

Genre Mini Unit

Brionne Thompson

Unit of Study: How-to-books

Age Level: Ages 5-8 (Summer preschool program, extended to older early childhood ages. I will be addressing this unit to the oldest of the summer small groups, consisting of 7-8 children of the above ages.)

Resources:

- Examples of How-To Books
 - Welcome Books, How Things Are Made series
 - *Wax to Crayons* by Inez Snyder
 - *Trees to Paper* by Inez Snyder
 - *Tomatoes to Ketchup* by Inez Snyder
 - *Beans to Chocolate* by Inez Snyder
 - *Milk to Ice Cream* by Inez Snyder
 - Let's Try it Out books, Hands-On Early-Learning Science Activities Series
 - *Let's Try It Out in the Water* by Seymour Simon, Nicole Fauteux, and Doug Cushman
 - *Let's Try It Out in the Air* by Seymour Simon, Nicole Fauteux, and Doug Cushman
 - *How to Lose All Your Friends* by Nancy L. Carlson
 - *Everybody Needs A Rock* by Byrd Baylor
 - *Making Playdough* by Brionne Thompson
 - Example written by teacher
 - Various Recipe Books
- Chart Paper & Markers
- Blank Writing Paper
- Regular and Colored Pencils
- Storyboard Templates
- Blank picture/text pages

Standard and Objectives Overview:

Creative Curriculum® Objectives:

- #31 – Shows awareness of time concepts and sequence
- #39 – Expresses self using words and expanded sentences
- #45 – Demonstrates understanding of print concepts
- #48 – Understands the purpose of writing
- #49 – Writes letters and words

Expected Outcome: Students will write and illustrate a how-to book on a topic of their choice.

DAY 1

Time: 20-30 minutes

Objective: Students will become more familiar with how-to writing by listening to how-to books in large and small group and by participating in a shared writing activity.

Mini-Lesson (15-20 min.): Introduce students to process text structure by referring to a text read earlier and by reading *How to Lose All Your Friends*. Also engage students in a shared how-to writing activity.

- Say, “In large group today, we looked at a book that told us how crayons are made. Books that give directions to do or make something are called *how-to books*. Now we are going to read another book that gives directions. The author organizes writing in a certain way to help us as we read. We need to pay close attention to this because we are going to write a how-to book of our own, and we will need to organize our writing, too.
- Read *How to Lose All Your Friends* by Nancy L. Carlson, pausing to point out how the author has organized her writing. Specifically, point out the numbers she uses.
- Do a shared writing to create instructions for how to keep your friends. Encourage the students to come up with ways that might not have been addressed in the book. Also, purposely use organizational strategies that were pointed out in the text.
- As students finish their writing, allow them to browse through the other examples of how-to books.
- Before dismissing small group, encourage the students to start thinking about ideas they might want to write instructions for.

Accountability/Assessment (3-5 min.): Give students blank paper and colored pencils. Have them write or illustrate additional suggestions that could be added to our writing.

Author’s Chair (3-5 min.): Have students share what they have written/drawn with a buddy. Have one or two students share with the whole group.

Accommodations: Students can choose whether to write or to illustrate their suggestions. Also, students who finish early will have an additional activity to do.

DAY 2

Time: 20-30 Minutes

Objective: Students will brainstorm a list of possible ideas for their how-to book.

Mini-Lesson (10-15 min.): More how-to book examples and brainstorming how-to book ideas.

- Say, “Yesterday we read a how-to book and looked at how the author gave us directions for how to do something. We also wrote down some of our own ideas together. Today, we are going to look at a how-to book that Ms. Brionne wrote, and we will talk about some of the steps she used to get ready to write the book. You will also get a chance to do some of those steps to start getting ready to write your book.”
- Read *Making Playdough* by Brionne Thompson. Point out that this book did not use numbered steps, but instead used words to help us know what order things went in. Point out words like *first*, *then*, *next*, and *finally*.
- Say, “Before writing this book, Ms. Brionne had to decide what to write about. She did this by making a list of lots of ideas that she had. I’m going to show you one activity that she could have used to do this.”
- Model using think-aloud while writing a list of possible ideas, being sure to include “thoughts” like, “I know a lot about _____, so I could tell someone how to do it” or “I’m really good at _____, and I can explain it to somebody else.”
- Say, “Now I want you to come up with some of your own ideas. I am going to give you a blank sheet, and you can choose to write words or draw pictures to show the ideas that you have.”

Accountability/Assessment (5-10 min.): Say, “While you are writing, I am going to come and see if you are coming up with ideas that you could teach someone else about.” Assist students, as needed, in labeling their ideas.

Author’s Chair (3-5 min.): Have students share three of their favorite ideas with a partner.

Accommodations: Again, students can choose whether to write or draw their ideas. Also, have the how-to book examples on hand again for any early finishers or for additional ideas.

DAY 3

Time: 20-30 Minutes

Objective: Students will choose one of the ideas from their lists and use it to begin writing their how-to text. They will begin by writing or drawing pictures of the steps using a storyboard template.

Mini-Lesson (10-12 min.): Select an idea to begin writing about and begin writing by illustrating or writing the steps.

- Briefly read one of the Welcome Books and think-aloud about the how-to steps included in the text.
- Say, “Yesterday we came up with a list of ideas for writing our own how-to book. Today, we are going to choose one of these ideas and start writing about it. I will start by showing you how I choose an idea, and I will also show you one way to start organizing what you want to write.”
- Think-aloud as you choose a topic, being sure to point out the reasons for eliminating some ideas. (i.e. too complicated, not very interesting to me, etc.)
- Model the use of a storyboard, pointing out that you can choose to write words or draw pictures first. Also, demonstrate how you can draw arrows if you want to change the order or insert a step, also noting that you could cut out the sections and rearrange them if you wanted. Use lots of think-aloud language as you model for the students. Do the first few steps and note that you can finish later. Be sure to save the last step for tomorrow.

Accountability/Assessment (8-10 min.): Allow students to select an idea and begin organizing their writing with a storyboard template. Say, “I will be watching to see what idea you choose and what steps you want to include.” Give lots of reinforcement for use of strategies you have modeled.

Authors Chair (5-7 min.): Have a few students share which idea they chose and why. Then have students turn to a partner and show them the steps they have come up with so far.

Accommodations: As students begin to choose, assist them in narrowing down their options by asking them questions modeled earlier. As they begin writing steps, students will again be allowed to choose to write or illustrate first. In discussion, use questions to get them thinking about important steps and to express interest in the topic chosen.

DAY 4

Time: 20-30 Minutes

Objective: Students will complete their storyboard and begin writing/illustrating the pages for their books.

Mini-Lesson (5-10 min.): Demonstrate how to take ideas from the storyboard and begin making them into book pages. Explain how you will publish the books.

- Say, “Yesterday we got a good start on organizing the information for our books. Today we will finish organizing and begin creating the pages for our books.”
- Show students your storyboard, with all steps finished except for the last one. Quickly model documenting your final step.
- Show the students the picture/text pages and explain that these will be used to create our books. Tell them that you will be typing up the words they choose, and that the pictures they create will be added to the typed page. Emphasize the fact that they can make LOTS of changes to the words they choose before you type up their final text.
- Model how to transfer a storyboard idea to a book page. Begin by writing the text for the page, referring to the illustration you made to help you remember what you wanted to say. Be sure to model making mistakes and note that you can go back and fix them later.
- As you give students their papers, ask each one to remind you of what they have chosen to write about. Explain that you will be checking back with them to see what they are writing about for their first step.

Accountability/Assessment (10-15 min.): As students begin writing, make special note of their efforts to use the steps modeled earlier. Also comment on their attempts at independent writing.

Author’s Chair (3-5 min.): Have students share their writing with a new partner.

Accommodations: Have alphabet charts available to help students who may need it and as a reference. Encourage independent writing based on individual skill levels. Allow students who need it to begin with illustrations.

DAY 5

Time: 20-30 minutes

Objective: Students will finish writing their pages and take time to read through the draft and make any changes before publication.

Mini-Lesson (5-7 min.): Reading draft and making changes or adding additional information.

- Say, “Yesterday we began writing the pages for our books. Today, we will finish writing them. We will also take some time to read our writing and make any changes we want.”
- Model reading a draft. Include think-aloud moments as you change the order of steps, add more information, and make corrections. Demonstrate how to cross out errors and insert new information.
- Say, “I want to give you lots of time to work today. I will come and see how you are doing and what changes you might choose to make. This weekend, I will type the words you have chosen and add your pictures to the pages. I will have your finished books for you next week, and you will have a chance to share them with the rest of the class during large group.”

Accountability/Assessment (10-20 min.): As students finish writing their pages, encourage them to read through what they have written and look for changes they want to make. Comment on how they use the revising methods shown earlier. Make sure their final choice of text is clear.

Author’s Chair (2-3 min.): Allow students a couple of minutes to share their work with their partner from yesterday.

Accommodations: Have yesterday’s materials available again. For students who need it, have an additional teaching assistant help to take dictation. Students who finish early can share their final text choice with a partner.

FOLLOW-UP

Assemble the books as promised and allow adequate time for all of the students to share their work during a large group the following week. Give the published copies to the students to take home. Possibly assemble copies to include in the classroom library as well.