a strained skin to his face that it seemed to hold his eyes open and lift his eyebrows up. A man with a pervading appearance on him of being inflated like a balloon, and ready to start. . . .was left, all standing up in disorder, was in that condition from being constantly blown about by his windy boastfulness.
3. Have students reread the description of Mr. Bounderby in small groups and fill in the lines below with details asked for:

Describing a Character

a. Profession and condition in life:_____

b. Size and general impression:_____

c. Comparison (What did it seem he was made of?):_____

_____

d. Head:_____

e. Seeming function of skin on face:_____

f. Comparison that gives overall impression:_____

g. Condition of hair and reason for it:_____

_____

Make a list below of some details you could use in describing a character. Pick someone you know fairly well, or invent someone who is the opposite of Mr. Bounderby in every respect you can imagine.

a. Name, occupation, and condition in life:_____

b. Size and overall appearance:_____

c. Specific physical details (anything particularly noticeable about eyes, hair, expressions, nose, mouth, ears, skin, or body):_____

_____

d. Disposition (grumpy, lively, and so on):_____

e. Comparisons (Does this person or anything about this person remind you of anyone or anything?):_____

f. Typical ways of moving:_____

g. Typical way of dressing:_____

4. **Student Prompt:** Mr. Bounderby and the person that you wrote about were both described in a fairly realistic way. But characters in comic strips, adventure stories, and fantasies often have some superhuman powers or other unrealistic traits. Read this description of Mabel the Mighty and think about how she is special.

   Strong and powerful, Mabel the Mighty could swing through the trees with speed and grace. Her arms seemed longer than usual for a young woman, and no doubt they were, since Mabel had known no other parents than chimpanzees. Chimpanzees had rescued her on the equator, where she had been mysteriously abandoned as a baby; naturally, she had imitated them in everything. Whenever she needed to rest, she would squat on a branch, her long dry fingers playing idly with her matted hair. Exposure to the wind, rain, and sun had made her skin tough and leathery, but she still needed the leopard skin she wore loosely-draped over her strong shoulders to protect her from the wind. She often wondered why she didn't have a thick furry coat like her brothers and sisters.

5. Now invent your own story or comic strip character who is superstrong or superclever, or who has some other super power. Your character can be human, partly human, or nonhuman. The more details you can think of to describe you character, the more real and interesting he, she, or it will become. List the details here.

a. Name of character:_____

b. Nature of character (What kind of being is it?):_____

c. Super characteristic of the character:_____

d. Size and overall physical impression:_____

e. Specific physical details (eyes, nose, mouth, skin, body, and so on):_____

_____

f. Disposition (evil, friendly, etc.):_____

g. Comparisons (Does your character or part of your character look like anyone or anything?):_____

h. Other details of personality or appearance:_____

5. Now write a descriptive paragraph about one of your characters. You may want to start or end your paragraph with a topic sentence that gives a general impression of the character.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity WA 9: Adjective? What's an Adjective?

(Bartoletti & Lisandrelli, 1988)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to identify and appropriately use adjectives.

Materials: 4-foot piece of heavy newsprint or butcher paper for each group; masking tape or other means of attaching paper to wall; a different colored marker for each group; a scenic picture to be mounted on the top of each piece of long paper (fantasy, rustic, formal, outdoors).

Procedure:

1. Mount a picture at the top of the long sheets of paper and hang them around the room. Students will be writing on them, so be sure the surface is smooth. Allow plenty of room between papers for groups to work.
2. Divide students into workable groups, one for each picture. Give different colored markers to each group (one group, green markers, etc.). Each student will be writing on his/her own group's paper.
3. Students will write a list of words that describe what they see in the picture—single words only, no phrases. Allow about ten minutes for this activity.
4. At the end of ten minutes, ask the groups to move to another picture and write descriptive words different from what another group wrote.
5. Continue the rotation until each group has had an opportunity to work on each picture.

6. When the lists are complete, read through the lists reviewing them with the students. **Student Prompts:**

   Does the word describe the picture?

   Is the word listed only once?

   Is each word found in the dictionary or did students make them up?

   Which pictures were easiest to describe?

   Can you think of a song to describe the picture?

7. Use the activity as a springboard for a writing project of your choice or students' choice.

Activity WA 10: The Conflict Questionnaire

(Graves, 1983)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to discriminate between fictional characters and organizing sentences and paragraphs for evaluation of characters.

Materials: "The Conflict Questionnaire" form; pens and/or pencils.

Procedure:

1. Divide students into small groups. Ask students to work cooperatively on a narrative writing assignment by answering the following questions:
   - Write suggestions for the beginning, middle, and end of your story.
   - What is the theme, or meaning, of your story?
   - Who are your main characters?
   - What are their qualities?
   - What do they look like?
   - What do they talk like?
   - What do they act like?
2. Allow time for groups to answer questions. Distribute "The Conflict Questionnaire" for each group to fill out. This will set up their story for writing.

The Conflict Questionnaire

1. Can you describe the main problem or problems that your characters encounter?_____

2. Do your characters have an inner conflict or an external conflict? Do they have a personal problem or a problem with another individual?_____

_____

_____

3. Does the conflict involve nature or the environment? Is a storm, an earthquake, an illness, or an animal the cause of the problem? _____

_____

_____

4. Does the conflict focus on a character who has trouble with the rules or expectations of his/her culture or the society in which he/she lives? _____

_____

5. Does the conflict center on an issue between characters? Perhaps it is a family conflict or a friendship gone bad. Or, maybe an enemy or a personal threat is the cause of the conflict._____

_____

❖ **Note: Remember that conflict can occur at different levels, but in the beginning of the narrative, less is more. It is usually more powerful to develop one kind of conflict in a story and let your characters really go for it!**

Activity WA 11: The Paragraph

(King, 1985)

Learner Outcomes: Student will plan a paragraph in logical thinking through the development of non-threatening writing activities.

Purpose: Students will plan a paragraph as an exercise in logical thinking through the development of non-threatening pre-paragraph writing activities.

Materials: list of at least 15 items to generate ideas for writing; sample worksheets A & B.

Procedure:

1. Ask students to generate a list of items that have similar ideas or something in common. Allow students to exercise imagination. Provide several minutes for the activity. Ignore spelling. (Some examples: things in your room; TV stars; TV programs; trees; soft drinks; kinds of cars; holidays; indoor hobbies; relatives; etc.)
2. In small groups, ask students to choose topics. Group members can generate three or more supporting statements, each on a different line of Worksheet A (see sample).
3. Students can read each other's writing, offering suggestions or ideas. Ask students to review their own sentences and work out a good concluding sentence. They now have the basis for a five-paragraph essay.
4. Talk about topic sentences. Have students formulate a topic sentence and write it on Worksheet B (see sample).

5. To keep ideas apart in students' paragraphs, introduce them to some useful words to use: *first, next* or *then, last* or *finally.* **Student Prompt**: Write your topic sentence. Use the word *first* and tell all about your first supporting idea. Then use *next* or *then* and talk about your second support. Use *finally* or *last* to write about your third point.
6. Transition words can be introduced as students are ready. The above activities can be done over several weeks until students can easily generate interesting paragraphs.

Sample Worksheet A

Write three supporting statements for each topic sentence.

Some animals are useful to man.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

My room was untidy.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

You can do many things while you wait at an airport.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Hitchhiking is dangerous.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

His table manners are terrible.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Sample Worksheet B

Write a topic sentence and concluding sentence for each group of supporting sentences.

T.S._____

1. I was late for school.
2. My books fell in the mud.
3. When I went to hand in my math homework, I discovered it was gone.

C.S._____

T.S._____

1. My neighbor gave me $5.00 for mowing the lawn.
2. I earned $10.00 washing and waxing a car.
3. My father paid me $5.00 for cleaning out the garage.

C.S._____

T.S._____

1. John didn't hand in his homework for several weeks.
2. He failed two of the three quizzes.
3. He never completed his science project.

C.S._____

Activity WA 12: And in Conclusion, I Would Like to Say

(Levin, 1974)

Learner Outcomes: Students will demonstrate the ability to write a coherent conclusion to a story, choosing appropriate language that is engaging and relevant.

Materials: Books or stories selected from a variety of places (library, home, teacher's library).

Procedure:

1. Read (or select students to read) a story to the class.
2. Stop at a point in the story that will facilitate an opportunity for the students to create an interpretive conclusion.
3. Divide the class into small groups and allow them to verbally present their conclusions in any manner they like (drama, music, art, etc.).
4. Ask groups to select an ending, or combination of endings, and collaboratively write an appropriate ending for the story that was read.

Activity WA 13: Transformational Author

(Levin, 1974)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to produce evidence of correct mechanics and grammar by adjustment of word choices.

Materials: 4" x 6" card stock, pens, pencils

Procedure:

1. Determine classification of the sentences to be developed such as compound subject, compound predicate, compound sentence, etc.

   For example, the following two sentences might be given:

   a. Perry went to the football game.

   b. George went to the football game.

   These sentences might be rewritten as: Perry and George went to the football game.

2. Divide students into small groups and write two or three related sentences on 4" x 6" card stock.
3. **Ask** students to write possible ways the sentences may be rewritten into one sentence on the first card.
4. Original sentence cards may be passed to other groups so they may practice rewriting.

Adaptations: Other suggestions for sentences on cards can be contractions (He *can not* go. – He *can't* go.); or possessives (That paper belongs to Sam. – That is Sam's paper.)

Activity WA 14: To Help Student Writers Focus

(Perry, 1999)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to elaborate on an initial idea and construct a clear written narrative.

Materials: Paper, pens, pencils

Procedure:

1. **Student Prompt:** Think of ways to make this activity fun. Write a series of lines beginning with

   I wish

   No!

   Alas!

   Amazingly

2. Allow 5-10 minutes for students to finish writing each line, then move on to the next one.
3. Students may share with each other in small groups.

Activity WA 15: Focus on Character

(King, 1985)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to identify details from a reading passage, express themselves in writing, and produce a legible finished product.

Materials: None, unless students want to dress in costume.

Procedure:

1. Divide class into small groups.
2. **Student Prompt:** Choose characters from a book you have read. Have conversations with them (students pretending to be characters).

   Ask some questions: What does he/she want? What does he/she like? What's he/she afraid of? Where's he/she coming from? Where's he/she going? What does he/she need you to know?
3. Allow time for reflection and discussion after the activity. Students may wish to dramatize the characters.

4. Write a paragraph about characters using the compare/contrast paragraph frame.

_____are different from _____

_____in several ways. First of all _____

_____while_____

_____

Secondly, _____

while _____

In addition, _____

while _____

So it should be evident that _____

Activity WA 16: Splatter Words

(Perry, 1999)

Learner Outcomes: Students will demonstrate the ability to connect ideas created from prewriting activities.

Materials: Large sheet of paper, markers, music (CD, tape recording, or the like)

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into small groups. Ask students to discuss a particular type of music that would represent the book(s) they have just read. Let them choose a song/instrumental piece to listen to during the following activity.
2. On a large piece of paper have students write words randomly ("splatter" them all over the paper) with felt-tipped markers. Tell them they can write anything that comes to mind. They can move around the room if necessary. The music will get students in the mood to write.
3. After a specified time limit, ask groups to look for patterns or points of engagement on their splatter papers. Ask students to choose a theme (preferably from the book) and write about it, using their chosen words.
4. Wander around the room, overseeing groups, giving input and feedback.

Activity WA 17: Famous Authors or Characters

(Levin, 1974)

Learner Outcomes: Students will be able to choose essential elements about fictional characters. Students will produce a written demonstration that they understand and can analyze an author's characterization.

Materials: Book selected for class reading assignment.

Procedure:

1. Select or invite volunteers to play the part of imposters; one of which will be selected as the most authentic author or character. Students who have read the book will examine the three imposters to determine the "best" author or character based on how well the imposters answer the questions asked.
2. Students will develop questions to ask.

   Examples of questions on the author:

   a. **personal data:** where lived, when lived, age, how old when book written, what (if anything) prompted the author to write the book, etc.
   b. **specific content of book:** setting, characters, story line, conclusion, etc.
   c. **interpretation of the book and its content:** how the book relates and contrasts with other books authored, characters or character elements considered but not included in the book, alternative conclusions, what was the basis in real-life for any character, why did the author not have the character react in another specified way at a certain point in the plot, etc.

   Examples of questions about characters:

a. **personal data:** where lived, when lived, age at certain point in the book, age range throughout the book, sex, physical characteristics, intellectual characteristics, family composition and background, etc.

b. **specific content of book:** setting, all characters, story line, conclusion, was there a basis in real-life for the character, how would this character respond in a specified situation, compare and contrast this character and another character in another book by the same author, etc.

3. Students will write a report based on information gained from activity.

4. Students may use the following rubric to check their essay.

STUDENT PRE-CHECK FOR WRITING TASK

Go Back and Look	Yes/No	Source
Did you review your notes to check the facts, dates, and spelling of names and places?		
Do you know who your audience is and how that will affect your essay?		
Did you do an outline of how the facts and ideas will be presented? Will you start from a narrow set of facts and build to a main idea (inductive), or go from a main idea to supporting it with facts (deductive)?		
Did you use paragraphs to move from one idea to another in a logical way?		
Did you use complete sentences and end each sentence with an appropriate mark of punctuation?		
Did you think about the facts and put them together in your own words, or did you string them together directly from the sources?		
If you quoted one of your sources, did you give credit by using quotation marks and showing the page number and author quoted?		

Assessment

According to Irvine and Armento (2002), there are three fundamental learning assessment principles:

(1) assessment should be ongoing and occur in a range of contexts

(2) assessment should provide valuable information to students and teachers and indicate areas for reteaching or refinement

(3) assessment should be modified for students with special needs (p. 29)

Farr & Trumbill (1997) write: "The question of ensuring fairness of performance tasks is a complex one. . ." (p. 220). They provide criteria that is responsive to student diversity:

1. Assessment tasks should reflect the diversity of cultures and experiences of students to be assessed.
2. Assessment tasks should allow for different modes of presentation to reflect different learning styles and different cultures.
3. Assessments should be given in students' primary language when it is the student's language of communication.
4. Students should be given a choice of the language in which they will complete an assessment task except when the purpose is to assess the language ability of the student.
5. Assessments should be adapted for students with disabilities so that they can participate in the assessment.
6. Assessments should be validated for significant student populations. (p. 221)

A valid assessment is one(s) used to judge student achievement against the learning outcomes. Following is a list of some valid assessment instruments that teachers can use in a middle school language arts general classroom:

- Observation
- Performance/production
- Test (multi choice, shot answer, extended answer) or examination
- Peer or self assessment
- Interviews/conferences
- Essay
- Assignment
- Project
- Quiz
- Role play
- Simulation
- Speech or seminar
- Running record
- Informal prose inventory

Portfolios

A portfolio is one way students can present their work to others. The portfolio answers the question "What are you capable of doing?" (Irvin, 1990, p. 87). When putting together a reading portfolio, students show that they are capable readers.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PORTFOLIO CONTENTS

1. Books

List of books that you have read

- A copy of one or two of your best reading logs
- Summaries of books read this year
- Book reports
- Sample lists to show the variety of books read
- Descriptions of favorite books
- List of books that you have read at home and a list for those read at school
- Brief description of the five latest books read
- List and/or descriptions of favorite authors

1. Personal Data

- Grades so far in middle school
- Grades for reading class
- Create an application and complete it
- Short data sheet
- Description of you (picture?)

2. Background

- History of parents, relatives, or others who have read a great deal
- Statement of how others influenced your reading
- Discussion of your ability as a reader

- Description of your experiences with reading
- Plans for your future occupation and/or college
- Things from the past such as projects, essays, etc.

3. **Testimonials**
   - Letters of recommendation from people who know your reading habits
   - A page of teacher comments
   - Suggested books for others (celebrity list)
   - An interview with someone you think is a good reader
4. **Factual Material**
   - A copy of a newspaper or magazine article that you think is important
   - Your reaction and opinions on the topic from a magazine article
   - A short bibliography for a problem that you think is especially important
5. **Special Options**
   - Advertisements or commercials for reading
   - Presentations you have made
   - Certificates of recognition
   - Self-recognition
   - Taped reading of you at your best
   - A chart to show speed of reading, perhaps on the books you have read
   - Special vocabulary list related to a problem area or a favorite topic
6. **Unique Ideas**
   - Your own special thoughts or creations
7. **Strategies Used in Reading**

- Proving answers to questions
- Comprehension model
- Ways to monitor comprehension
- SQ3R using the question/answer columns
- Key wording
- Semantic map
- A description of techniques that you use when reading
- Event/reaction chart

8. **Writing**

- A short story that you have written
- Writing a characterization for one of the books read
- Poems that you have read or written
- An essay question concerning your literacy
- A copy of your writing assessment (if possible)
- Critiques of pieces of writing

Please organize your portfolio into sections and include a table of contents. Put your portfolio in a colored pocket folder or accordion folder. Decorate the cover appropriately and in a way that represents you and your special interests. For example, someone who is interested in soccer might decorate the cover with soccer balls. On the label, include your name, year, and high school that you will attend. (Irvin, 1990)

Engaging a listener's interest	**Yes**	**No**
Change speed to match the content of the story		
Change volume		
Change voice to represent a character (e.g. croak for the Frog Prince, boom for a giant)		
Change accent to suggest a "posh" character or someone from a different area		
Change pitch (making voice higher or lower)		
Look at audience		
Position the book well		
Create an atmosphere by emphasizing special words and phrases		
Make your tone sound angry, spooky, mysterious, or humorous		

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Educational research and literature document the disparity between what research suggests and what is currently practiced in today's general middle school classrooms. Students who are underachieving, failing, and at risk for dropping out of school are the focus of America's current education reform movement. Differences in culture, learning ability, and temperament evoke poor academic performance in classrooms where teachers are not prepared to meet the diverse needs of students. Classroom teachers are challenged to teach **all** children.

Middle school students exhibit diverse physical, social, emotional, and conceptual needs. Most middle school students have acquired some fear of learning; but at risk students experience overwhelmingly anxious feelings. Teachers can modify classrooms to allow students equitable participation in learning opportunities that alleviate boredom and discouragement.

Research suggests a dire need for "culturally responsive" teaching that is aware of students' previous knowledge, language, and experiences. Classroom teachers are challenged to teach **all** children. The practice of inclusion validates the fact that each student has a right to be in the regular classroom, and that services and supports are provided when needed.

Multiple Intelligences theory addresses learning differences to promote inclusion for at risk students. Classroom activities can be adapted for at risk pupils by using Multiple Intelligences theory.

Research and literature conclude that adolescents who find schoolwork difficult can have gaps in their education. A strong teacher-pupil relationship is the beginning of at risk student intervention. Relevant instruction to individual students increases educational effectiveness. At risk students should be exposed to a challenging variety of collaborative learning experiences with integrated curriculum.

Small class size, student involvement, and self-assessment are recommended by research to actively engage middle school students in learning. The activities included in the handbook can be adapted for use by middle school language arts teachers to engage at risk students in reading and writing instruction.

The author hopes that the information, activities, samples, and references will aid middle school language arts teachers in their endeavors to meet the needs of at risk students.

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APPENDIX

For students who are negative toward reading:

- **Read to students every day.**

Read works that represent a broad variety of cultures. Ask questions that cover differences and similarities of many cultures.

- **Allow time for independent reading.**

Introduce books from a variety of cultures. Incorporate works that have different dialects, etc.

- **Have students keep a journal of personal stories and select some to publish.**

Include literature from families who have immigrated.

Encourage bilingual or second-language learners to translate literature as a writing project.

- **Allow all students to try translating works.**

Provide dictionaries or word books and have students work in pairs or small groups to write or illustrate their own versions of stories in different languages.

- **Gather information regarding students' interests.**
- **Provide joke and riddle books.**
- **Have students write, illustrate, and bind their own books.**
- **Encourage students to share what they read.**
- **Create a book nook to display favorite books.**
- **Invite guest speakers.**

For students who are reluctant readers:

- Provide a wide variety of reading materials.
- Get to know students' interests.
- Read orally to the entire class.
- Provide thought-provoking objects that would stimulate interest.
- Have students examine popular music lyrics.
- Provide time for silent independent reading.
- Have students read to accomplish a specified task.
- Be enthusiastic about reading

For students who have limited interest in reading:

- Invite guests to share their interests and link to library books.
- Provide plenty of reading materials.
- Use multimedia to stimulate interests (movies, videos, photos, etc).
- Develop a paperback book exchange in the classroom.

Oral Reading

Round-robin oral reading is worthwhile, according to Johns (1986), only when it (1) informs or entertains the audience; (2) enables participation in a group activity such as a play or choral reading; or (3) when increases personal pleasure by reading aloud beautiful passages of literature. Teachers observe in general that round-robin oral reading is boring, wastes time, embarrasses some students, and often works against development of positive self-concepts.

For practical purposes, oral reading should (1) take place before a receptive audience; (2) be preceded by silent reading and careful oral preparation; and (3) students should actively listen, not follow along in their books (Johns, 1986). Purposeful functions of oral reading include: choral reading, plays, student-written skits, poetry and rhymes, student prepared radio/TV programs, puppet plays, announcements, brief oral reports, interpretation of a selection of literature, riddles or jokes, letters, and sharing of recreational reading.

Checklist for Encouraging Adolescent Writers

1. Adjust reading level
2. Allow students to tape lectures
3. Allow word processed assignments
4. Provide a written outline
5. Use peer tutoring
6. Write board work and oral instructions so students may refer to later
7. Use overhead or other visual media
8. Incorporate technology: computers, videos, etc.
9. Individualize assignments
10. Teach specific study skills such as note taking or organization
11. Use flexible grouping
12. Allow for a variety of learning situations
13. Change working conditions and arrangements often
14. Include students' ideas to accomplish what is wanted
15. Use multiple instructional strategies
16. Contact each student to ensure high quality work
17. Teach about multiple intelligences and survey students
18. Anchor activities so students know what to do when they finish early
19. Have predictable places to put completed work

Effective Small Groups

- Ask "Why?" for each group assigned
- Specify group tasks and student tasks within groups
- Give expectations for level of quality desired
- Check to see if directions are clear
- Can students access information needed?
- Audiotape material
- Partnership for reading or other learning
- Match the task to the students' readiness
- Require more than students can think and grapple with
- Tap into students' interests
- Facilitate
- Build in assignments for each group member so that each is accountable to speak or write for the group
- Observe group functions
- Notice the level of engagement of group members
- Teach, reteach, and extend teaching in small groups
- Let students struggle

OFF TO A GOOD START

(Student Planning Worksheet)

What we want to know:_____

_____

_____

What we will do:_____

_____

_____

What we will need:_____

How we will evaluate:_____

_____

_____

How we will define responsibilities:

What?	Who?
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Writing Organizer

Topic Assigned_____

Step 1. **Discovery** (Check each step as it is completed.)

_____ I have thought about my topic.

_____ I discussed my topic with another person.

_____ I did some reading about my topic.

_____ I made some notes about ideas that were uncovered during Discovery.

Step 2. **Talking on Paper** (Check each step as it is completed.)

_____ I found a comfortable place to write.

_____ I wrote for at least 15 minutes.

_____ I wrote whatever came into my mind.

_____ I ignored spelling, grammar, and sentence structure.

Step 3. **Private Talking Out Loud** (Check each step as it is completed.)

_____ I read my words out loud to hear how they sounded.

_____ I made some changes of things that didn't sound right.

Step 4. **Public Talking Out Loud** (Check each step as it is completed.)

_____ I asked at least one person to listen to my paper as I read it.

_____ I asked more than one person to listen to my paper as I read it.

_____ I learned how people felt about what I read.

_____ I did more thinking about my paper when people asked me questions.

Step 5. **Cleaning** (Check each step as it is completed.)

_____I went back to my comfortable writing spot.

_____ I reread my paper and made changes.

_____ I need to read my paper aloud to someone again; it still needs cleaning.

_____ I have finished cleaning.

_____ I like what I have written.

Step 6. **Polishing** (Check each step as it is completed.)

_____ I checked my spelling.

_____ I checked my sentences.

_____ I checked my grammar.

_____ I think my paper is polished.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING "IN FLOW"

1. Read a lot so you'll learn to tell the difference between good and bad and why things work or don't work.
2. Write—the only thing that matters is getting words on paper, and it's the only way to discover what works for you—become a better writer by writing a lot!
3. Don't stop—the only way you can fail at writing is to give up.
4. Wait—get ready for the task.
5. Begin before feeling fully ready.
6. Be patient.
7. Write regularly.
8. Stop before becoming fatigued.
9. Spend as much time prewriting as writing.
10. Putting finished work away for awhile and looking at it later helps separate creative impulse from your internal critic.
11. Provide feedback for yourself.
12. Read writing aloud.
13. Believe that what you write matters, or has purpose.
14. If the challenge is too great for your skills, flow is broken.
15. You must challenge yourself to keep engaged.

16. Be open to discovery.

17. Make writing fun.

18. Set a goal of how many words you want written on every page.

19. Have a preset deadline, but don't take it too seriously.

20. Never judge or criticize your writing.

21. Set a timer to sit and write.

22. Give yourself a reward at the end of your work.

23. Reflect on what you write.

24. Think about how to motivate yourself to set up action steps to achieve writing goals.

25. Think like a writer: approach work with openness and learn appropriate skills.

(Adapted from Perry, 1999)

Content, Organization, and Style Scoring Guide

Points	Description	Yes	No
4	Maintains consistent focus on the topic and has ample supporting details		
	Provides transitions which clearly serve to connect ideas		
	Uses language effectively by exhibiting word choices that are engaging and appropriate for intended audience and purpose		
	Includes sentences, or phrases where appropriate, of varied length and structure		
	Allows the reader to sense the person behind the words		
3	Maintains adequate focus on the topic and has adequate supporting details		
	Has a logical organizational pattern and conveys a sense of wholeness and completeness, although some lapses occur		
	Provides adequate transitions in an attempt to connect ideas		
	Uses effective language and appropriate word choices for intended audience and purpose		
	Includes sentences, or phrases where appropriate, that are somewhat varied in length and structure		
	Provides the reader with some sense of the person behind the words		
2	Demonstrates an inconsistent focus and includes some supporting details, but may include extraneous or loosely related material		
	Shows an attempt at an organizational pattern, but exhibits little sense of wholeness and completeness		
	Provides transitions which are weak or inconsistent		
	Has limited and predictable vocabulary which may not be appropriate for the intended audience and purpose		
	Shows limited variety in sentence length and structure		
	Attempts somewhat to give the reader a sense of the person behind the words		
1	Demonstrates little or no focus and few supporting details which may be inconsistent or interfere with the meaning of the text		
	Has little evidence of an organizational pattern or any sense of wholeness and completeness		

	Provides transitions which are poorly utilized, or fails to provide transitions		
	Has limited or inappropriate vocabulary for the intended audience and purpose		
	Has little or no variety in sentence length and structure		
	Provides the reader with little or no sense of the person behind the words		
0	**Response is "I don't know"; response is a question mark (?); response is one word; response is only the title of the prompt; or the prompt is simply recopied**		

Conventions Scoring Guide

Points	Description	Yes	No
2	Consistently follows the rules of standard English for usage		
	Consistently follows the rules of standard English for spelling of commonly used words		
	Consistently follows the rules of standard English for capitalization and punctuation		
	Consistently exhibits the use of complete sentences except where purposeful phrases or clauses are used for effect		
	Indicates paragraphs consistently		
1	Generally follows the rules of standard English for usage		
	Generally follows the rules of standard English for spelling of commonly used words		
	Generally follows the rules of standard English for capitalization and punctuation		
	Generally exhibits the use of complete sentences except where purposeful phrases are used for effect		
	Indicates paragraphs for the most part		
0	Mostly does not follow the rules of standard English for usage		
	Mostly does not follow the rules of standard English for spelling of commonly used words		
	Mostly does not follow the rules of standard English for capitalization and punctuation		
	Exhibits errors in sentence structure that impede communication		
	Mostly does not indicate paragraphs		
	Response is "I don't know"; response is a question mark (?); response is one word; response is only the title of the prompt; or the prompt is simply recopied		

Name_____ Date_____

PROOFREADING CHECKLIST FOR LANGUAGE ARTS

ELEMENTS	YES	NO	CHECK ITEM
Spelling			
used a spell check program			
used consistent spelling			
checked foreign words			
checked spelling of names and places			
Capital Letters			
beginning of each sentence			
proper nouns			
initials (U. N. for United Nations)			
month of year			
Period			
at end of sentences			
after abbreviations (Mr.)			
after initials (J. Smith)			
Comma			
words in a series			
between city and state			
between day and year			
after a greeting in a friendly letter			
before the conjunction in a compound sentence			
after a dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence			
after a noun of direct address			

Question Mark			
at the end of a questioning sentence			
Exclamation Point			
at the end of a sentence or a word that shows excitement			
Apostrophe			
in contractions			
to show possession (Joe's dog)			
Quotation Marks			
around direct quotations			
around the title of a poem, story, song, or television program			
Book Title			
underlined or italicized (Where the Flowers Grow or *Where the Flowers Grow*)			
Colon			
before a list of items			
in writing time of day			
business letter greeting			
Hyphen			
compound words (sometimes)			
compound numbers			
to divide a word at the end of a line of text			
Agreement			
subject and verb			
singular and plural			
Voice (Active or Passive)			
consistent within the paper			
avoids the passive voice			
uses active voice if the subject acts			

Structure and Content			
shorter sentences			
correct use of paragraphs			
order and logic in sentences			
no jargon, unless it is in dialogue			
appropriate words or phrases			
Common Spelling Errors			
Weather/Whether			
Their/There/They're			
Affect/Effect			
Your/You're			
Its/It's			

Quality Criteria for a Narrative Paper

Cooperative Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Completeness					
Personal meaning					
Accuracy					
Bias defended					
Mental models explained					
Creativity					
Overall presentation					
Suggestions:					
Comments:					

Note: The word "cooperative" suggests working together with the learner to rate him/her. You may set an arbitrary standard, from one to five, "1" being lowest, "5" being highest. (Jensen, 1995)

Adaptations for Notetaking

- **Notetaking is too slow**
  - Provide basic outline as handout
  - Model outlining on blackboard
  - Use overhead transparencies during lectures
  - Copy overhead transparencies for students

- **Legibility**
  - Show how illegibility can affect value of notes
  - Model "shorthand" and abbreviations
  - Provide a variety of paper and pens

- **Deciding how to organize**
  - Provide a notetaking format
  - Teach a particular notetaking strategy that suits your class

- **Learning how to use notes**
  - Show how to review, correct, and elaborate on notes
  - Model how to use notes for studying
  - Schedule time for reviewing notes during class

EXAMPLES OF TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS

Use of standard software and computer software packages

Tutorials
Software tools
Drill and practice
Simulations
Games
Problem solving

Software Tools

Newsletters
Brochures
Reports
Charts and graphs
Slides
Gradebooks
Recordkeeping
Calendars

Using the Internet

Lesson plans
Research
Developing puzzles and games
Pictures, sounds, music, etc. for other projects
Key Pals
Classroom partnerships
Quests and Adventures
Subscribing to Listservs
Learning to use it
Ethics and social issues
E-mail

Presentations

PowerPoint slides
Authoring and drawing packages

Learning Styles	Multiple Intelligences
Auditory	Linguistic Logical-Mathematical Interpersonal Intrapersonal Naturalist
Visual	Visual-Spatial Logical-Mathematical Intrapersonal Naturalist
Tactile-Kinesthetic	Bodily-Kinesthetic Visual-Spatial Musical-Rhythmic Naturalist

Teaching to Complement Learning Styles/Multiple Intelligences

An acronym for incorporating multiple intelligences into each lesson (Winebrenner, 1996, p. 53) is the word "Wholistic."

W hole to parts

H ands-on learning

O rganize information visually

L earning styles focus

I mmerse the senses

S eek patterns and connections

T echnology assistance

I ntegrate skills into context

C oncrete to abstract

Multiple Intelligences Profile

Self-Assessment

NATURALISTIC	YES	NO
I enjoy categorizing things by common traits		
Ecological issues are important to me		
I enjoy working on a garden		
I believe preserving our National Parks is important		
Putting things in hierarchies makes sense to me		
Animals are important in my life		
My home has a recycling system in place		
I enjoy studying biology, botany, and/or zoology		
I spend a great deal of time outdoors		

MUSICAL	YES	NO
I easily pick up on patterns		
I focus in on noise and sounds		
Moving to a beat is easy for me		
I've always been interested in playing an instrument		
The cadence of poetry intrigues me		
I remember things by putting them in a rhyme		
Concentration is difficult while listening to a radio or television		
I enjoy many kinds of music		
Musicals are more interesting than dramatic plays		
Remembering song lyrics is easy for me		

LOGICAL	YES	NO
I keep my things neat and orderly		
Step-by-step directions are a big help		
Solving problems comes easily to me		
I get easily frustrated with disorganized people		
I can complete calculations quickly in my head		
Puzzles requiring reasoning are fun		
I can't begin an assignment until all of my questions are answered		
Structure helps me be successful		
I find working on a computer spreadsheet or database rewarding		
Things have to make sense to me or I am dissatisfied		

EXISTENTIAL	YES	NO
It is important to see my role in the "big picture" of things		
I enjoy discussing questions about life		
Religion is important to me		
I enjoy viewing art masterpieces		
Relaxation and meditation exercises are rewarding		
I like visiting breathtaking sites in nature		
I enjoy reading ancient and modern philosophers		
Learning new things is easier when I understand their value		
I wonder if there are other forms of intelligent life in the universe		
Studying history and ancient culture helps give me perspective		

INTERPERSONAL	YES	NO
I learn best by interacting with others		
The more the merrier		
Study groups are very productive for me		
I enjoy chat rooms		
Participating in politics is important		
Television and radio talk shows are enjoyable		
I am a "team player"		
I dislike working alone		
Clubs and extracurricular activities are fun		
I pay attention to social issues and causes		

KINESTHETIC	YES	NO
I enjoy making things with my hands		
Sitting still for long periods of time is difficult for me		
I enjoy outdoor games and sports		
I value non-verbal communication such as sign language		
A fit body is important for a fit mind		
Arts and crafts are enjoyable pastimes		
Expression through dance is beautiful		
I like working with tools		
I live an active lifestyle		
I learn by doing		

VERBAL/LINGUISTIC	YES	NO
I enjoy reading all kinds of materials		
Taking notes helps me remember and understand		
I faithfully contact friends through letters and/or e-mail		
It is easy for me to explain my ideas to others		
I keep a journal		
Word puzzles like crosswords and jumbles are fun		
I write for pleasure		
I enjoy playing with words like puns, anagrams, and spoonerisms		
Foreign languages interest me		
Debates and public speaking are activities I like to participate in		

INTRAPERSONAL	YES	NO
I am keenly aware of my moral beliefs		
I learn best when I have an emotional attachment to the subject		
Fairness is important to me		
My attitude effects how I learn		
Social justice issues concern me		
Working alone can be just as productive as working in a group		
I need to know why I should do something before I agree to do it		
When I believe in something I will give 100% effort to it		
I like to be involved in causes that help others		
I am willing to protest or sign a petition to right a wrong		

VISUAL/SPATIAL	YES	NO
I can imagine ideas in my mind		
Rearranging a room is fun for me		
I enjoy creating art using varied media		
Performance art can be very gratifying		
I remember well using graphic organizers		
Spreadsheets are great for making charts, graphs, and tables		
Three dimensional puzzles bring me much enjoyment		
Music videos are very stimulating		
I can recall things in mental pictures		
I am good at reading maps and blueprints		

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY PROJECT CHART

	Optional Project Format	Verbs
KNOWLEDGE	Flash cards, rebus story, scrapbook, drawing, puzzle, tape recording, mobile, collage	Define, draw, identify, label, list, locate, match, name, recite, select, state
COMPREHENSION	Puppet show, picture dictionary, pamphlet, news story/report, diagram, essay, bulletin board, diary	Classify, demonstrate, describe, explain, generalize, give examples, group, paraphrase, put in order, retell, rewrite, show, summarize
APPLICATION	Chart/graph, model, peep show, display, interview, survey, experiment, mini-center	Apply, compare/contrast, debate, diagram, draw conclusions, discover, examine, interview, investigate, keep records, make, construct, predict, produce, prove, track, translate
ANALYSIS	Textbook, transparency, oral report, movie, scroll, collection, guest speaker, letter	Analyze, deduce, determine, examine, infer, relate, compare, contrast, uncover
SYNTHESIS	Poem/song, game, speech, play, gallery/museum exhibit, choral reading	Combine, create, design, develop, imagine, invent, make up, perform, prepare, present (an original piece of work), produce, revise, tell, synthesize
EVALUATION	Written report, scroll, book cover, poster project cube, photo/picture essay, advertisement, editorial, debate	Argue, award, choose, criticize, critique, defend, grade, judge, justify, rank, rate, recommend, support, test, validate

Progress Report and Project Evaluation

Progress Report

Name _____ Date_____

Week: 1_____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ Title of Project _____

What activities have you done so far?

1.
2.
3.
4.

What remains to be done?

5.
6.
7.

Are you having any problems or questions?

How do you feel about what you've done so far? Please rate your feelings on the scale below.

I'm bored _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ Interested

It's too much _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ Too little

I'm frustrated _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ Enthusiastic

I'm sad/angry _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ Happy

Other _____

What has been MOST interesting so far is _____

Will you be able to: complete on time? Yes ___ No ___

meet all standards? Yes ___ No ___

What specific help do you need?

I predict that my grade will be: A ____ B ____ C ____ D ____ Incomplete _____

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP PARTICIPATION	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
Did you listen to the opinions of others in your group?				
Were you inclined to change your mind because of group pressures?				
If you did change your mind, was it because of logical and persuasive arguments?				
Did your single-mindedness prevent your group from reaching a decision in time? Did someone else's?				
After your group arrived at a decision different from yours, did you still feel you were right?				