

A New Tool: The Writer's Notebook!

Parents and students,

This year we will be using "Writer's Notebooks" as a major part of our writing workshop. So what exactly is it? A writer's notebook is a tool for authors of all ages to collect ideas, stories, thoughts, reflections, descriptions, questions, feelings, and many other things. A writer's notebook is not a ship captain's log or diary, but a series of snapshots to be a treasured reflection of their life as a fourth grader. Students will be encouraged to write in their notebooks often, both at home and at school, about topics of their choice. Ralph Fletcher describes writer's notebooks best when he wrote, "A writer's notebook gives you a place to live like a writer, not just in school during writing time, but wherever you are, at any time of day." On the back of this sheet, you will find a selection taken from Fletcher's book *A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You*. It contains a more specific description of what writer's notebooks are, why to use them, and what they should look like.

To help students understand how and when to use their Writer's Notebooks, I have been sharing selections from my own notebooks. I've also given them a list of possible types of entries they might explore in their notebook. We've taped this list in the front of their notebook to help spark ideas when they are not sure what to write. I'm including the list down below for your reference as well. Please encourage your child to collect ideas of exciting life events or interesting observations in their writer's notebook on a regular basis.

Types of Entries for your Writer's Notebook:

- Questions
- Things you wonder about
- Memories
- Eavesdropping-overheard conversations
- Playing with Language
- Images that stick in your mind
- Lists
- Family Stories
- Close observation or descriptions
- Interviews
- Clippings from newspapers, magazines
- "Talking to yourself" on paper
- Your opinions on issues and situations
- "Mind Popping" /Free association
- Responding to literature
- Dreams
- Plans for a project
- Quotations
- Kernels for Stories
- Lines you Love

Thank you!

Mrs. Mumaw

Mr. Hansel

Mrs. Hoppers

Mrs. Harris

WHAT IS A WRITER'S NOTEBOOK, ANYWAY?

Once, when I was a boy, a telephone repair truck pulled up in front of our house and two workers got out. They had come to lay a telephone cable. My brothers and sisters and I watched them work hard for almost three hours digging a long narrow ditch in our back yard. Finally, when it was starting to get dark, they left the ditch and went home, promising to return and finish the job the next morning.

Early the following morning I went outside and looked into that empty ditch. But it wasn't empty at all. I was amazed to find all sorts of small animals caught in there: four toads, two frogs, even a small box turtle. They must have wandered into the ditch, gotten stuck there and been unable to climb back out. I let all the animals go. The two workers returned, finished laying the telephone cable, and covered up the ditch.

That got me thinking. The next day I decided to dig my own ditch. I dug it at the edge of the woods (I didn't think Dad would have appreciated seeing another ditch in our lawn) and made it about a foot wide, ten feet long, and eight inches deep. Next morning I hurried outside and discovered that—yes!—the same thing had happened. A number of small creatures had been caught in there.

A writer's notebook is like that ditch—an empty space you dig in your busy life, a space that will fill up with all sorts of fascinating little creatures. If you dig it, they will come. You'll be amazed by what you catch there.

Writing is what I do for my job. I've written books for adults and books for young readers. I've published a novel, several books of poetry, short stories, and books for teachers on how to teach writing. In this book I want to explore with you the most important tool I use: my writer's notebook. Keeping a writer's notebook is one of the best ways I know of living a writing kind of life.

What is a writer's notebook, anyway? Let's start by talking about what it's *not*. A writer's notebook is not a diary: "Today it is raining. We have a substitute teacher named Miss Pam-

have gym right before lunch." It's not a reading journal in which your teacher tells you to summarize the main idea of a book, or write a letter to a character. A writer's notebook is different from any journal you've ever kept before.

Writers are pretty ordinary people. They have favorite songs, favorite movies, favorite TV shows. Writers have Evil Big Sisters (and, occasionally, sweet ones). They get good or not so good grades, take vacations, paint their houses . . .

Writers are like other people, except for at least one important difference. Other people have daily thoughts and feelings, notice this sky or that smell, but they don't do much about it. All those thoughts, feelings, sensations, and opinions pass through them like the air they breathe.

Not writers. Writers react. And writers need a place to record those reactions.

That's what a writer's notebook is for. It gives you a place to write down what makes you angry or sad or amazed, to write down what you noticed and don't want to forget, to record exactly what your grandmother whispered in your ear before she said goodbye for the last time.

A writer's notebook gives you a place to live like a writer, not just in school during writing time, but wherever you are, at any time of day.

What does a writer's notebook look like? There's really no right answer for this except that your writer's notebook should reflect your personality. Some writers prefer a pad small enough to stick in a back pocket. Others have beautiful notebooks with wildflowers on their covers, and others with plain brown covers. My wife's notebook has unlined pages because she likes to sketch in it, as well as write. My notebook is really supposed to be a business ledger, with lined, numbered pages. It has a hard cover and a very sturdy binding, which is good because I drag it with me wherever I go and it gets banged up a lot.

A notebook doesn't even have to be made from paper, really. Often I work on my "notebook computer" while I'm flying from one city to the next. But a notebook doesn't have to be expensive or fancy—a plain notebook from the stationery store will do just fine.

From "A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking

4th Grade Parent Information Night -NOTES

- **Introductions**
- **Daily Schedule**
 - 7:40-8:10 - Morning Activity / D.O.L.
 - 8:10-9:30 - Math
 - 9:30-12:20 - Language Arts / Snack / Specials
 - 12:20-12:45 - Lunch
 - 12:50-1:10 - Recess
 - 1:10-2:20 - Science / Social Studies
- **P. R. I. D. E. - School-wide Behavior Expectations**
 - Prepared Respectful Independent Dependable Excellence
- **Social Emotional Learning**
 - meet 1 time / week with Ms. Ashley Hammond (Youth Services Bureau)
- **Math**
 - *Everyday Mathematics* www.everydaymathonline.com (Login & password in planner)
 - Journals (contains Math Boxes and in-class pages)
 - Study Link (pages are perforated to tear out and turn in)
 - Student Reference Book
 - can check out extra copy of old version of SRB to keep at home
 - Multiplication Timed Tests
 - 100 problems in 3 minutes
 - All students will do 2-3 times per week
 - Practice at home is so helpful to reach goals!
 - Family Letters for each Unit (from Study Link book)
 - Has vocabulary for chapter and answers to Study Links
- **Reading**
 - *Reading Street* (Basal Reader) - Online access through PHM Student Launch Pad
 - Novel Studies
 - Independent Reading Calendar (Minimum=450 minutes; Reading Reward Goal=600 minutes)
 - Record titles of books read on the back
 - Please total up the minutes each month
 - Parent signature
- **Spelling & Vocabulary**
 - Spelling - Pretests on Friday, Packets due Wednesday, Final Test on Thursday
 - Spelling sentences need to show the meaning of the word.
 - Vocabulary Vine - Greek and Latin roots
- **Writing**
 - Writer's Notebooks - focuses on collecting good ideas
 - Lucy Calkins Units of Study (Narratives, Information, Personal and Persuasive Essays)
 - Simple 6 (Prompt writing & Responding to Texts)
- **Science**
 - Earth Science - Rocks & Minerals, Erosion, Weathering, Moon Phases
 - Life Science - Owl Pellets, Life Cycles, Adaptations, Plants
 - Physical Science - Properties of Matter, Physical/Chemical Changes, Forces, Energy
- **Social Studies**
 - Indiana History - Field Trips: Cabin Days (Oct.), Fur Trade (spring)
 - TCI - Regions of Our Country (in homeroom classes)

- States Tests (in I.M.C.) - by region. Watch for map with test dates to come home.
- **Assessment**
 - AIR Ways Interims & Benchmarks
 - same format as ILEARN; helpful to guide instruction and give testing experience
 - ILEARN testing window **April 20-May 15**. Please avoid appointments on these mornings!
 - Parent-friendly information can be found at www.doe.in.gov/assessment/ilearn-families
- **Homework**
 - due the next day (unless otherwise noted)
 - return to the teacher who assigned it
- **Planners**
 - filled out daily at school
 - often checked by math teachers
 - always time at end of day to write in planners; not always time for teachers to sign them
- **Friday Folders**
 - graded papers, notes from PTO, important papers for parents to see
- **Snacks** - Only fruit (applesauce pouches), veggies, cheese stick, yogurt pouches/tubes
- **Water Bottles**
 - please try to send ones that don't spill
 - label with names
- **Technology**
 - Chrome books -a set for each class
 - Google Classroom - used by teachers; separate class for LA, Math, and Science
 - will use Google Classroom for eLearning Days this winter (not Canvas)
- **Contact Information**
 - Email is the best way to contact us.
 - Questions about math, please email the math teacher.

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Notes from PTO-

- New Online directory - pumaparents.membershiptoolkit.com
 - info from MySchoolAnywhere transferred to new program
- Planning to Volunteer?? - Please fill out background checks
 - Need these checks to go with us on Field Trips, too!
- Sign up to volunteer for different events. There are different tabs for each activity:
 - <https://www.signupgenius.com/tabs/53173d800a0c8eccf9-volunteer>
 - Room Parents
 - Fun Fair
 - Math Pentathlon (sign up to help for your child's Math teacher)
 - Art Smart
- Weekly emails (when you sign up for online directory, you will receive these)

Looking forward to a great year!

Name _____

Minimum: 450 minutes

September 2019

Reading Reward Goal: 600 minutes

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 NO SCHOOL LABOR DAY	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 PICTURE DAY	11	12	13 FUN FAIR 4:30-6:30PM	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

PARENT SIGNATURE: _____ TOTAL MINUTES: _____

PLEASE MAKE SURE THE BACK SIDE OF THE CALENDAR IS FILLED OUT COMPLETELY OR THE CALENDAR WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!!

